



open your eyes **HANDBOOK**

How to identify and tackle
online disinformation?

-

A tool for adult educators

Co-funded by the
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

MODULE 1

Common understanding of Media Literacy in the EU context	1
GET READY	1
Introduction	1
Contents	1
Objectives	1
Methods	1
CHECK IT OUT	2
Introduction and teacher instructions	2
Glossary	2
Literacy and media literacy: conceptualization and statistics	3
Profiles of adults learners with low media literacy	6
Importance of Lifelong Learning and digital media literacy in the EU context	10
VERIFY	14
DO IT YOURSELF	15
SOURCES	16
FURTHER READING	16

MODULE 2

Conceptualising disinformation	18
GET READY	18
Introduction	18
Contents	18

Objectives	18
Methods	18
Equipment	18
CHECK IT OUT	19
Preparation	19
Present the objective of the session	19
Conceptualising disinformation: definitions	20
Conceptualising disinformation: a categorisation	22
Conceptualising disinformation: how does disinformation work?	27
VERIFY	31
DO IT YOURSELF	32
SOURCES	33
FURTHER READING	33

MODULE 3

How to tackle disinformation: tools and methodologies	36
GET READY	36
Introduction	36
Contents	36
Objectives	36
Methods	36
Equipment	36
CHECK IT OUT	37
Theoretical inputs: analysing internet-based information	38
Theoretical inputs: tools to verify Facebook information	41

Theoretical inputs: tools to verify images	45
VERIFY	48
DO IT YOURSELF	49
CASE STUDY: SUAVELOS, A WHITE SUPREMACIST NETWORK	53
SOURCES	57
FURTHER READING	57

Project n.2018-1-BG01-KA204-047871 "Open Your Eyes: Fake News for Dummies"

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INTRODUCTION

open your eyes
HANDBOOK

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Open Your Eyes is a European project which aims to improve the digital literacy of adult learners by providing them with the tools to **identify and tackle disinformation online**. The project, implemented between 2018 and 2020, produced two main results:

- A [database of initiatives against disinformation](#) collected across the European Union and beyond;
- The present Handbook, which aims to guide educators in setting up “**Check It Out**” Labs: workshops for adults who are interested in learning more about disinformation, how to recognise it and how to limit its spread, particularly online.

ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

The Handbook is divided in **three consecutive modules** covering the following topics:

- Common understanding of media literacy in the EU context;
- Conceptualising disinformation;
- How to tackle disinformation: tools and methodologies.

After familiarising themselves with the concepts of media literacy and disinformation, the educator will be guided through a series of increasingly practical activities which will provide them with the tools to analyse online content and assess its reliability – and pass on such knowledge to adult learners.

ABOUT THE “CHECK IT OUT” LABS

The final purpose of this Handbook is to enable educators to set up **workshops for adult learners** on the topic of disinformation. The “Check It Out” Labs can be held both face to face or within an online learning environment; both scenarios have been foreseen in the development of the suggested activities.

The suggested duration of a “Check It Out” Lab is of **4.5 - 6 hours** (three sessions of 1.5 - 2 hours each, corresponding to the three modules). Each session should include:

- A presentation of the theoretical content (**CHECK IT OUT**): 30 - 40 min;
- Practical activities (**DO IT YOURSELF**): 1 - 1.15 hours;
- Assessment and Q&A round (**VERIFY**): 5 - 10 min.

The first session should include a short presentation of the project.

MODULE 1

Common understanding of Media Literacy in the EU context

GET READY	1
Introduction	1
Contents	1
Objectives	1
Methods	1
CHECK IT OUT	2
Introduction and teacher instructions	2
Glossary	2
Literacy and media literacy: conceptualization and statistics	3
Profiles of adults learners with low media literacy	6
Importance of Lifelong Learning and digital media literacy in the EU context	10
VERIFY	14
DO IT YOURSELF	15
SOURCES	16
FURTHER READING	16



INTRODUCTION

This first module provides a theoretical introduction to **digital media literacy**, exploring the roots of this concept, its multi-faceted definition, and the current situation of the overall literacy level within the EU. We will find out that the ability to understand what we read, see and hear in the media, be them paper or digital, should never be taken for granted, and that functional illiteracy is still a major issue in many contexts. Education, especially **lifelong education**, plays a key role in the fight against any form of illiteracy, and this is even truer in the era of **social media**.

CONTENTS

In light of this, the first module presents:

- Conceptual background for the concepts of literacy, media literacy, digital literacy and illiteracy
- Relevant statistics regarding literacy levels around the world
- Profiles of “media illiterate” adult learners
- How lifelong learning can help to enhance digital media literacy

OBJECTIVES

This section will help teachers and learners develop a deeper understanding of the concepts mentioned, which are crucial when dealing with the topic of disinformation and provide the appropriate context around this phenomenon.

After completion of this module, adult educators will be able to:

- Understand, explain and compare the concepts of literacy/illiteracy, media and digital literacy
- Distinguish between the terms illiterate and functionally illiterate
- Identify the core skills which define media literacy and digital literacy
- Provide statistical data regarding digital literacy worldwide and from a historical perspective
- Assess and describe the different profiles of “media illiterate” adult learners
- Understand and explain the concept of lifelong learning
- Explain why lifelong learning is critical to fighting media illiteracy and disinformation

METHODS

In terms of methods to be used, we advise developing a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation, since the content of the module is theoretical and having visual material will convey the message more effectively and be more appealing to the students. If you opt for a visual presentation, the necessary equipment will include a laptop/PC, a projector and a projection board. You may need a flipchart and colored markers to take notes of the main ideas to be remembered by the audience or invite the learners to write down themselves keywords or exercises.



INTRODUCTION AND TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

A good way to prepare the audience would be to assess their level of awareness regarding the subject matter, whenever you begin explaining a subtopic. This can be done using the following method:

Spark a conversation and create a dynamic atmosphere by asking some introductory questions, such as:

- What do you know about literacy?
- In what context have you encountered the term literacy?
- What about media and digital literacy? What is the difference between the two concepts?
- Could you give some examples of types of literacy?
- What is “functional illiteracy” and how does it affect the perception of information?
- Do you know what are the main factors leading to a fair level of digital media literacy?
- What social categories, age groups, etc., are more vulnerable to disinformation?
- How would you describe someone who is “media illiterate”?
- Are you familiar with the idea of lifelong learning and its implications?

GLOSSARY

Literacy: 1. the ability to read and write; 2. literacy also refers to the knowledge of a particular subject, or a particular type of knowledge. (Cambridge Dictionary)

Functional literacy: Person who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective function of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing, and calculation for his or her own and the community's development. (UNESCO)

Media literacy: Media literacy refers to all the technical, cognitive, social, civic, and creative capacities that allow us to access and have a critical understanding of and interact with media. These capacities allow us to exercise critical thinking while participating in the economic, social, and cultural aspects of society and playing an active role in the democratic process. This concept covers all kinds of media interactions (broadcasting, radio, press, the Internet, social media) and addresses the needs of all ages. (Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28, European Audiovisual Observatory, Strasbourg, 2016)

Lifelong Learning: All purposeful learning activity is undertaken on an ongoing basis to improve knowledge, skills, and competence. (European Commission, 2000)

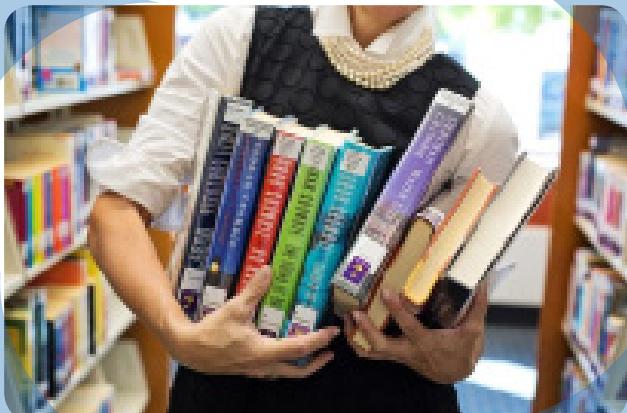
Non-formal learning: Learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time, or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.” (Cedefop, 2014)

Informal learning: Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family, or leisure. It is not organized or structured in terms of objectives, time, or learning support. Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. (Cedefop, 2014)

Prosumer: a customer who helps a company design and produce its products. The word is formed from the words "producer" and "consumer". (Cambridge Dictionary)

LITERACY AND MEDIA LITERACY: CONCEPTUALISATION AND STATISTICS

When we talk about '**literacy**' in our present-day context, oftentimes the discussion will take us straight to '**digital literacy**' and '**media literacy**', since digital tools, the media environment, and the digital revolution are creating the norm and painting the picture of the world as we know it – through the media, in academical and formal education contexts, in European urban areas, to name just a few common settings. From this perspective, it becomes easy to forget that the world experiences today uneven levels of development and that there still exist places in 'our world' where digital literacy is not the norm – in some places, we cannot even consider 'literacy' as the norm, since there still exist **illiterate and functionally illiterate people**, as we will discover further along.



Source: pixabay.com

To grasp the meaning of media literacy, we will start with **defining the basic element: the term 'literacy'**, understood primarily as "**the ability to read and write**" (Cambridge Dictionary). This first level of literacy is considered 'basic literacy'.

A second meaning of the term reveals the fact that "**literacy also refers to the knowledge of a particular subject, or a particular type of knowledge**" (Cambridge Dictionary). This indicates that literacy can be associated with **expertise in a certain domain** such as

a specific field of knowledge, and thus understood as finances – 'financial literacy', or ICT – 'computer literacy'. In light of this second meaning of the term 'literacy', we can conclude that **literacy also means 'competence' in a specific field**. Of course, competence varies greatly when considering both basic literacy and media literacy.

We started by talking about one type of literacy, which is the gateway to a world of knowledge, and we ended up concluding that there are many types of literacy, contextual uses, and particular socio-cultural settings. David Mallows describes this aspect of the term in his article "What is 'literacy?'?", on the EPALE platform website: "[...] literacy is highly contextual – what we are required to do with our literacy is always contextualized – situated within a particular socio-cultural setting. Indeed, it has become common to refer to literacies, rather than literacy, to emphasize the point that literacy is a social practice and so there is no one form of literacy that everyone needs. Instead, we all need (and use) different literacies depending on our social or professional group (e.g. nurses, teenagers, academics); the kinds of activities we engage in (e.g. shopping, dealing

with bureaucracy, studying, etc.); and the different social and institutional contexts in which we act (school, work, home, etc.).”¹

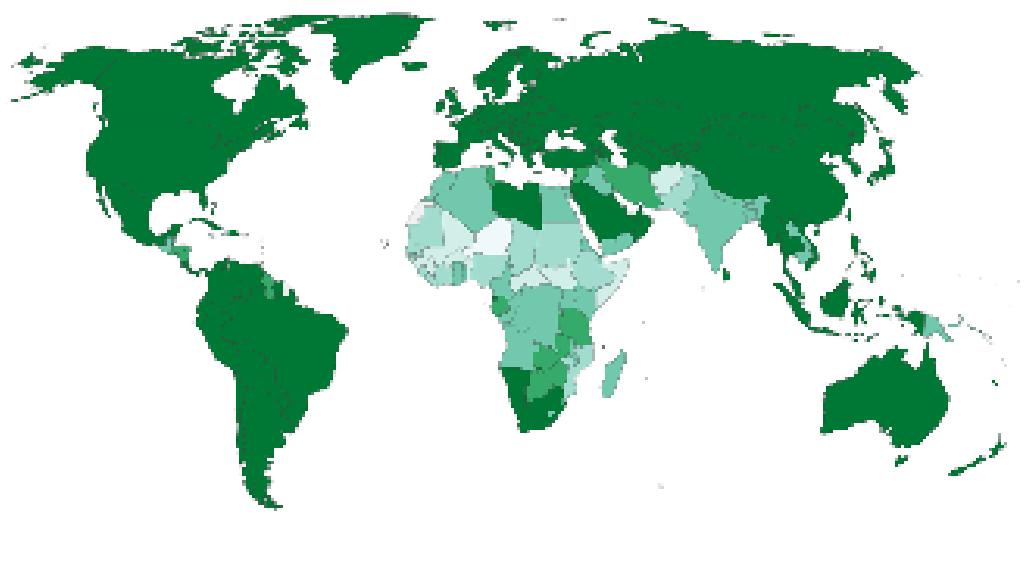
When addressing the topic of literacy, the opposite phenomenon also needs to be taken into account: illiteracy, the lack of reading and writing skills. Being completely illiterate has become quite rare, but functional illiteracy is still a serious challenge. According to UNESCO, a person is functionally literate if they can “*engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for the effective functioning of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing, and calculation for his or her own and the community's development*”. In other words, being functionally illiterate means not being able to use the basic abilities to read and write to cope with everyday challenges.

