



Empowering Europeans towards a Media-Savvy Citizenry

Tackling Misinformation and Digital Media Literacy Best Practice Guide



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Introduction

The current document is the Best Practice Guide “Tackling Misinformation and Digital Media Literacy”, one of the first result of the project ”**CheckMate** - Empowering Europeans towards a Media-Savvy Citizenry” (co-funded by Erasmus + Key Action 2 Project, Cooperation partnerships in adult education).

This Guide has been created at the end of an in-depth desk research on the main issues concerning media literacy in the countries involved and of a needs analysis developed in direct contact with the main stakeholders. This research resulted from the dedication and contribution of each of the partners involved in the project.



Specifically, the partnership consists of the following organizations:

- ✓ **BürgerInnen Forum Europa**
— Austria
- ✓ **Neapolis University Pafos**
(NUP) — Cyprus
- ✓ **Athens Lifelong Learning Institute**
— Greece
- ✓ **Centro per lo Sviluppo Creativo**
“Danilo Dolci” (CSC) — Italy
- ✓ **Syncnify** — France
- ✓ **Vsi Socialiniu inovaciju centras**
(SIC) — Lithuania

1. The project

The global problem of how to counteract the dissemination of false reports and information harmful to peace, security and cooperation has existed for hundreds of years. Today, the desire to find a solution has risen in line with the growth of the media's influence, intensified by the role that social media plays in informing the public. Although a number of ideas are floating in intergovernmental forums, as to how to limit the harmful effects of disinformation, the prevalence of online and offline disinformation is still threatening political independence, territorial integrity, and the security of all citizens. In addition to that, by blurring the lines between false and true, disinformation undermines public trust in quality journalism and its role in a democratic society. Even in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, social media was overwhelmed with various stories that claimed to describe potential miracle cures for the disease. Most of these stories were unfounded, based on hearsay, and in some instances actually with extremely dangerous consequences at a community level. Nowadays, it is more evident than ever that propaganda, misinformation and fake news have the potential to polarize public opinion, to promote violent extremism, hate speech and, ultimately, to undermine democracies and reduce trust in the democratic processes¹. CheckMate Project looks to raise awareness, turning alienation into constructive engagement, among the topic's stakeholders, fostering social dialogue and enabling new and innovative solutions. Furthermore, CheckMate shall train adults of any social, age, religious, economic and ethnic background, paying special attention to vulnerable and marginalised groups, to be able to critically filter, investigate sources, fact-check content, and categorise all information received, turning chaos into critical and analytical capacities. In that effort, CheckMate shall integrate and promote the use of innovative technological solutions. Specifically, the CheckMate project aims at four main objectives:

- ✓ To **tackle misinformation**, while bringing International Law closer to European citizens.
- ✓ To **strengthen media literacy** by training participants in innovative strategies and methods to evaluate media reports.
- ✓ To **raise awareness and promote social dialogue** among stakeholders aiming at developing new solutions to misinformation and suggest relevant policy recommendations.
- ✓ To **promote the use of advanced new technologies** by stakeholders and participants in addressing the issue.

To achieve these goals, the CheckMate project consists of the following activities, which will follow the current research phase:

- ✓ Organisation of **digital information sessions and workshops** with civil society and other stakeholders to raise awareness using innovative metaverse platforms, achieving more than 150 users in 6 countries.
- ✓ Development of **e-training course and web browsing extension** to strengthen critical media literacy.
- ✓ Development of the **Metaverse Networking Platform** containing features such as avatar and venue customization, networking tools, analytics, integration with other applications.
- ✓ Development of a **policy and recommendations report** based on project implementation experiences on ways to tackle mis/disinformation.

1 World Economic Forum, The Global Risk Report 2024, 2024

2. Methodology and Document's Structure

This document is a Best Practice Guide based on a research designed to be an in-depth study of the topic of media literacy through a dual perspective and holistic approach. The dual perspective is revealed in the dual nature of the research conducted: 1) the first phase of the research is based on normative documents and official reports; 2) and the second phase is based on direct contact with stakeholders and target groups. The result of such researching activities allowed the partnership to put together a needs analysis based on direct contact with potential beneficiaries and structured on a cross-cutting approach, just as the issue of media and the need for media education is transversal at many levels. The goal was to portrait a picture as comprehensive as possible on the project topics. Thus, the macro-themes were addressed through a comparative approach, which allowed to have a look at all partner countries. "Tackling Misinformation and Digital Media Literacy" Best Practice Guide's topics organization follows the below-mentioned structure:

1. **Introduction to the topics and the national contexts:** the first part will be an introduction to the theme, followed by a description of the phenomenon of misinformation, disinformation and media literacy in the countries involved. This session will highlight statistical data on information search and consumption habits, with a reference to the cases of fake news that have caused the most stir in the partner countries.
2. **National legal framework analysis:** Then the topic will be approached from the perspective of institutional and legal framework, specifically focusing on the current regulations in the countries studied; the balance between the need for protection and control of fake news and freedom of expression; the institutional bodies in charge of media control and citizen protection.
3. **Consultations and people's perspectives:** The following chapter will be devoted to analysing the results of the interviews with the identified stakeholders and the needs analysis coming from the focus groups with potential beneficiaries. This part of the research was structured from a shared set of questions on the topic of media, perceptions of social media, critical thinking, and educational measures to be taken into account.
4. **Good practices analysis:** In this section, identified best practices on media literacy education projects or initiatives are introduced. The readers will have an overview on all the 31 best practices identified, thus getting an idea on what has been a successful implementation in the last years on the field.
5. **Conclusions:** the conclusions, which will close the most substantial part of this guide, will be the result of the reflections made, considering what has been analyzed in recent months. By cross-referencing the most important results and the considerations accrued with the experts and researchers involved, the document will provide meaningful and useful conclusions for the development of the future content of the CheckMate project, but also to provide directions for the creation and strengthening of educational policies in the field of media and citizen protection. Annexes with the list of all the Good practices will follow, thus giving the chance to deepen on specific practice for those readers who are interested.

3. Introduction to the topic

IN BRIEF:

Misinformation occurs when inaccurate information is disseminated without the intention to deceive or harm, often due to misinterpretation, misunderstanding, or lack of knowledge

Disinformation involves intentional and deliberate dissemination of false or misleading information with the intent to manipulate, deceive, or influence public opinion for political, social, or economic advantage.

Misinformation can cause confusion and misunderstanding, while disinformation undermines trust in information and public opinion, being particularly harmful due to its clear manipulative intent.

Media literacy encompasses competences and skills necessary for conscious and independent development in the modern digital, global, and multimedia environment.

Media literacy has become a priority in EU education agendas, evolving into a multidimensional concept that includes cognitive, emotional, and social skills for navigating the media landscape critically and consciously.

Disinformation & Misinformation

The gravity of misinformation and disinformation is underscored by recent reports, notably the World Economic Forum's identification of them as the foremost global risk. Advances in technology, particularly user-friendly AI, have facilitated the proliferation of fake information and 'synthetic' content, prompting governments to enact evolving regulations to combat these threats. However, challenges remain, including the emergence of new forms of crime such as deepfake pornography and stock market manipulation. Moreover, the intricate balance between preventing misinformation and safeguarding freedom of expression poses a dilemma for governments, with authoritarian regimes potentially exploiting regulatory control to undermine human rights. The continuous expansion of media and social networks exacerbates the complexity of the issue, necessitating comprehensive mechanisms for education, control, and protection by institutions. In such context, clarifying the distinction between misinformation and disinformation is crucial.

Misinformation occurs when inaccurate or incorrect information is disseminated without the intention to deceive or harm, but is intended to be perceived by its recipients as serious and factual. This can occur for various reasons, such as misinterpretation, misunderstanding or lack of knowledge. On the other hand, **disinformation** involves the intentional and deliberate dissemination of false or misleading information intending to manipulate, deceive or influencing public opinion. Persons or entities spreading disinformation have a clear intent to gain political, social or economic advantage. The sources of disinformation can be governments, political organisations, interest groups or non-state actors that seek to influence public opinion to achieve specific goals. While misinformation can cause confusion and misunderstanding, disinformation is particularly harmful because it undermines trust in information and public opinion. Both can have negative consequences for society and democracy, but disinformation is generally considered more harmful because it is orchestrated with a clear manipulative intent².

2 LibertiesEU, Misinformazione vs Disinformazione: definizione ed esempi, retrieved from www.liberties.eu/it/stories/misinformazione-vs-disinformazione/43752

