

D1.2. Specs on the criteria to label claims as potential fake news

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Executive Summary

This report outlines the methodologies employed by fact-checkers to verify the accuracy of claims and establish a transparent, consistent process for labelling data as true, false, or otherwise. Fact-checking organisation, Verificat, and the media corporation CCMA follow rigorous procedures to ensure that information circulated in the public domain meets high standards of credibility and accuracy.

The methodology used by Verificat aligns with the principles set by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), promoting non-partisan and transparent practices in accountability journalism. Verificat's process involves evaluating statements for their public interest and potential virality, consulting a range of reliable sources, and qualifying claims with specific tags such as "True," "Half-truth," "Misleading," "Fake," or "Not Verifiable." The organisation maintains transparency by avoiding anonymous sources, ensuring team neutrality, and providing avenues for rectification.

Similarly, CCMA's fact-checking process involves multiple layers of scrutiny and verification. They prioritise the verification of statements or information that could mislead or significantly impact public opinion. The CCMA team follows a stringent multi-step process where claims are analysed by journalists, reviewed by editors and producers, and finally approved by senior news management. Claims are classified into categories like "Fact," "Fake," "Half-truth," or "Unverifiable."

Both organisations emphasise the importance of transparency, neutrality, and the opportunity for rectification, contributing to their credibility and reliability in combating misinformation and promoting factual accuracy in public discourse

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1. Introduction

Fact checkers use different methodologies for performing all the activity before establishing a verdict about whether a claim is true or false. This process includes the selection of a topic, collection of data, hypothesise on the potential veracity of the claims, select source for verification and finally state a label for this claim, among others. In this document we describe the process that fact checkers are performing to establish a common and transparent criterion for all the data labelled and used in the project.

2. Fact checking methodology

The methodology used in this project is based on the International Fact-checking Network¹. As their documentation states, “The code of principles of the International Fact-Checking Network at Poynter is a series of commitments organizations abide by to promote excellence in fact-checking.” They promote nonpartisan and transparent fact-checking as an instrument of accountability journalism. Verificat is one of the 94 current² members of the network.

2.1 Fact checking process by Verificat

Verificat analyses the political discourse and the multi-modal information (i.e., texts, audios, images...) circulating on social networks that are of public interest, verifiable and potentially viral. They do not verify campaign commitments, opinions, or comments on private conversations.

The **discourse verification** follows this process:

- Select and statement and evaluate their relevance
- Identify the source
- Contact the original source and ask based on what they do the statement
- Check official sources and databases
- Check alternatives but relevant sources such as: academic, technical and speciazed
- Contextualise the information
- Qualify the claim with the following tags:
 - True: It is reaffirmed after consulting different sources.
 - Half-truth: Most of the information is correct, however it overlooks relevant contextual details so that it can lead to misinterpretations
 - Misleading: It contains some truthful information but hides relevant facts. The data is insufficient to communicate or manipulate reality.

¹ <https://ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/>

² <https://ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/signatories> accessed by May 11th, 2022.

- Fake: Official sources and investigations do not support the claim.
- Not verifiable: The official data available or the research conducted is not conclusive to prove whether it is true, half-truth, misleading or fake.

The procedure carried out by a particular verifier is evaluated by the fact-checking team. The final decisions need the approval of, at least, three team members before it can be published.

Apart of the discourse verification, Verificat also fact check what they name “noise”, this is basically viral misinformation. The verification process is:

- Identify viral misinformation and persist a screenshot
- Look for the original piece of information in case it is an image or video
 - If needed, locate the protagonist of the information to ask if this content is true or fake
 - If needed, look for alternative sources that can prove the validity of the content
- Contrast information with data, facts and other relevant source
- Qualify the claim with the following tags mentioned above (i.e., true, half-truth, misleading, fake or not verifiable)

Some other relevant aspects to consider when we are dealing with fact checking are transparency, neutrality, and rectification. In this sense, Verificat does not use anonymous sources. To be transparent, if the source reached does not want to be identified, they look for other sources, and if there are not reliable sources, the claim is not verified. The whole process for reaching the final verification is publicly exposed to ensure its transparency and reliability. In terms of neutrality, basically the members of the team can not to be linked to or affiliated with any political party. And finally, in terms of rectification, Verificat provides different communication channels (i.e., e-mail, social networks, etc.) for reporting errors in the verification.