For the modern European living in an urban area, it is quite difficult to grasp the fact that there are still illiterate people around the world (even in Europe) who have very little to no access to the sphere of media literacy altogether. In 2015, in many countries more than 95% of people aged 15 and above had basic literacy skills: “*can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement about their everyday life*”. This percentage stood right next to a 20% rate of literacy, encountered in some areas of the world, according to the study quoted below.

According to the same source, “[...] literacy levels have risen drastically only in the last couple of centuries: while only 12% of the people in the world could read and write in 1820, more recently, the share has reversed: only 14% of the world population, in 2016, remained illiterate. Over the last 65 years, the global literacy rate increased by 4% every 5 years – from 42% in 1960 to 86% in 2015.”²

Adult literacy rates, 2015 or most recent observation, 2015

Adult literacy rate is the percentage of people aged 15 and above who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement about their everyday life. Definitions may differ in some countries. See sources for more details.



Sources: Literacy rates - UNDP, CIA World Factbook, Wikipedia

ILO: IFW

¹ Source: <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/what-literacy>

² Max Roser and Esteban Ortiz-Ospina (2020) - “Literacy”. Published online at OurWorldInData.org. Retrieved from: <https://ourworldindata.org/literacy>

It is worth mentioning that there is no universally accepted definition of **media literacy**, therefore you may find many definitions based on similar core views. We will start the process of defining this concept with the definition given by the EU Media Literacy Expert Group since it touches all the main aspects we have found in various other definitions: “**Media literacy** refers to all the **technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities** that allow us to **access** and have a **critical understanding** of and **interact with media**. These capacities allow us to **exercise critical thinking** while participating in the economic, social, and cultural aspects of society and playing an active role in the democratic process. This concept covers all kinds of media interactions (broadcasting, radio, press, the Internet, social media) and addresses the needs of all ages.”³

This definition encompasses a set of key principles found in most other definitions: having both the technical skills, as well as a critical understanding of the media, while employing it in different aspects of our lives to facilitate our existence in society. In other words, we educate our media literacy by refining different skill sets in order to critically assess media messages and have an active role in the information society and under the influence of the widespread availability of digital technologies.

Since media literacy is used in close relation to **digital literacy**, we feel it is important to distinguish between the two: while media literacy refers to all types of media, as we can see in the definition above (be it broadcasting, radio, press, the Internet, social media), digital literacy narrows its focus onto digital means of communication.

Media literacy arguably includes digital literacy, although according to some digital literacy would require particular skills due to network communication and interactivity.



Source: <https://tracyvanderschyff.com/2017/07/28/facilitating-the-evolution-of-human-capabilities/>

On the whole, media literacy and digital literacy imply the acquisition of the same core skill set:

- **Technical skills or practical & functional skills** > ability to access and make use of (digital) media;
- **Critical thinking & evaluation** > ability to analyze and curate information critically;
- **Collaboration and good communication** > necessary to achieve network communication and interactivity;
- **Cultural and social understanding** > necessary to establish a common ground for collaboration and network communication;
- **Creativity** > media and digital literacy proficiency empower the user toward producing content;
- **Communication ethics** > shared values based on practice norms;
- **Safety & security** > safe use of technology (especially of the internet).

³ Source: “Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28 by the European Audiovisual Observatory”, Strasbourg 2016

One of the challenges when it comes to digital literacy is understanding the importance of acquiring the skill set described above in order to keep a logical order of steps and to become truly digitally literate and a fully functioning, confident member of the digital society.

Literacy as we know it is thus a relatively recent product of the modern age. What is even more evident is that **without basic literacy there can be no media literacy**. Even though a significant number of people are not directly in the sphere of media literacy, they are still affected by phenomena such as disinformation, which arise and spread through digital means and mass media. These types of phenomena work at a community scale: they start and/or are spread through the means mentioned above, but they are ultimately carried from individual to individual and from community to community using all communication means. The illiterate, functionally illiterate, and media illiterate people are bound to become victims of disinformation because they do not have the means to counter it – these categories are the most vulnerable to distortion, inaccuracy, and misrepresentation of information. We will discover some of the profiles of these vulnerable categories in the next section, to better understand their behavior about disinformation.

PROFILES OF ADULT LEARNERS WITH LOW MEDIA LITERACY

No one is completely immune to disinformation, regardless of their level of media literacy. This is because, as we will see in the following sections, hoaxes are often subtly engineered to bypass critical thinking, aiming at emotional rather than logical reactions. However, there is no doubt that certain profiles may be more exposed and affected by the spread of false information. We have built the profiles of three different characters, falling within the following categories:

- Young adults: 19-30 years old
- Adults: 31-65 years old
- Elderly people: 65+ years old

Source: pixabay.com



PAUL

22 YEARS OLD

After getting through compulsory education, Paul didn't have the opportunity to continue with his educational path and go to university.

As a consequence, his motivation went down, and he now only works occasionally as a delivery man.

Paul reads very few books or newspapers and spends a lot of time on social media pages or browsing YouTube videos.

He does not trust traditional media outlets or sector-specific journals, with their long and complicated articles.

On the other hand, he believes in many conspiracy theories which he shares daily on his Facebook account through heated posts, asking his followers to spread the word.

Today, he is a strong supporter of the theory claiming that 5G technology helps transmit coronavirus, although this has been firmly rejected by the scientific community.⁴

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⁴ Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/52168096>



Source: pixabay.com

MIKE

50 YEARS OLD

He has a nice family and two children.

His son and daughter, who are now entering their teenage years, have introduced Mike to the world of social media.

He was sceptical at the beginning, as he never really got along with digital technologies and he blamed people for spending so much time with their eyes glued to the screen.

A few months later he received a brand-new smartphone as a gift, very fast and intuitive to use.

He started looking up his friends on social media and he created several chat groups to talk with them.

Within these groups Mike shares and receives a lot of news, chain messages and memes of uncertain source which carry controversial statements on politics, society and science.

He now checks his smartphone continuously, as social media and his circle of friends have become his main source of information.

When Mike first heard of the concept of “confirmation bias”, he thought that was complete nonsense.

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Source: pixabay.com

MARIA

86 YEARS OLD

Maria was born in 1934. Her childhood unfolded during World War II, away from any and all media sources other than a few, scarce newspapers.

She received her first TV set when she was 34 years old, and to this day it remains a trusted source of information and life guidance. We do not know how many of her life decisions have been based on something that she learned on TV.

52 years later, she still tells stories of people in TV series as if they happened in real life.

Maria believes everything she sees on the news. She is also a great news spreader, since she shares what happened in the news with anyone willing to listen.

Interestingly, the same is true for books: the written word has the same strong impact on her and she does not grasp the meaning of 'fiction'. "Why would anyone bother to write a story if it wasn't true?", grandma Maria argues.

"If it's in writing or if they say it on TV, it must be true", she concludes.

The digital age is a parallel universe for Maria. Technology, other than her TV and landline, is a thing of complete mystery.

She enjoys FaceTiming her niece, however, if a young relative is willing to help with that.

In Maria's world view, the medium is what makes the message credible.



TIPS FOR TRAINERS

Sketching profiles of learners always implies some degree of standardization while building different types of characters.

Can you think of other characters that you would describe as vulnerable to disinformation? How would you describe them?

Try to build three more characters according to your knowledge and experience with adult learners. Then, use these fictional characters to design personalized training strategies to enhance their media literacy skills.

How would you change your approach? Would you adopt different methodologies or go for one-size-fits-all?

Use these examples to practice with the different target groups you might find in your classes. If you find it appropriate, you may also present them to your learners to raise their awareness about how different personalities are affected by disinformation.

IMPORTANCE OF LIFELONG LEARNING AND MEDIA LITERACY IN THE EU CONTEXT

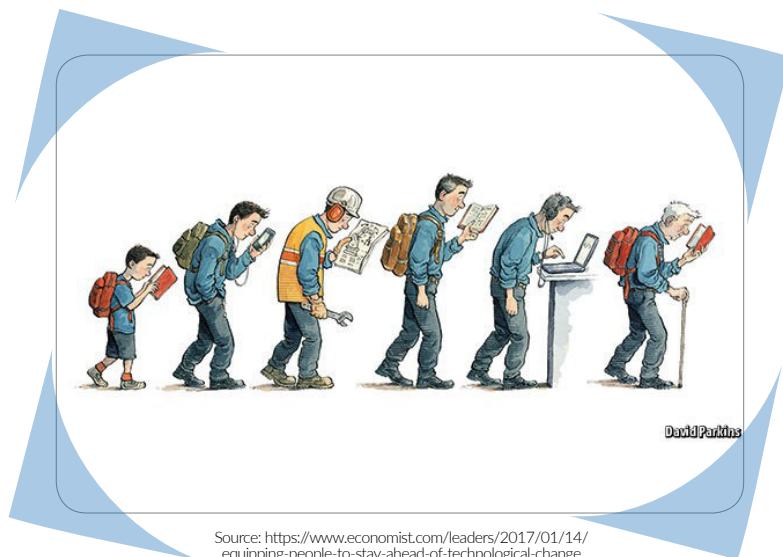
Lifelong Learning is a common notion used by the EU institutions working on Education and Training. It lays the ground for a crucial component of democratic life and participation inside the entire European community.

A basic definition of *Lifelong Learning* can be traced back to the “Memorandum of Lifelong Learning”, issued by the European Commission in 2000 with the purpose to launch a European-wide debate on a comprehensive strategy for implementing lifelong learning at individual and institutional level. This concept is there described as “[...] all purposeful learning activity undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence. [...] All people living in Europe, without exception, should have equal opportunities to adjust to the demands of social and economic change and to participate actively in the shaping of Europe’s future. The term ‘lifelong’ learning draws attention to time: learning throughout life, either continuously or periodically.”⁵

Discussions around the topic have increasingly started to focus on the critical factor of people’s motivation, showing how the **internal push** and a **voluntary commitment to learning** are what really makes the difference in its efficacy. People learn something when they are truly motivated to do so. In this context, non-formal and informal learning (i.e. occurring away from conventional school or academic settings) are coming under the spotlight of research and innovation in education, looking for the best methodologies to make this kind of learning emerge and be validated. This would lead to a fairer and more complete profile of people’s competences, considering the multiple facets of learning take-ups.

⁵ European Commission, A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, 2000

Lifelong learning implies a constant engagement and the willingness to take up new challenges at work and within our own personal and social role. But the act of learning also includes the necessity to keep yourself informed and up-to-date with the latest news and facts. And, of course, the ability to access, read and understand the information reported.



Source: <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2017/01/14/equipping-people-to-stay-ahead-of-technological-change>

This is where media literacy finds a strong link with lifelong learning. Media can be defined as **means of communication for a large (or massive) audience**, and we should not take their intelligibility for granted, especially when we consider the fast pace that has characterized their evolution in the past few years. The EU has defined media literacy as the “[..] capacity to access, have a critical understanding of, and interact with different media (broadcast, radio, press) and distribution channels (traditional, internet, social media)”⁶, addressing the needs of all ages.

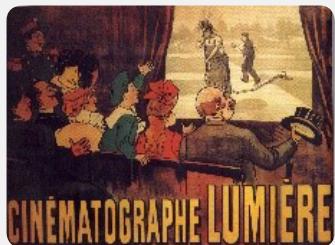
The process of digital transformation has heavily affected the world of media, to the point that they are now gathered under the collective term “digital media”. The main steps of the transition from analogically- to digitally-supported media outlets encompassed the entire 20th century, with a notable acceleration of technological development in the second half of this period.

The diagram in the next page illustrates the main milestones in this process, although we all know that many other steps and facets can be found in-between each step. **Digital media, and the way we use it, are changing rapidly**. Just think of the huge shift brought on by the internet and social media, which enabled users to abandon their previously passive role for a new proactive one. The old model of news consumption (one-way transfer of news items from a publishing/broadcasting source to an audience) is now outdated, surpassed by a new one where users are turned into “**prosumers**”. This is a relatively new term (coined in 1980 by American futurist Alvin Toffler) that blends together the words “producer” and “consumer”, efficiently describing how people on social media become at the same time producers and consumers of information, engaged in a wide activity of posting, reposting and sharing news items.

⁶ Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/media-literacy>

1895

The Lumière brothers unveil the first projected **cinematographic motion pictures**



1901

Guglielmo Marconi raises the first **radio antenna**



1950s

Television sets begin to appear in people's homes



1965

Two computers communicate with each other: the **invention of the Internet**



1998

The **Google search engine** is born



2004

Facebook goes online, launching the social media era



The process of digital transformation comes with a great deal of **new opportunities**, but also with several **related responsibilities**. A bad or shallow use of digital instruments can lead to negative or even harmful consequences in real life. "Fake news", disinformation and misinformation can instantly reach every corner of the globe travelling across the net, with a steadily growing impact.

And who knows what is coming next? What will be the next big disruption in digital media?

Whatever that will be, media literacy skills in the context of lifelong learning (i.e. learning to learn) will be a crucial educational tool for every citizen to keep pace with the swift changes.

Picture sources:

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cin%C3%A9matographe_Lumi%C3%A8re.jpg
2. https://ethw.org/Guglielmo_Marconi
3. <https://www.flickr.com/photos;brizzlebornandbred/9283849102/sizes/m/>
4. <https://computerhistory.org/blog/the-earliest-unix-code-an-anniversary-source-code-release/>
5. <https://money.cnn.com/gallery/technology/2015/09/01/google-logos/6.html>
6. <http://blog.logomyway.com/facebook-logo-history-company/>

TIPS FOR TRAINERS

Use the diagram on the evolution of media to start a brainstorming session on how the concept of “digital media literacy” has been changing over the last century.

Ask your learners to work in a group and come up with different definitions of digital media literacy based on the main technological advancements indicated in the diagram.

Finally, ask them to write what “digital media literacy” means for them today.

What can you notice if you compare all the different definitions and their evolution?

What might “digital media literacy” mean in the future?

Highlight the role of lifelong learning and why it is critical to building a safe environment for fair use of digital media that should be beneficial to society as a whole.



DO IT YOURSELF

Consider the following steps to set up a practical activity with your students:

- 1.** Have your learners divided into groups.
- 2.** Take two boxes and label them as "Audience" and "Topics".
- 3.** On paper cards, write down different types for each category. Examples for the audience could be teenagers, elderly, parents, right/left-wing voters, etc. Interesting topics could include the environment, politics, economics, sport, science, etc.
- 4.** Have each group randomly draw one card from each box.
- 5.** Ask each group to prepare a presentation explaining what they think would be the best way to communicate that specific topic to that specific type of audience. Each group will need to select up to two types of media (television, radio, digital, etc) and motivate their choice, also demonstrating what their piece of news would look like (including tone, language, and point of view to be adopted).
- 6.** Presentations can include any type of content (text, pictures, audio, video).
- 7.** After each presentation, leave the floor open for questions and observations from the other groups. Do they agree with the strategy adopted? Would they change anything?
- 8.** Steer the discussion towards the different characteristics of each medium and why it might or might not be suitable for the given target audience.
- 9.** Food for thought: how is communication affected by each medium and target audience? Would the same message be different if you changed any of the two factors?



<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/literacy>

<http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/functional-literacy>

<https://rm.coe.int/1680783500>

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4117>

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Ac11047>

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/prosumer>



Case Studies of Conditions and Success Criteria in Media Literacy Education,

<http://ecml.pc.unicatt.it/english/documents/guidelinesCaseStudies.htm#teaching1>

Media Literacy – Literacy for the 21st Century, by Gerhard Bisovsky

<https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/media-literacy-literacy-21st-century>

Study on Assessment Criteria for Media Literacy Levels, EAVI

https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/culture/library/studies/literacy-criteria-report_en.pdf

Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, EU

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2018:189:TOC

Watch the video series "[Has Technology Changed Us?](#)", narrated by Gillian Anderson, on the impact of technology on society and individuals. Scripted by Nigel Warburton. From the BBC Radio 4 series about life's big questions - A History of Ideas. This project is from the BBC in partnership with The Open University, the animations were created by Cognitive.

[Rewiring the Brain](#)

[The Medium is the Message](#)

[The Fourth Revolution](#)

[The Antikythera Mechanism](#)

MODULE 2

Conceptualising Disinformation

open your eyes
HANDBOOK

GET READY	18
Introduction	18
Contents	18
Objectives	18
Methods	18
Equipment	18
CHECK IT OUT	19
Preparation	19
Present the objective of the session	19
Conceptualising disinformation: definitions	20
Conceptualising disinformation: a categorisation	22
Conceptualising disinformation: how does disinformation work?	27
VERIFY	31
DO IT YOURSELF	32
SOURCES	33
FURTHER READING	33

Project n.2018-1-BG01-KA204-047871 "Open Your Eyes: Fake News for Dummies"

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section of the Handbook is to introduce the learners to the conceptual background of disinformation. To this end, it presents a definition of disinformation, an appropriate categorisation of disinformation methods and phenomena and a broad outline of how disinformation works in the online world. Understanding disinformation as a concept would equip adult learners with an ability to approach it in an analytical and critical manner upon encounter.

CONTENTS

- What is disinformation?
- Categories of disinformation
- How does Information work?
- Recognising disinformation

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module, adult learners will be able to:

- Understand what disinformation is
- Distinguish different types of disinformation
- Understand how disinformation works

METHODS

- Open discussion
- Pair work
- Group work
- Self reflection

EQUIPMENT

- Computer, tablet or smartphone
- Internet access
- Facebook account



PREPARATION

It might be a good idea to prepare a PowerPoint/[Prezi](#)/[Canva](#) presentation for this part because a large part of the session relies on analysing visual content. Furthermore, think about adapting the examples suggested in this section of the handbook to issues which are more familiar to your audience. For instance, if you are a Slovenian educator tutoring Slovenian learners, try to find some examples from Slovenian public discourse to illustrate a point. The more popular the examples are, the better you will communicate the message.

Another preparation idea: prepare a short quiz (3 questions max) in [Kahoot](#) or questions with [Mentimeter](#) to engage participants in the topic. The quiz can be a motivation tool as well as a tool to check their existing knowledge about disinformation.

Examples of questions:

- 1.** What is typical of disinformation?
 - A.** It is invariably false
 - B.** It is only encountered on the internet
 - C.** It is unintentional
 - D.** It is created for fun

- 2.** Which of the following characteristics relate to misinformation?
 - A.** The content is manipulated on purpose and to cause harm
 - B.** The information published is private
 - C.** The mistakes are unintentional (inaccurate photos captions, dates, translations ...)
 - D.** They are created for personal or corporate interest

PRESENT THE OBJECTIVE OF THE SESSION

The objective of the session is to conceptualise disinformation as a phenomenon affecting our lives and decision-making and to reflect on its nature: what is it? Where does it come from? Who creates disinformation and why?

An effective way to involve participants and set common expectations about what they will learn is to ask a few preliminary questions on disinformation and categorise their responses. This can be done through group work by asking learners to discuss and collect ideas, but also individually by asking each participant to write their ideas on post-it notes. The activity can be conducted as follows:

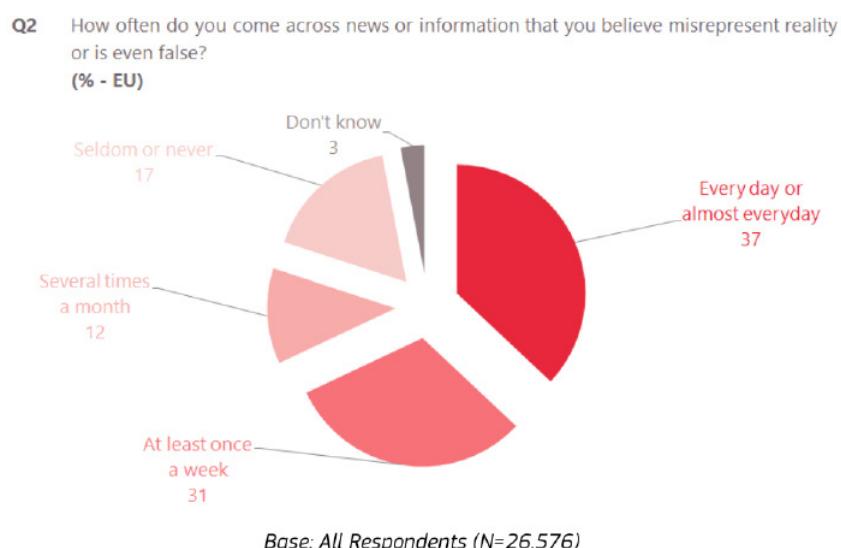
- Ask learners to provide examples of disinformation.
- Invite learners to categorise such examples according to topics.

The examples will most probably relate to topics such as identity, money, social benefits, health, technology.

- Ask learners to answer the questions “Where do we encounter disinformation? In what form (videos, articles, posts, etc)?”
- Ask learners to reflect on the question “Why do people spread disinformation?”

Responses will most probably relate to the ‘advancing of interests’: (geo-)political, financial, business, social. Make sure learners are able to distinguish between intentional and unintentional spread of false information. To emphasise this distinction, try asking them: “Who spreads false information?”. After a first round of answers, follow up with a second question: “Who here has shared false information and realised it only after?” (you might want to raise a hand yourself).

- Ask learners how often they think they come across disinformation. Use the following (or similar) graph to illustrate¹:



CONCEPTUALISING DISINFORMATION: DEFINITIONS

Before providing an official definition, ask participants to come up with their own. After this preliminary exercise, suggest the following definition:

“Disinformation is understood as verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm. Public harm comprises threats to democratic political and policy-making processes as well as public goods such as the protection of EU citizens’ health, the environment or security. Disinformation does not include reporting errors, satire and parody, or clearly identified partisan news and commentary.” (European Commission High Level Expert Group, 2019)²

!!! Point out the difference with the wide-spread concept of “**fake news**”. This term is known mostly for its usage by politicians to describe news agencies with which they disagree. It is empty of content, derogatory and is mostly regarded as a joke. The use of the term “fake news” “is

¹ Eurobarometer, 2018

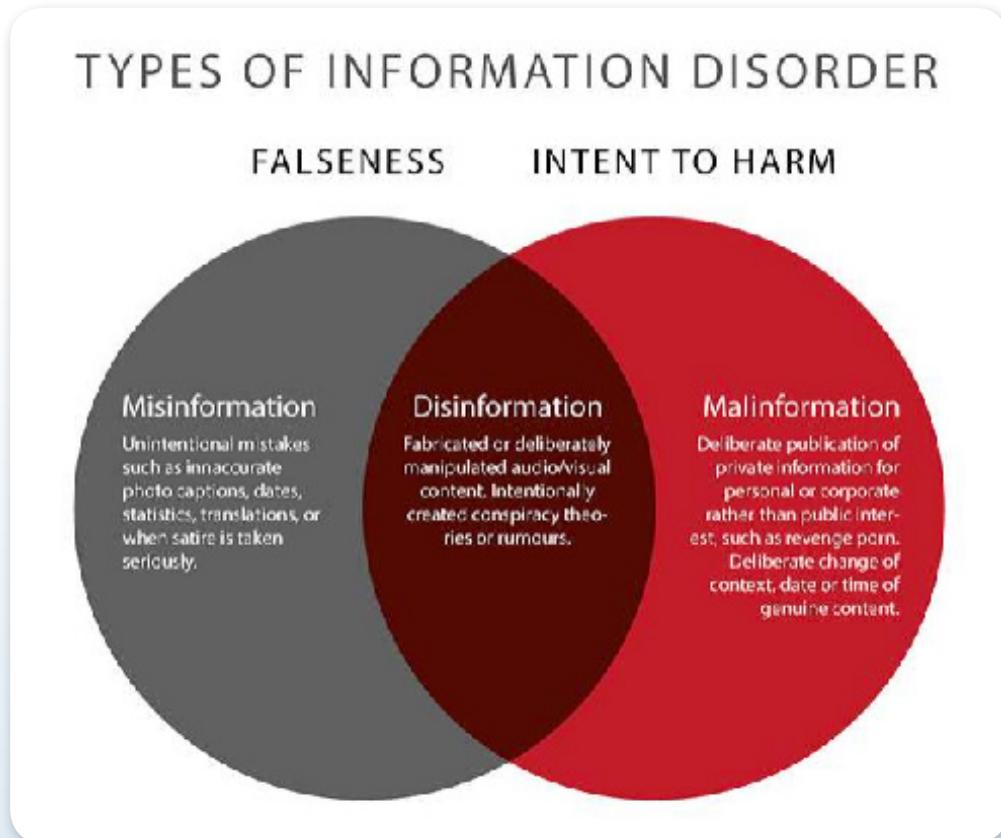
² European Commission, ‘Tackling Online Disinformation’, 2019, retrieved on 19.04.2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/tackling-online-disinformation>

becoming a mechanism by which the powerful can clamp down upon, restrict, undermine and circumvent the free press"³. The EU and European states mostly refer to "disinformation" as the relevant concept.