The public information about the process of verification is published in Verificat’s website³.

2.2 Fact checking process by CCMA

CCMA, particularly the journalist of “Fets and Fakes” a section in the radio show “La Tarda” and the TV show “Tot es mou” with the idea of becoming a transmedia platform, work independently and in accordance with the CCMA style book verifying information. They choose the statements or information to verify based on a journalistic criterion and attend to the criteria of plurality and equity required by different public actors. They also consider a criterion of relevance, meaning any statement that would be influential if not verified. They pay special attention to misinformation deliberately created with the intention of confusing or establishing as real a false data or situation (i.e., disinformation).

³ <https://www.verificat.cat/metodologia> accessed by May 11th, 2022

- One or more journalists on the team investigate specific misinformation and work out a first version of the denial or rectification.
 - Primary sources are consulted, and the available public and official sources are scrutinised.
 - The information found is contrasted with the authors of the initial claim, in case it is possible to identify the specific source of information.
- Fact-checking is subject to three levels of analysis:
 1. The journalistic process is called into question by the members of the "Facts or Fakes" team who monitor and test the soundness of the work done to find possible errors or weaknesses. Once this first test is passed, a vote is taken. Four favourable votes from team members are needed and all have veto power. If there is no vote against, it moves on to the second level of analysis. If there is a vote against, the process is restarted from the beginning.
 2. A new analysis will be carried out by the editors or conductors of the show where the rectification will be broadcast, the head of the News section most affected by the information in question and the head of the Digital Media department of the radio. All three parties must agree for the denial to move to the third level of analysis.
 3. The head or deputy head of News will finally have to certify that the process has been done correctly and rigorously and give the final approval to the publication of the verification. (points 2 and 3 must be done within a maximum of two days from the end of point 1)
- Finally, the verification is published both on the antenna of Catalunya Ràdio and Catalunya Informació, on the social networks of both media and on the website www.catradio.cat.

CCMA classify the information verified in four degrees:

- Fact: claims have been verified as true.
- Fake: claims have been verified as false without any doubt.
- Half-truth: claims that contain parts of truth but that have been used in a biased manner to influence the views of the recipient.
- Unverifiable: claims established in public discourse which are impossible to verify, confirm or deny for various reasons.

3. Conclusions

The fact-checking processes utilised by Verificat and CCMA demonstrate a robust commitment to accuracy, transparency, and accountability in journalism. By adhering to methodologies endorsed by recognised bodies like the International Fact-Checking Network, these organisations set a high standard for verifying claims that are in the public interest. Both entities follow structured, multi-

layered procedures that involve cross-checking with various sources, applying consistent criteria for labelling claims, and ensuring that their processes remain non-partisan and open to correction.

Verificat's approach is notably comprehensive, with a strong emphasis on not using anonymous sources and being transparent in every step of the verification process. This helps to maintain public trust and credibility. Conversely, CCMA's methodology is characterised by multiple levels of verification, ensuring that the fact-checking process is thorough and robust. The requirement for consensus at various stages ensures that the final decision on a claim is balanced and well-considered.

Both methodologies highlight the critical importance of fact-checking in today's media environment, where misinformation can easily spread and cause significant harm. By establishing clear, transparent, and accountable verification processes, these organisations help to promote informed public discourse, safeguard democratic principles, and build trust in the information ecosystem.

Terminology and Acronyms

CCMA	Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals
IFCN	International Fact-checking Network