Reflect as a group on the definition:

- Recommended question:
 - How do you regard the act of *unintentionally* spreading false information? If someone spreads false information unintentionally, are they an offender or a victim?
- Optional questions:
 - What does *verifiably false* mean? The discussion should boil down to (amongst others): made-up and untrue facts, selective or partial selection of facts and statements so that interpretation is impeded, made-up or untrue facts about the context.
 - How does disinformation cause public harm? Ask learners to think of examples.
 - What type of activity is excluded from the definition of disinformation? How does the role of media relate to this definition?

Use this discussion as a prelude to present the "**Information Disorder**" conceptual framework (Wardle, 2017; Wardle & Derakshan, 2017)⁴, which identifies three types of false and/or harmful information:



³ Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, 'Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making', Council of Europe, 2017 Strasbourg, p. 5.

⁴ Ibid.

- **Misinformation:** Unintentional mistakes such as inaccurate photo captions, dates, statistics, translations or when satire is presented as something serious.
- **Disinformation:** Fabricated or deliberately manipulated audio/visual content. Intentionally created conspiracy theories or rumours.
- **Malinformation:** Deliberate publication of private information for personal or corporate rather than public interest (such as revenge porn). Deliberate change of context, date or time of genuine content.

!!! Falseness (*misinformation*) and intent to harm (*malinformation*) as a combination cause *disinformation*.

Reflect on the definitions as a group by thinking of examples. The boundary is sometimes very hard to identify, so be flexible about what example belongs in which category.

Another activity suggestion: provide learners with a piece of news from last week and ask them to turn it into a) misinformation, b) disinformation, c) malinformation.

Let them work in groups and limit the time. In the end, let every group present their “news” and receive feedback from the rest of the participants.

CONCEPTUALISING DISINFORMATION: A CATEGORISATION

Suggest the following categorisation of mis- and disinformation⁵ and then reflect on it as a group by providing examples:

- **Satire or parody:** no intention to cause harm but with the potential to fool.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the following details:

- Address Bar:** tatersgonnatake.com/nancy-pelosi-says-trump-must-apologize-to-iran-or-else/
- Header:** HOME, ABOUT US, PRIVACY POLICY
- Title:** Nancy Pelosi Says Trump Must Apologize To Iran 'Or Else'
- Author:** Flagg Eagleton
- Text:** Nancy Pelosi has really outdone herself this time. In what can only be described as a drunken rant, the commie Speaker of the House demanded that President Trump apologize to the Iranians for killing one of their generals "or else." What does she mean by "or else?" from the rest of the rant, we couldn't really tell:

"I have a great relationship with the Iranians. Probably better than anyone. I know them and have dealt with them on many, many occasions. There's probably nobody better, more qualified to talk to them and you know, we're going to go and see what we can do to be the United States of American and talk to them because we're looking at those things and we're also looking at other things.

⁵ Claire Wardle, ‘Fake News. It’s Complicated’, First Draft, 2017, retrieved on 17 April 2020, <https://firstdraftnews.org/latest/fake-news-complicated/>; examples from: Alexandre Alaphilippe, Roman ... ‘Face to Face Training for Educators: The Conceptual Background of Disinformation’, EU DisinfoLab, 2020, Zalec

- In the US this was picked up as truthful by so many news agencies that the US fact checker Snopes had to get involved to verify that it was not true⁶.
 - Draw attention to the website URL (tatersgonnatate.com) and the satire clarification ("Pelosi Satire with Mayonnaise").
 - Invite learners to reflect on who should be held responsible for this case of disinformation. Can we blame someone who clarified they were writing a joke?
 - Invite learners to reflect on how the piece aims to make people feel.
- **Misleading content:** misleading use of information to frame an issue or an individual.

Archives Home → Articles

December 16, 2019

The Ground Zero Mosque Project Is Back

By Pamela Geller

The news was buried under two dense paragraphs and five large photos in [an article](#) in New York YIMBY about a different project: "Construction has also yet to begin on 51 Park Place, which is slated to become a 71-foot-tall, 16,000-square-foot Islamic cultural center." The infamous Ground Zero Mosque project, a long buried effort to build a triumphal mosque at the site of the worst jihad terror attack in American history, is back.

Construction has yet to begin, but it will: the shady developer behind the Ground Zero Mosque scheme, Sharif El-Gamal, has been working to build this sinister structure for years.

FOLLOW

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- Greta Thunberg's Fantastic Voyage for Socialism Exemplifies the Failures of Socialism
- The Impeachment Show Trial
- After Trump and Boris Wins: Rectification of Names
- Donald Trump and Jewish

- In reality, the plan is for the construction of 'a high-rise condominium complex, [which] will incorporate a Muslim cultural center and prayer space'⁶.
- How intentional was this attempt to mislead the readers?
- Invite learners to reflect on how the piece aims to make people feel. Emphasise the terminology used by the article to frame the project: "sinister project", "triumphal mosque", "buried information".

⁶ David Mikkelsen, 'Did Nancy Pelosi Say Trump Must Apologize to Iran 'Or Else?'', Snopes, 2020, retrieved on 19.04.2020, <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/trump-apologize-to-iran/>.

⁷ Bethania Palma, 'Is the 'Ground Zero Mosque' Project Back?', Snopes, 2019, retrieved on 19.04.2020, <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/muslim-community-center/>.

- **Imposter content:** when genuine sources are impersonated.



- This article, which falsely alleged that “Emmanuel Macron was supported by Saudi Arabia during the 2017 French presidential election”, was published on “LeSoir.info”, a fake website posing as the Belgium newspaper Le Soir. The correct URL for Le Soir is “LeSoir.be”.
 - Invite learners to reflect on how the piece aims to make people feel.
 - What could one do to check the authenticity of the website?
- **Fabricated content:** news content that is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm.



- This article claims that Pope Francis supported the candidacy of Donald Trump during the US elections in 2016, which is completely false.
- Invite learners to reflect on how the piece aims to make people feel.
- What could be the motives behind this content?

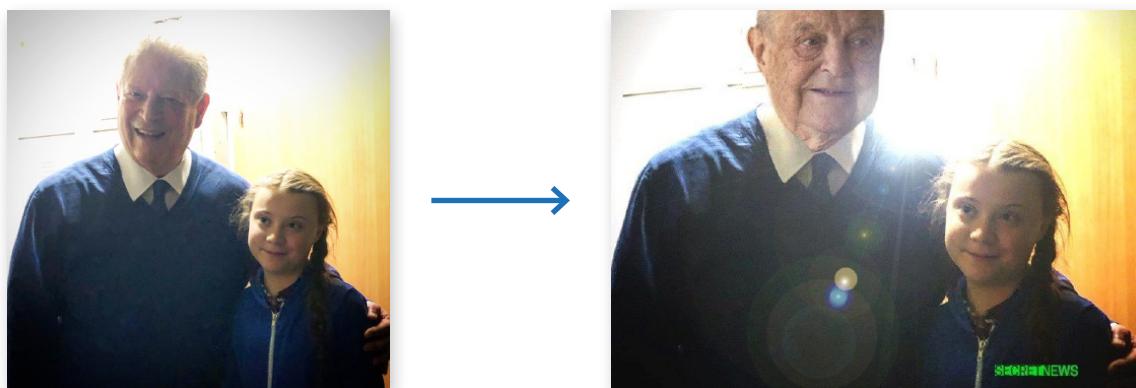
- **False connection:** when headlines, visuals or captions do not support the content.



- This article is titled: "South of Spain: Refugees come ashore – beachgoers in fear and dread". However, the content of the article doesn't support the claim of "tourists in fear and dread" and includes a video which shows that the tourists were not scared at all by the refugees.
 - Ask learners how the picture featured in the article made them feel.
 - Invite learners to reflect on how the piece aims to make people feel.
-
- **False context:** when genuine content is shared with false contextual information.



- This tweet falsely suggests that this is a picture of “a child detained by the US authorities because he is an illegal migrant”. In reality, the photo was taken during a demonstration against the Trump administration’s immigration policies and the child is not detained at all.
 - Invite learners to reflect on how the piece aims to make people feel.
 - Which topics are addressed in this piece of content and which emotions are played on?
-
- **Manipulated content:** when genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive.



- The original picture of a meeting between Greta Thunberg and Al Gore was edited to falsely claim that the young Swedish activist met George Soros.
- Invite learners to reflect on how the piece aims to make people feel.

After presenting the seven categories listed above, invite learners to reflect on:

- Other examples of mis- and disinformation that they would associate with each of the seven categories.
- What types of emotions they thought the examples above were trying to evoke. Answers will probably revolve around fear, anger, sadness, repulsion, worry, etc. Emphasise that strong emotions such as the ones just mentioned tend to provoke an equally strong reaction.
- What type of reaction they think is most natural. Learners will probably mention the urge to talk about it, to share with people, to comment, etc. — essentially, to contribute to the spread of disinformation.

CONCEPTUALISING DISINFORMATION: HOW DOES DISINFORMATION WORK?

This is a good moment to focus on the importance of emotional appeal to the success of disinformation. Before naming these emotions, ask participants what they think (brainstorming).

Disinformation always tries to play on your emotions: it aims to make you cry, scream, get angry, become afraid, be repulsed. For this reason, it tends to play on the topics that people hold most at heart: children, health, money or public finances.

Another frequently exploited topic is that of identity. Identity-related disinformation can relate to:

- National identity (for instance, the EU prohibiting something which is typically national);
- Religious identity (for instance, an article comparing the rights of muslims to the rights of christians);
- Social identity (for instance, a distorted presentation of an event or activity relating to LGBT rights).

A few examples include:

- 'European Court of Human Rights: From March 2016, the baptism of children will be prohibited in member states of the European Union' (Italy, *Libero Quotidiano*, 2016).
- 'Bulgarian authorities are following the Norwegian example by stealing children from their families' (posters and posts on social media; part of a disinformation campaign against the reform of child services in Bulgaria; November, 2019).
- Covid-19 is a hoax or a purposefully human-developed virus (March 2020).
- Social developments and new liberties are driven by a feminist or a homosexual agenda aimed at corrupting public morale (the concepts of a feminist and a homosexual propaganda are prominent disinformation tropes)⁸.

A particularly effective strategy to counter the spread of disinformation is to always stop and think when you come across a piece which provokes you emotionally. When coming across something that makes you feel angry or afraid, always take a moment to reflect: "Wait! Why does this make me feel this way?". Always remember to double-check with other sources to make sure that that piece is reliable.

!!! This is where the more theoretical part of the session begins. Remember to frequently ask the audience what they think, if they can think of examples or if they think that they might have seen/experienced something in first person.

⁸ EU vs Disinformation, 'DISINFO: Europe Brings Totalitarian Feminism to Belarus to Destroy Social Values', 2019, retrieved on 19.04.2020, <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/europe-brings-totalitarian-feminism-to-belarus-which-destroys-societys-values/>.

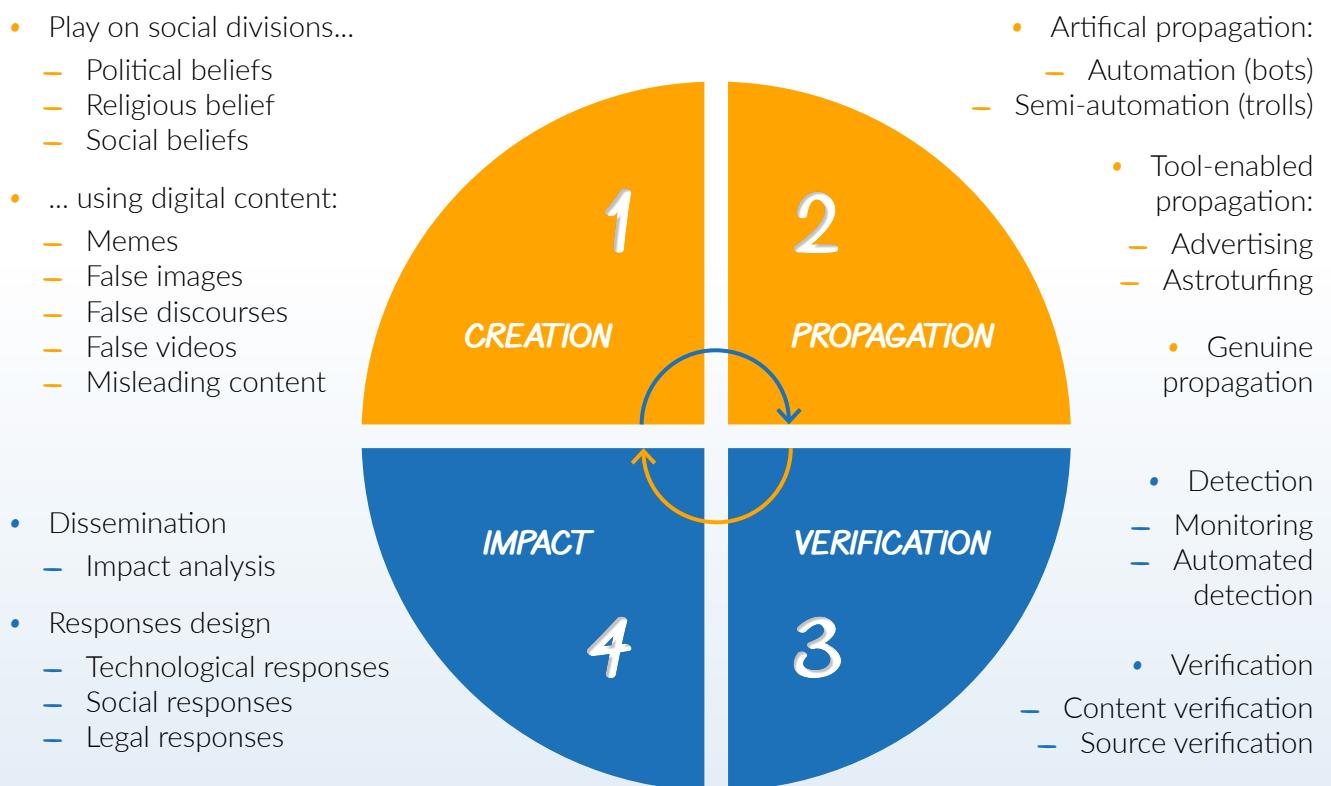
Genuine amplifiers

There are a number of factors related to universal human behaviour which serve as genuine amplifiers to disinformation. These include:

- **Confirmation bias:** people usually prefer to read and engage with content which reflects their own views. This makes them more likely to share it even if it is not truthful⁹.
- **Homophily:** people's online behaviour (including sharing of content and commenting) is influenced by the behaviour of their online social connections, as they tend to be usually like-minded people¹⁰.
- **Echo Chambers:** confirmation bias and homophily, taken together, lead to the creation of online spaces (echo chambers) where people are exposed to and share with their connections predominantly information conforming to their pre-existing beliefs. This is often at the expense of diverse opinions and without regard for truthfulness of content or sources. The algorithms of social media platforms contribute to the development of such echo chambers¹¹.

The propagation of disinformation

The following graph¹² is a good instrument to conceptualise the propagation of disinformation:



⁹ Wardle and Derakhshan, 2017, p. 50.

¹⁰ Alaphilippe, Gizikis et al., 2019, p. 21.

¹¹ Wardle and Derakhshan, 2017, p. 50.

¹² Alexandre Alaphilippe, Alexis Gizikis, Clara Hanot, Kalina Bontcheva, 'Automated Tackling of Disinformation', European Parliamentary Research Service, 2019, Brussels, p. 10.

The graph illustrates the lifecycle of a piece of disinformation. The orange area indicates the period of rise, spread and peak of disinformation. The blue area represents the decline of disinformation through verification, dissemination of truth and analysis of impact. Sometimes we see responses to disinformation aimed at providing a long-term solution; these include legislative initiatives, social movements or a change of online platforms to identify disinformation.

The graph emphasises:

- The topics on which disinformation plays: political, social, religious beliefs.
- The forms of disinformation: usually digital, such as memes, videos, articles, social media posts.
- The instruments of amplification: artificial propagation (automated bots sharing each other's content to amplify the effect), propagation through tools (e.g. paid advertisement) or genuine propagation (unintentional spread by online users).
- The importance of verifying *both the content and the source*.
- The importance of disseminating findings about disinformation and of raising people's awareness about it.

Disinformation does not always follow all stages of this lifecycle. Sometimes disinformation is identified as such at a very early stage and potential public harm is prevented on time. On other occasions, disinformation is never caught and continues to propagate for a very long time before it dies out.

Amplification and Social Media

One of the online places where disinformation can most easily spread and amplify the effects of public harm are social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. There are many reasons for this¹³:

- Social media provide a very easy way to reach a lot of people. In essence, you can write one emotionally provocative article or make a video and you can be guaranteed that a wide group of people will have no choice but to view it.
- The algorithms of these platforms are designed to promote content which is trending. This means that the more users engage with a piece of disinformation, the more users it will reach – a snowball effect.
- Disinformation usually works through a network of channels which are all involved in spreading it. This could include fake profiles and fake groups which share the content so that it is recognised as trending by the platforms. Another option is paid advertising: junk news websites create fake content and advertise it online; users then engage with it and the content-creators get revenue from displaying adverts.
- Social media offer a lot of micro-targeting advertisement instruments. This means that you can design an advertisement so that it targets a specific audience which is more likely to

¹³ Alexandre Alaphilippe, Roman ... 'Face to Face Training for Educators: The Conceptual Background of Disinformation', EU DisinfoLab, 2020, Zalec.

engage with the disinformation. Targets are identified on the basis of job titles, membership in groups, residence, etc.

Conclude the session by asking for learners' feedback. Are they more aware of disinformation now? What is the most important point they take home from this session?



For face-to-face sessions

Ask learners to create teams of no more than six people. Ask them to outline as a group three actions they will take next time to identify online disinformation and to prevent its spread. Give the groups six minutes to think and then ask one person per group to present. Reflect on the actions as a group.

Possible answers may include:

- Checking the trustworthiness of the source;
- Double-checking the piece of information;
- Not sharing a piece of information;
- Informing friends and family that there is widespread disinformation about a particular issue;
- Pausing when encountering emotionally provocative content and reflecting on why it is so provocative.

For online sessions

Ask learners to use the internet to find an investigation about a piece of disinformation (or a disinformation campaign). The investigation should scrutinise the piece of disinformation by verifying its claims and analysing its impact. If learners cannot find such an investigation, invite them to try to find an online article which constitutes disinformation.

Give them 5 minutes to perform the task.

Reflect as a group on the results. How was the investigation carried out? What instruments did the researchers use to identify an instance of disinformation? Can we use such instruments ourselves in our day-to-day life? In what way do the articles found by participants constitute disinformation? What did they aim to achieve? How did the learners identify them as disinformation?

Example:

This profile shares content on French politics but never interacts in French. It has no friends and only likes a few pages in Russian.

The image consists of four parts:

- Screenshot 1:** A post from 'Ilya Makrin' sharing a link to 'La France en colère - Carte des rassemblements'. The post was shared on 1 sept. and has 1,1 K interactions (likes, comments, shares). It includes a photo of a man speaking.
- Screenshot 2:** A post from 'Ilya Makrin' sharing a link to 'Marine Le Pen Soutien'. The post was shared on 25 sept. and has 4 interactions. It includes a photo of a man.
- Screenshot 3:** A post from 'Ilya Makrin' sharing a link to 'Marine Le Pen Soutien'. The post was shared on 14 août and has 171 interactions. It includes a photo of a man.
- Screenshot 4:** The main Facebook profile page for 'Ilya Makrin'. The profile picture is highlighted with a red box. The page shows basic information like current city (Montpellier), origin city (New York), and favorite sports team (FC Shakhtar). The 'Photos' section is visible on the right.



Alaphilippe, Alexandre, ..., Roman, Face to Face Training for Educators: The Conceptual Background of Disinformation, EU DisinfoLab, 2020, Zalec.

Alaphilippe, Alexandre, Gzikis, Alexis, Hanot, Clara and Bontcheva, Kalina, Automated Tackling of Disinformation, European Parliamentary Research Service, 2019, Brussels.

EU vs Disinformation, DISINFO: Europe Brings Totalitarian Feminism to Belarus to Destroy Social Values, 2019, retrieved on 19.04.2020 at: <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/europe-brings-totalitarian-feminism-to-belarus-which-destroys-societys-values/>.

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MODULE 3

open your eyes
HANDBOOK

How to tackle disinformation: Tools and methodologies

GET READY	36
Introduction	36
Contents	36
Objectives	36
Methods	36
Equipment	36
CHECK IT OUT	37
Theoretical inputs: analysing internet-based information	38
Theoretical inputs: tools to verify Facebook information	41
Theoretical inputs: tools to verify images	45
VERIFY	48
DO IT YOURSELF	49
CASE STUDY: SUAVELOS, A WHITE SUPREMACIST NETWORK	53
SOURCES	57
FURTHER READING	57

Project n.2018-1-BG01-KA204-047871 "Open Your Eyes: Fake News for Dummies"

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INTRODUCTION

After having introduced the conceptual background of online disinformation strategies, this module will present the tools to debunk them and present methodologies to assess the reliability of a news source with concrete examples and a case study. It will also provide adult educators with tips to spot disinformation networks and to verify the reliability and transparency of a Facebook page. For this training, we chose to focus on Facebook because it one of the most widely used social network, with 2 billion active users in the world¹.

A large amount of the module materials are visual, so it would be a good idea to prepare a PowerPoint presentation, print some of the images/visual aids in colour or prepare handouts for learners to see the information and examples more clearly.

CONTENTS

- Analysing Internet-based information
- Analysing information on social networks
- Tools to verify information

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module, adult educators will have been able to:

- Understand the strategy behind a typical disinformation campaign
- Check and question written contents/images/videos
- Identify indicators of who is behind disinformation
- Verify the reliability of a Facebook page
- Verify the reliability of the information on Twitter

METHODS

- Desk research, visual verification of information
- Facebook transparency features
- Specific tools (InVid, CrowdTangle)

EQUIPMENT

- Computer, tablet or smartphone
- Facebook account
- Internet connection
- The following downloadable tools: InVid, CrowdTangle

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/>



Kick off the session by asking a few open questions. You can do it by printing them out and giving each learner one of the questions (face-to-face teaching) or by displaying them on the screen (online teaching). These are some of the suggested questions:

- Have you ever spotted disinformation on your social media feeds? If yes, what tools did you use to tackle disinformation? Were you able to identify who was behind the disinformation campaign?
- Do you usually verify written contents, images, or videos on social networks? Why?
- What do you usually share on your Facebook page? Can you assess how reliable a Facebook page is?

To learn some of the basic vocabulary that will be used throughout the module, start by learning the definition of the following words: Bias, Cross-posting, and Fact-Checking.

Face-to-face teaching: print the words and definitions in separate pieces of paper and ask your students to match them.

BIAS	The action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgment.
CROSS-POSTING	The act of sending a message to more than one internet discussion group or news group at a time, or the message that is sent.
FACT-CHECKING	The act of checking factual information in non-fictional text in order to determine the veracity and correctness of the factual statements in the text.

Face-to-face and online teaching: Ask the learners to provide their own definitions or thoughts on each term and then discuss the actual meaning together as a group.

BIAS: the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgment².

CROSS-POSTING: the act of sending a message to more than one internet discussion group or news group at a time, or the message that is sent³.

² <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bias>

³ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cross-posting>

FACT-CHECKING: the act of checking factual information in non-fictional text in order to determine the veracity and correctness of the factual statements in the text. This may be done either before (*ante hoc*) or after (*post hoc*) the text has been published or otherwise disseminated⁴. Fact-checking can be done by journalists in media entities, or organisations dedicated to fact-checking such as:

- <https://www.factcheck.org/>
- <https://www.politifact.com/>
- <https://firstdraftnews.org/>
- <https://factcheck.afp.com/>

Use additional resources, which are specific to your country. You can show on a screen how to browse through some of them. Here is an example of fact-checking platforms in Spain:

- <https://maldita.es/malditobulo/>
- https://verne.elpais.com/tag/bulos_internet/
- <https://saludsinbulos.com/>

THEORETICAL INPUTS: ANALYSING INTERNET-BASED INFORMATION

Start by providing some theoretical input to your learners. You can do so by printing the following information (face-to-face teaching) or by preparing a presentation with animation where each of the FIVE CHECK steps is displayed (face-to-face and online teaching).

If you are reading an article from a website, you have never heard before, it is important to dig deeper to try to understand who is behind it, and if the news is truthful.

These five CHECK steps will help you analyse the information you deal with every day and spot disinformation.

1. Check the content: read the article carefully to see if:

- All the data is accurate;
- The article provides an unbiased (impartial) opinion.

2. Check the website:

- Look at pages such as “Contact” and “About Us” to see if you can get more details about the owner of the website. Lack of such information is a sign that the source might be an actor spreading disinformation items.
- Take a look at the URL of the website to check that it does not try to mimic the URL of a legitimate media.
- Try to see if the website has been quoted by legitimate sources (e.g. known media outlets) in the past.

3. Check the author:

- Look for other articles written by the author.
- If the name of the author is nowhere to be found, the information is likely to be less credible.

⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fact-checking>

4. Check the sources:

- Check if the sources used in the article are from legitimate sources/media.
- Check if the quoted experts are real people/specialists. Use Google to verify if these individuals exist and have a good reputation.

5. Check the pictures:

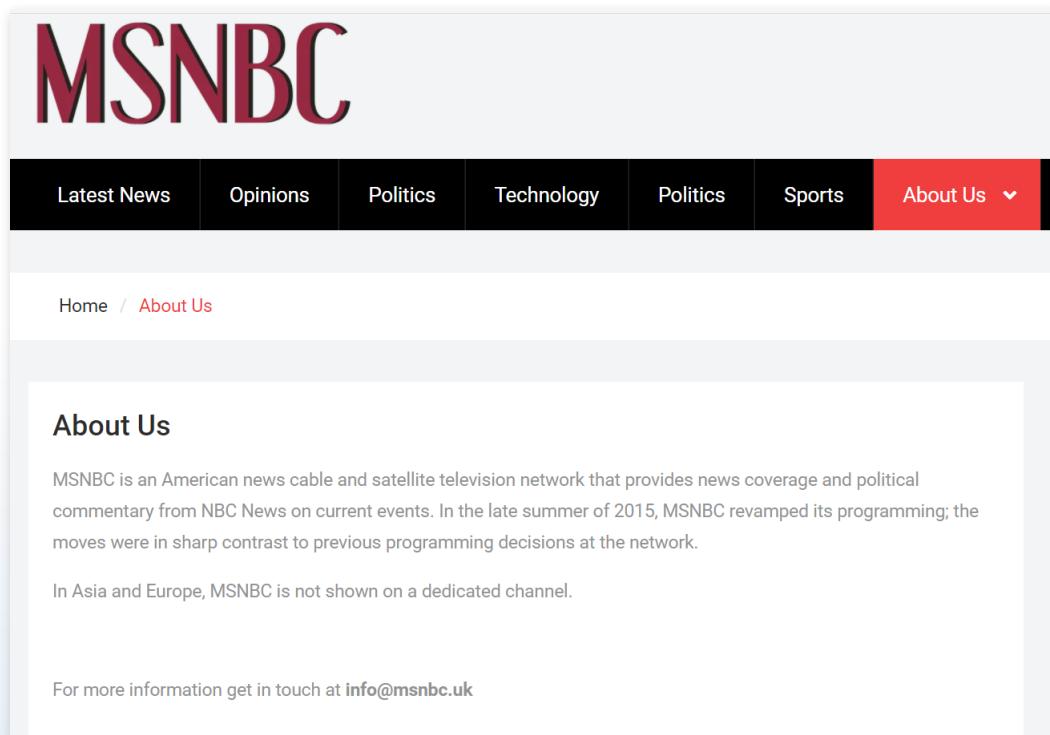
- Use InVID to detect manipulation of videos or specialists.

Once you have discussed the CHECK steps, go to the following activity. Make sure that participants can use a computer, tablet or smartphone (individually or in groups).

Go through the steps described above to decide if this media outlet is real.

Here are some tips:

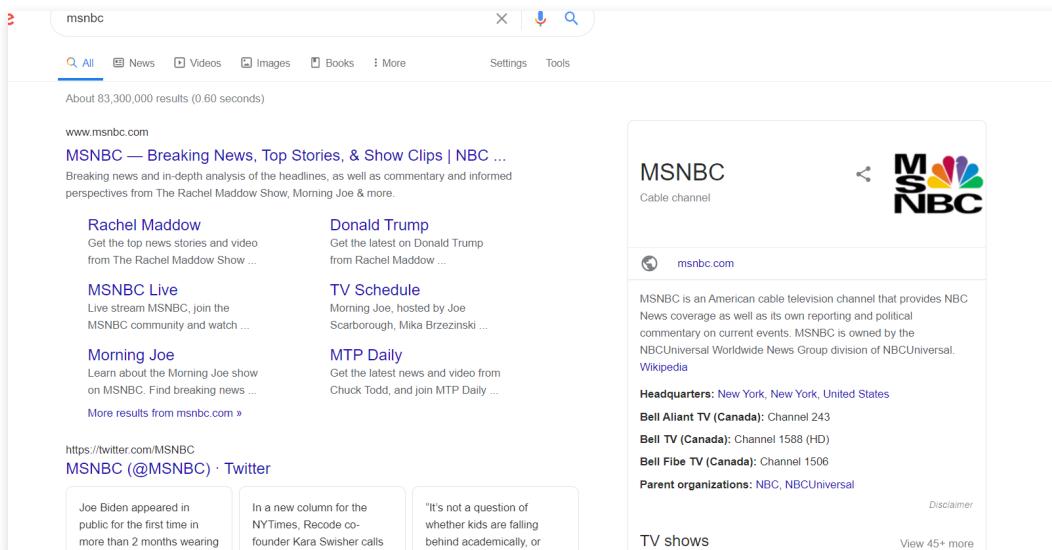
- Search for this media outlet on Google. What can you find?
- Check the logo
- Have a look at the “About Us” page



Correct answer:

This page is false, and it is impersonating the real American media outlet “MSNBC”.

If you search “MSNBC” on Google, you will find that MSNBC.com is a real American media outlet, with a dedicated Wikipedia page.



- The logo is different.
- The “About Us” page says the email address is info@msnbc.uk, whereas the real website is MSNBC.com.

Show learners the following tips. In order to make the exercise more dynamic, consider (for example) organising a true/false quiz by adding false statements to the ones below.

ADVANCED PRACTICE CHALLENGE THE CONTENT YOU ARE READING

- Polarizing, divisive and shocking content is more likely to be false and it should prompt you to be particularly vigilant.
- Spelling and grammatical errors, sloppy punctuation, partisan vocabulary are a good sign that a source is probably not reliable.
- Lack of clear context, quotes, or references to identifiable sources should prompt you to dig deeper to verify the information.
- Check other media outlets and trustworthy sources to see if they report the same story.
- If the information concerns another country, check if the local media's reporting is similar to what your article describes.
- Verify that images are not being manipulated or used in the wrong context.
- Check if the information has already been verified by a recognized fact-checker.

If you want to know more about how to spot bogus claims (= false, not real, or not legal), watch this video from [FactCheck.org](#):

 <https://youtu.be/Fm0LwscDYHs>

THEORETICAL INPUTS: TOOLS TO VERIFY FACEBOOK INFORMATION



To assess the reliability of a Facebook page, go to the **Page Transparency⁵** section on Pages:

- Visit any Page's timeline.
- Scroll down to the Page Transparency below the About section.
- Tap *See All*.

The information in the Page Transparency section shows:

- The date of the Page creation
- The primary country locations where the Page is managed
- The number of people who manage the Page in each country
- The Page's previous name changes
- Any Page merges that happen on or after September 6, 2018
- The confirmed business or organisation that has claimed ownership of the Page or that has been granted access to help manage the Page



When you check the transparency of the following Facebook page, you will notice that it is managed from Ukraine, despite being a support page of French political candidate Marine Le Pen... This is suspicious.

⁵ https://www.facebook.com/help/323314944866264?helpref=about_content



Marine Le Pen 2022
@marinlepen2022

- [Accueil](#)
- [Publications](#)
- [Photos](#)
- [À propos](#)
- [Communauté](#)
- [Groupes](#)
- [Créer une Page](#)



de J'aime | S'abonner | Partager | ...

Écrivez une publication...

Photo/Vidéo | Identifier des... | Je suis là | ...

Publications


Marine Le Pen 2022 · 12 octobre · <https://linfonational.net/marine-le-pen-veut-qu'on-arrete-toutes-les-aides-aux-migrants-l-inf-national/>
[L'INFO NATIONAL](https://linfonational.net/marine-le-pen-veut-qu'on-arrete-toutes-les-aides-aux-migrants-l-inf-national/)
Marine Le Pen veut qu'on arrête toutes les aides aux migrants | L'Info National
1,1 K 198 commentaires 362 partages
J'aime Commenter Partager

Transparence de la Page pour Marine Le Pen 2022

Récapitulatif Historique de la Page Personnes qui gèrent cette Page

Récapitulatif de transparence de la Page
Facebook vous montre des informations pour vous aider à mieux comprendre le but de cette Page. Découvrez les actions des personnes qui gèrent et publient du contenu. [En savoir plus](#)



Historique de la Page

-  **Création de la Page 18 juillet 2016 - Marine Le Pen 2017**
-  La Page a changé de nom **une fois**.
-  Fusionnée avec **0 autres Pages**.

[Voir plus](#)

Personnes qui gèrent cette Page

-  Le pays de résidence principal des personnes qui gèrent cette Page inclut :
- Ukraine (2)**

Pubs de cette Page

 Cette Page ne diffuse pas de publicité actuellement.

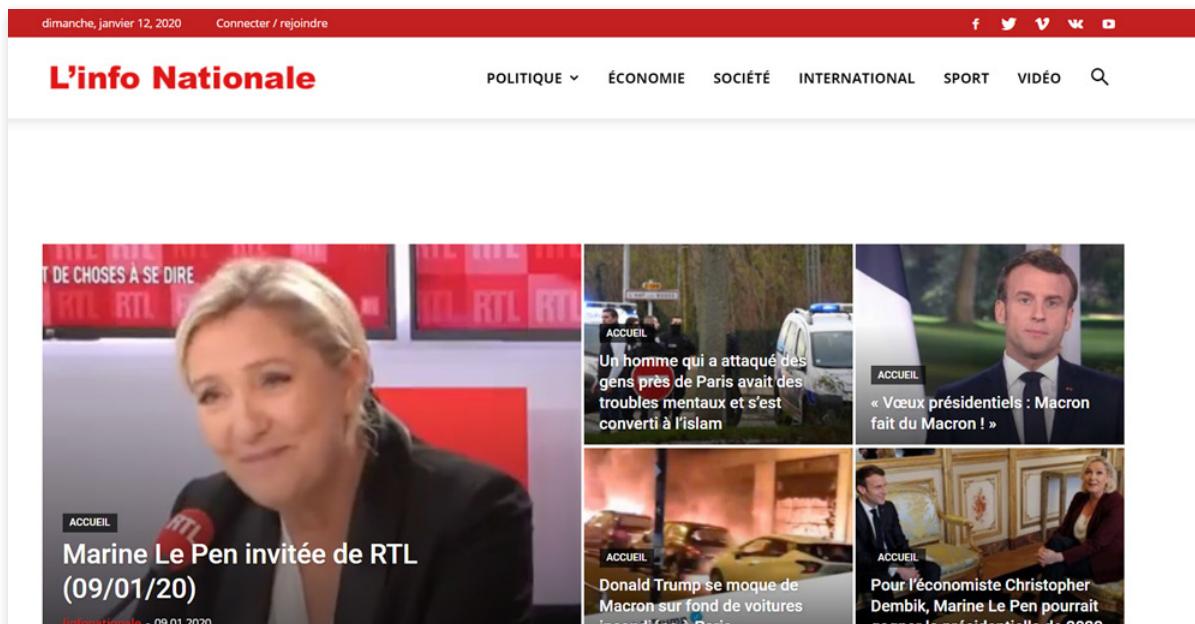
 Cette Page a diffusé des publicités de nature sociale, électorale ou politique.

[Accéder à la bibliothèque publicitaire](#)

[Trouver de l'aide ou signaler la Page](#)

[Fermer](#)

This page mainly shares content from the website “linfo-national.net”. Linfo-national.net is a website that was identified in a French fact-checking article⁶ as an alleged news website copying and amplifying disinformation items.



If you have enough time, ask your learners to follow the same procedure with a Facebook page they think might be fake. When they are done, give each learner 5 minutes to present their findings to the rest of the groups and if possible start a debate.

Facebook group

Although Facebook groups may give a good opportunity to feel connected with people all over the world, they can also be a hotspot for spam, fake news, and misinformation.

If you are a member of a Facebook group, check who is active in this group. Look at suspicious behaviour:

- Profile posting always the same type of content;
- Profile posting always the same website;
- Profile not interacting with each other or has no friends, looks.

⁶https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/2019/04/04/non-il-n-y-a-pas-eu-18-millions-d-immigres-en-europe-en-5-ans_1719500

ADVANCED PRACTICE

ASSESS HOW AN ARTICLE HAS BEEN SHARED ON SOCIAL MEDIA WITH A SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS TOOL (CROWDTANGLE)

- Download CrowdTangle: www.crowdtangle.com.
- Install the Plugin on your browser.



- Check how an article has been shared online by clicking on the icon.

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying a New York Times article titled "The World's Oceans Are in Danger, Major Climate Change Report Warns". The article features a photograph of two people standing on a beach at sunset. Overlaid on the page is the CrowdTangle analysis tool interface. The interface includes a summary of social media interactions: 19,056 Facebook interactions, 11,252 Twitter interactions, 2,084 Reddit interactions, and 5,720 Instagram interactions. Below this, a table lists top referrers, showing five individuals with their follower counts and interaction details. The tool also includes filters for "Facebook", "Twitter", "Reddit", and "Instagram". At the bottom of the interface, there is a link to "Climate Feed", the email newsletter.

You can do the following practical activity individually or in groups. A good idea would be to prepare several images in advance and provide each participant/group with an image for them to check. Another option is to ask learners to cross-assign images to each other.

THEORETICAL INPUTS: TOOLS TO VERIFY IMAGES

Reverse search image with Google⁷

If you want to verify where an image might come from or where it appears online, you can try a reverse image search with Google:

Upload a picture:

- 1.** On your computer, open a web browser like Chrome or Safari.
- 2.** Go to Google Images.
- 3.** Click *Search by image* .
- 4.** Click *Upload an image* ➤ *Choose file or Browse*.
- 5.** Select a picture from your computer.
- 6.** Click *Open* or *Choose*.

Search with an URL:

- 1.** On your computer, open a web browser like Chrome or Safari.
- 2.** Go to the website with the picture you want to verify.
- 3.** To copy the URL, right-click on the picture.
- 4.** Click *Copy image address*.
- 5.** Go to Google Images.
- 6.** Click *Search by image* .
- 7.** Click *Paste image URL*.
- 8.** In the text box, paste the URL.
- 9.** Click *Search by image* .

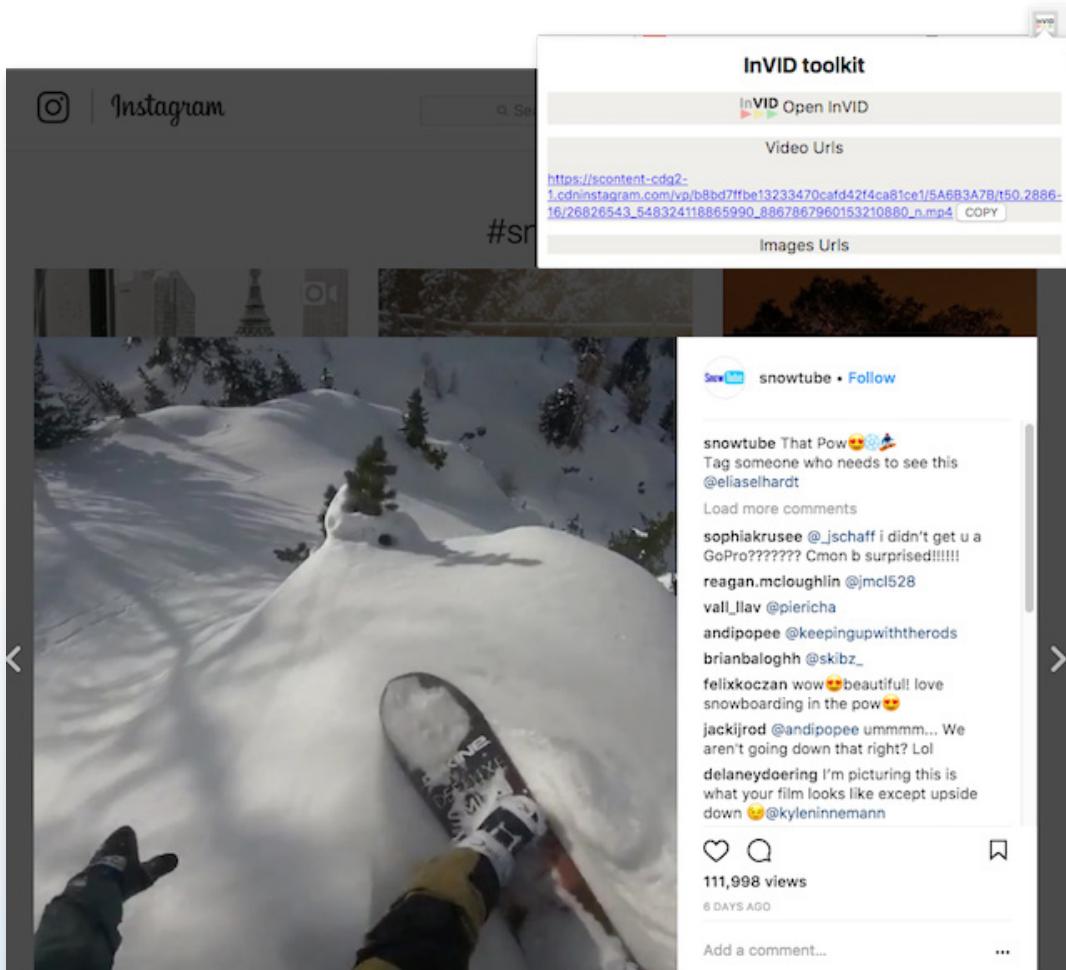
Search with a picture from a website:

- 1.** On your computer, open the Chrome browser.
- 2.** Go to the website with the picture you want to use.
- 3.** Right-click the picture.
- 4.** Click *Search Google for the image*. You'll see your results in a new tab.

⁷ <https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/1325808?co=GENIE.Platform%3DAndroid&hl=en>

ADVANCED PRACTICE
VERIFY PICTURES DIRECTLY FROM YOUR BROWSER WITH INVID
(EU HORIZON 2020 PROJECT)

- Download the plugin: <https://www.invid-project.eu/tools-and-services/invid-verification-plugin/>.
- Watch this video to learn how to use the plugin:
 <https://youtu.be/nmgbFODPiBY>



If you use InVID to verify the profile picture of Ilya Markin, you will find out that he is actually a public figure from Argentina.



Alberto Fernández (esq.) e Mauricio Macri (dir.) deram as intenções de voto na Argentina

Activity 1

Discussion in pairs or small groups. Recommended for face-to-face and online sessions. You can provide students (using a projector or in paper format) with the fake image first and ask what they think about it. Then, provide or display the second one and start a group discussion. To prompt participation, ask questions such as:

- Why do you think someone would manipulate a photo like this one?
- Do you think that the fake picture was spread intentionally or that those who shared it did not know it was fake?
- Would you share this photo if you saw it on your Facebook Feed?

Activity 1: Look at these two images. Which one is fake?



Answer:

The second picture is manipulated. The original picture of a meeting between Greta Thunberg and Al Gore was edited to claim falsely that the young Swedish activist met George Soros.

Activity 2

Discussion in pairs or small groups. Recommended for face-to-face and online sessions.

You can provide students with all the questions at a time, or separately in small pieces of paper (face-to-face teaching). You can also prepare a PowerPoint presentation with a different question on each slide (face-to-face and online teaching). Ask the following open questions or any other you think appropriate, and start a group discussion.

Activity 2: Answer the following questions:

- Have you ever spread disinformation?
- What channels do you trust when looking for information?
- Do you know any fact-checking service in your country?
- How harmful do you think disinformation can be to you?
- What do you think of the information from the example below: is it reliable? (“Coronavirus is an offensive biological weapon”)



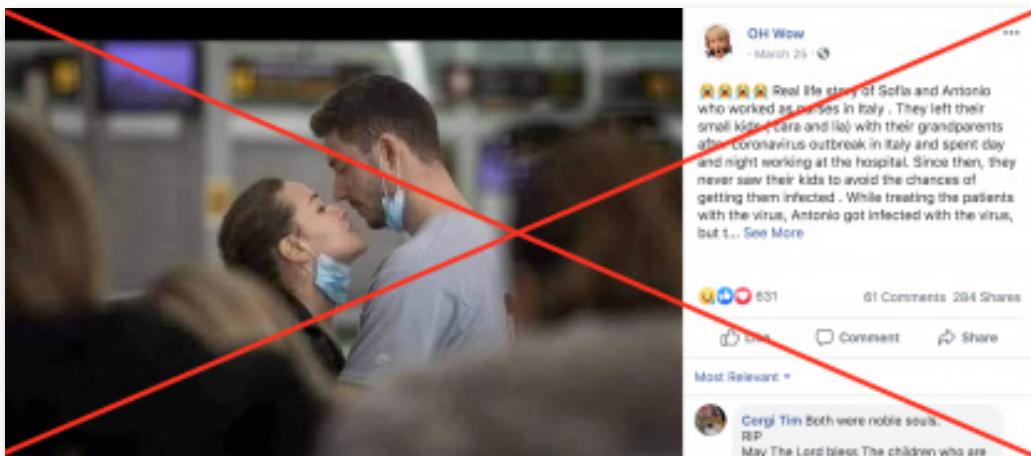
Activities 3 and 4

Discussion in pairs or small groups. Recommended for face-to-face and online sessions. Display only the fake picture on the screen and ask participants if they have ever seen it before. Ask them to discuss in pairs or small groups whether they think it is real or fake. Then display the real picture and have a short discussion with the whole group. You can ask them, for example “Why do you think someone faked this piece of news?”, “Would you believe it if you saw it on social media?”, “And if you saw it on another media channel?”, etc.

You can use the examples provided below or look for others example relevant to your national context.

Activity 3: Discussion in pairs or small groups.

Verify real images/videos: are they real or fake?



In March 2020, an intimate moment between nurses in a hospital during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Real or fake?

Correct answer: fake

[Back to search results](#) 39 of 426,473 results

PICTURES OF THE WEEK PHOTO GALLERY

[Overview](#)

A man and woman kiss in the Barcelona, Spain airport on Thursday, March 12, 2020. President Donald Trump, who had downplayed the coronavirus for weeks, suddenly struck a different tone, announcing strict rules on restricting travel from much of Europe to begin this weekend. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)

Use Information This content is intended for editorial use only.
For other uses, additional clearances may be required.

ID:	20073816103263
Creation Date:	March 12, 2020 03:22:46 AM
Submission Date:	March 13, 2020 11:07:05 PM
Photographer:	Emilio Morenatti
Source:	AP
Credit:	ASSOCIATED PRESS
Resolution:	5003 x 3336 3.89 MB
Person:	AP Week in Pictures

Reverse image search shows that the image has been taken by an "Associated Press" agency photographer at Barcelona's Airport. The claim has been fact-checked by Agence France Presse: <https://factcheck.afp.com/photo-does-not-show-nurses-treating-covid-19-patients-italy>.

Activity 4

In March 2020, Italians threw banknotes on the street in a symbolic gesture expressing the futility of money during the pandemic.

Real or fake?

Correct answer: fake

A reverse image search shows that banknotes of currency no longer in use due to hyperinflation in Venezuela.

The story has been fact-checked by Agence France Presse: <https://factcheck.afp.com/these-photos-have-circulated-online-least-march-2019-covid-19-pandemic>.



To conclude the session, ask learners if they have ever seen an image on social media that they knew was fake. What did they do? What would they do now?

Ask them to share with the other participants:

- What do they think were the most interesting aspects of this module?
- What have they learnt?
- Will their behaviour towards fake news change somehow from now on?

CASE STUDY SUAVELOS, A WHITE SUPREMATIC NETWORK

Un carabinier italien poignardé à mort par "deux migrants africains" à Rome, comme l'affirme la publication ci-dessous ? Deux jeunes touristes américains ont en réalité reconnu les faits, comme l'explique notre dépêche AFP u.afp.com/J7Mx

[Translate Tweet](#)

 Je soutiens la police · 23 mins · [Like Page](#) [...](#)

#Rome 🇮🇹 Mario, un policier de 35 ans tué de 8 coups de couteau près du Vatican par 2 migrants africains




NEWS.SUAVELOS.EU
#Rome 🇮🇹 Un policier tué de 8 coups de couteau près du Vatican par 2 migrants africains

 414 92 Comments 136 Shares

[Like](#) [Comment](#) [Share](#) [More](#)

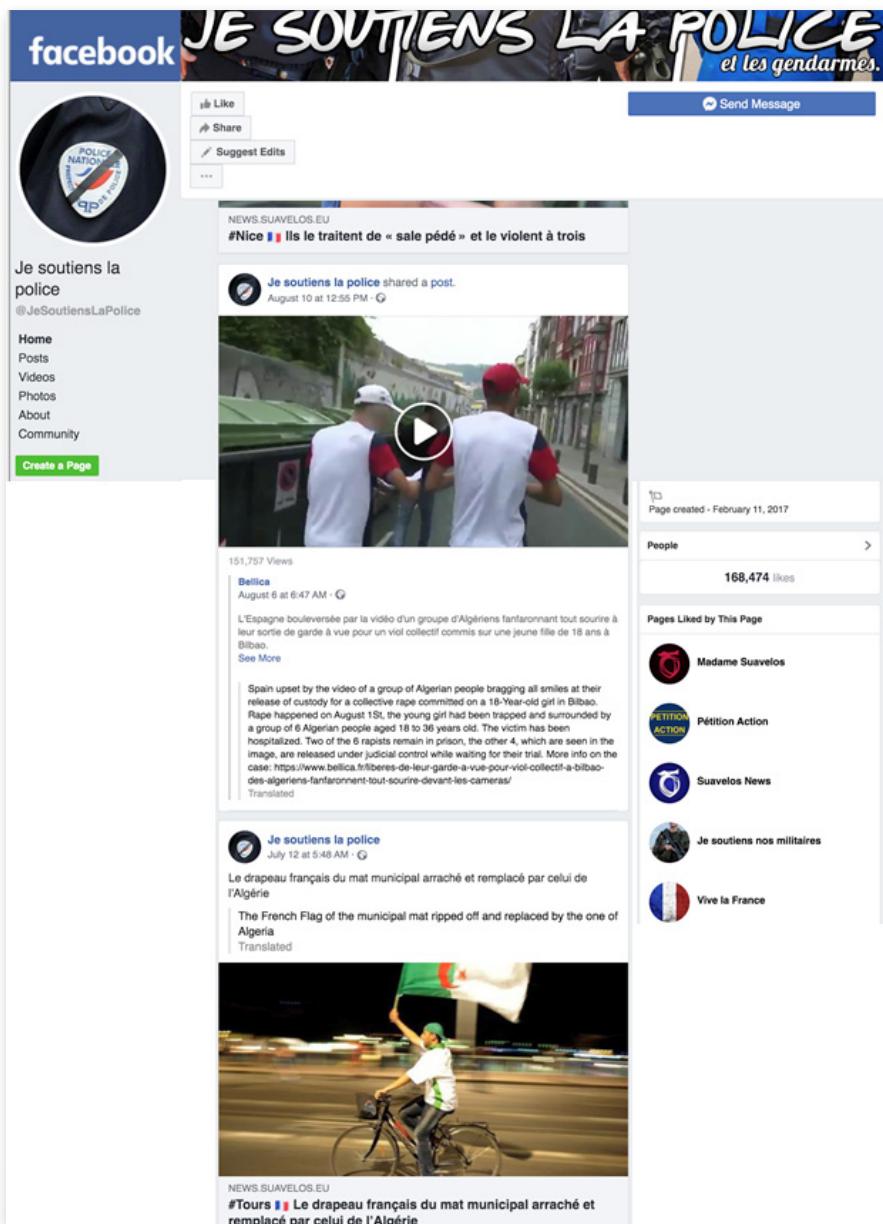
4:38 PM · Jul 27, 2019 · [TweetDeck](#)

577 Retweets 486 Likes

A Facebook page "I support the police" shared an article from a website called Suavelos about "the alleged murder of an Italian policeman by two Italian migrants near Vatican City."

AFP Factuel, a French fact-checker, showed that the story was not true and that the policeman was in reality killed by two American tourists.

The disinformation item is used here to try to amplify fears related to migrants.



"I support the Police" Facebook Page:

- Created in 2017
- 172 000 fans on Facebook
- A name which can attract a large audience but doesn't allow us to clearly identify the owner of the Facebook Page
- Publishes content from two websites called Suavelos.eu and Bellica.fr
- Also republishes content from other Facebook pages called "I support [...]"
- A lot of the content is linked to controversial issues (migration, violence, identity....)
- This page likes pages called Suavelos (Suavelos News, Madame Suavelos), another "I support" page and a page called "Vive La France"
- Website: Jesoutienslapolice.com

WHAT DO YOU OBSERVE?

Pages connexes

Je soutiens les Forces de l'Ordre
Site web d'actualités

SOS Armée
Organisation à but non lucratif

Notre Quotidien
Société de médias/d'actualités

Madame Suavelos
Magazine

Je soutiens nos militaires
26 April at 17:21 · G
↳ Live Page

Je soutiens la police
26 April at 17:21 · G
↳ Live Page

Une fresque avec une voilée insultant la police autorisé par la Mairie de Lille
Visualisez l'illustration

NEWS.SUAVELOS.EU
De nombreux migrants ne supportent pas le sang européen, les hôpitaux en pénurie de donneurs africains ...

STOP violences contre les femmes shared a post.
August 3 at 1:09 PM · G

Suavelos News
August 3 at 1:08 PM · G
↳ Fusillade dans un supermarché d'El Paso : 22 morts et 3 suspects en garde à vue

JESOUTIENSLAPOLICE.COM
Une fresque avec une voilée insultant la police autorisé par la Mairie de Lille

NEWS.SUAVELOS.EU
Fusillade dans un supermarché d'El Paso : 22 morts et 3 suspects en garde à vue

Je soutiens nos soignants
1 mars · G
↳ don du sang
Voilà pourquoi il y a des pénuries : ce sont toujours les mêmes qui donnent !

Je soutiens la police
Yesterday at 12:00 · G
Ces 3 racailles doivent être enfermées dans un hôpital psychiatrique. C'est de la folie.
These 3 scum must be locked up in a mental hospital. This is crazy.
Translated

Je soutiens nos militaires
22 April at 19:16 · G
↳ Live Page

Je soutiens la police
22 April at 19:06 · G
Horreur : petit à petit, la charia s'installe en France.
Visualizza traduzione

NEWS.SUAVELOS.EU
#Villejuif 🇲绶 Un Tunisien tue un homosexuel et éventre son compagnon

Je soutiens nos militaires
22 April at 13:50 · G
↳ Live Page

Suavelos News
22 April at 13:48 · G
Le PDG d'Asos se lance dans la mode islamique : 48h plus tard, des musulmans massacrent 3 de ses 4 enfants
Visualizza traduzione

CROSS-POSTING AND ALGORITHMIC HIJACKING

J'aime et je défends les animaux
July 10 - G

Des vétérinaires anglais croient soigner un oiseau exotique : c'était un goéland couvert de curry
English vets thought they were treating an exotic bird: it was a seagull covered in curry
Translated



Je soutiens les pompiers agressés shared a post.
May 1 - G

Suaveilos News
May 1 - G

146 811 morts : un journal allemand publie la liste des 31 221 attentats islamistes commis dans le monde depuis le 11 septembre 2001



STOP violence contre les femmes
July 10 at 01:18 AM - G

Yannick Mankado
July 10 at 01:18 AM - G

Terribleme Minicidio : Bianca, décapitée avec un grand soutien sur Internet



Vive la France har delat ett inlägg.
6 augustus 01 · 04:26 - G

Buvelos News
6 augustus 01 · 04:26 - G

Le Havre : un homme de 65 ans décide suite à une « altercation » avec un « jeune homme » de 33 ans



NEWS.SUAVEILOS.EU

Dès vétérinaires anglais croient soigner un oiseau exotique : c'était un goéland couvert de curry



STOP à la haine du blanc STOP violences contre les femmes
25 April at 08:00 - G

Like Page

Madame Suaveilos
25 April at 08:49 - G

Un magazine féminin apprend comment il faut traiter les blessures par arme blanche

Visualizza traduzione



Porte Tes Couilles et vote Marine 2017 chance Je soutiens la police's post.
Yesterday at 08:00 - G

Like Page

Je soutiens la police
Yesterday at 08:00 - G

Like Page

Qu'une seule chose à dire : bravo au collègue et bon rétablissement au blessé. En espérant qu'il ne soit pas empêtré par la justice, car on est en France après tout, la justice n'est pas du côté des forces de l'ordre et des victimes.

Visualizza traduzione



Wie versorge ich eine Schürhund?
MADAME SUAVEILOS.EU

Un magazine féminin apprend comment il faut traiter les blessures par arme blanche



Paris : un policier blessé à l'arme blanche, son collègue tire et tue l'agresseur
Un policier a été blessé à l'arme blanche dimanche soir dans le XVIe arrondissement de Paris lors d'une intervention pour un « délit familial...»
NOTRE-DAME-DES-CHAMPS



Je soutiens nos militaires
Yesterday at 09:03 - G

Like Page

Suaveilos News
Yesterday at 09:02 - G

146 811 morts : un journal allemand publie la liste des 31 221 attentats islamistes commis dans le monde depuis le 11 septembre 2001



Je soutiens la police
May 25, 2016 - G

Co doceur de pain en pire, mais ça n'affecte personne. Si quelqu'un fait ça, ça mérite de ne pas l'héberger, il n'y a rien de faire dans ce pays.

Prouve nous le contre exp.

It's getting worse and worse, but it doesn't make anyone crazy. If it leaves you indifferent enough not to share, there's nothing left to do in this country. Prove us the opposite please.
Translated



Wie versorge ich eine Schürhund?
MADAME SUAVEILOS.EU

Un magazine féminin apprend comment il faut traiter les blessures par arme blanche



Je soutiens CRS tabassés devant leur caserne alors qu'ils étaient en repos



Je suis Patriote shared a post.
May 22, 2016 - G

Voulez ce magnifique avenir de la France, vous ne faites que déclamer que nos dirigeants ne sont pas fous de combattre la délinquance et la criminalité comme il le doit...



WHAT IS SUAVELOS?

Les co-fondateurs de Suavelos sont Yann Merkado et Daniel Conversano.

Yann Merkado

Daniel Conversano

Le nationalisme blanc est une réclamation de l'héritage commun du monde blanc et de l'importance pour le blanc de se communautariser pour survivre, vivre mieux et s'adapter aux changements du monde. C'est la revendication que les blancs sont unis par une

Dans cette optique, nos objectifs sont clairs :

- Dénoncer le remplacement des blancs
- En finir avec la lose décliniste, la trahison défaitiste et les discours pompeux sur la décadence
- Dénoncer les faux alliés qui se servent du tremplin racial pour donner d'autres priorités que celle du nationalisme blanc
- Soigner l'éthnornasochisme blanc
- Combattre l'instinct d'ultracométiion entre blancs
- Réconcilier l'identité et la technologie
- Défendre le concept palpable d'Occident et l'honneur de l'Occident
- Répandre l'idée que les blancs ont le droit à une terre où ils sont en paix et chez eux
- Communautariser le blanc : lui donner le fond idéologique et les outils pratiques

THE DISINFORMATION CYCLE





How to Spot when News is Fake: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2017/599386/EPRS_ATA\(2017\)599386_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2017/599386/EPRS_ATA(2017)599386_EN.pdf).

Facebook Transparency page: https://www.facebook.com/help/323314944866264?helpref=about_content.

Crowdtangle: <https://www.crowdtangle.com/>.

InVid: <https://www.invid-project.eu/>.

EU DisinfoLab, list of tools to monitor disinformation: <https://www.disinfo.eu/resources/tools-to-monitor-disinformation>.

EU DisinfoLab list of initiatives tackling disinformation: <https://www.disinfo.eu/resources/initiatives-tacking-disinformation>.

AFP Factuel: <https://factcheck.afp.com/>.

The logo for 'FURTHER READING' features a stylized blue and white graphic element resembling a flower or a series of overlapping semi-circles on the left, followed by the words 'FURTHER READING' in a large, bold, blue, sans-serif font.

Facebook Discovers Fakes That Show Evolution of Disinformation: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/business/facebook-ai-generated-profiles.html>.

Evaluating News Sources: <https://libguides.utm.edu/newsources/evaluating>.

Claire Wardle (2017). 'Fake news, it's complicated': <https://firstdraftnews.org/latest/fake-news-complicated/>.

EU DisinfoLab for the European Parliamentary Research Service (2019). Automated tackling of disinformation: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/624278/EPRS_STU\(2019\)624278_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/624278/EPRS_STU(2019)624278_EN.pdf).