Media literacy

Media literacy is the term used to describe the competences and skills required for conscious and independent development in this new communicative, digital, global and multimedia environment. It is considered the outcome of the media education process. However, the concept is multifaceted and coexists with other terms such as audiovisual literacy, digital literacy and so on. Media education and its outcome, media literacy, were first described and defined in the international context by UNESCO, as part of a process of analysis that began in 1982 with the Grünwald conference, and continued with other dedicated events until the conference in Seville in 2002. UNESCO's work focuses on what is known as media education, which is the immediate predecessor of media literacy in its widest sense. In Europe, in the early 2000s, the term media education was used together with media literacy in an attempt to include and expand digital literacy and reduce the digital divide. This process was supported by the Council of Europe and the European Commission, which during 2006 and 2007 supported a Group of Experts in the field of media literacy and launched a public consultation on the topic. The work was also supported by the European Media Charter and several public media regulators³. Since then, media literacy has been ever present within the agendas of the European Union and in recent years has become a priority within the field of education. Nowadays, the meaning of media literacy has expanded and enriched. Now, it represents a multidimensional concept that goes beyond mere media understanding. It is a set of cognitive, emotional and social skills that enable people to critically and consciously navigate the complex media landscape. It involves a deep awareness of the dynamics of power and control within the media⁴. This includes understanding the economic, political and cultural mechanisms that influence the production, distribution and enjoyment of media content. It requires the ability to critically interrogate the media and their representations of reality. This involves not only analysing the explicit content of media messages, but also examining the implicit, omissions and hidden perspectives. It is important to recognize that media are not merely neutral vehicles of information, but actively reflect and influence the ideologies, social norms and power relations present in society. From this perspective, media literacy encourages active and responsible participation in the media. This implies the ability to produce and share content that adheres to ethical principles and promotes constructive and inclusive dialogue. In the digital age, the boundaries between old and new media are increasingly blurring, requiring education that is able to navigate through these complex media contexts⁵. In essence, it is an ongoing process of learning and reflection that requires a constant commitment to challenging dominant media narratives and promoting more inclusive, equitable, and democratic communication.

3 Pérez Tornero José Manuel, Media Literacy New Conceptualisation, New Approach, January 2008, Sweden: The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media

4 Hobbs R. Media Literacy Foundations, University of Rhode Island, 2019

5 Ibid

4. Overview on the phenomena of misinformation, disinformation and media literacy in all the partner countries

Data on media literacy

IN BRIEF:

- **France:** Rooted tradition of media literacy based on critical thinking for citizenship. Over 90% of metropolitan France's inhabitants are connected to Internet, indicating a significant level of digital literacy.
- **Italy:** Significant challenges in media literacy and increased use of digital platforms for news. Italy is one of the European countries with the highest number of contents removed from Facebook and Instagram in the first half of 2023, indicating considerable exposure to online misinformation.
- **Greece:** Showed overall improvement in recent years, indicating progress in catching up. Excels in the youngest demographic segment, with 88% of individuals aged 16 to 24 possessing basic digital skills.
- **Cyprus:** Ranked below the European average in basic digital skills, higher digital skills, and basic digital content creation skills. Ranked 25th out of 35 countries in the European region in terms of media literacy.
- **Austria:** Significant number of adult citizens possess average or above-average digital skills, but ability to distinguish misinformation is an area of challenge. Time spent in media use decreased in most categories in 2022 compared to the previous year.
- **Lithuania:** Faces challenges in improving the population's media literacy, with a level relatively low compared to the European average. Lithuania ranks below the European average in terms of media literacy according to the DESI Index.

The context which has been analyzed – taking into consideration the project partner countries – shows a diverse scenario with people with more or less digital and media literacy. However, a common concern is how citizens can deal with the increasing threats of mis/disinformation.

In **France**, media literacy has a strong tradition, rooted in the central role of critical thinking in citizenship. According to the French Republic Digital Society Lab's 2022 report, more than 90% of metropolitan France's inhabitants are connected to the Internet, highlighting a significant level of digital literacy. This high rate of connectivity reflects a society increasingly immersed in the digital age. However, there are concerns related to Internet security, highlighted by the fact that 69% of French people access online news weekly, according to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022. In addition, 40% of people get news from social media, indicating considerable exposure to online misinformation⁶.

Turning to **Italy**, media literacy faces significant challenges despite the increased use of digital platforms to access news. According to the Communications Guarantee Authority (AGCOM), in 2020, Millennials prefer the Internet and social media to inform themselves, showing a significant change in consumption habits compared to previous generations⁷. Italy also stands out as one of the European countries with the highest number of content removed from Facebook and Instagram in the first half of 2023, with more than 45,000 from Facebook and 1,900 from Instagram, as indicated in 2023 Meta's report. Despite this, television still remains the main source of information, although increasing criticism has emerged about its quality and reliability, with 71.8% of people expressing negative opinions about its reliability, according to data from the Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali⁸.

Greece ranks 25th out of 27 EU member states in the 2022 Digital Economy & Society Index (DESI), but has shown an overall improvement in recent years, indicating progress in catching up. In digital public services, Greece has seen an increase in active users of e-government services and has a large percentage of its population with basic digital skills. 52% of individuals aged 16 to 74 have basic digital skills, in line with the EU average of 54%, according to the same DESI report⁹. Specifically, Greece excels in the youngest demographic segment, with 88% of individuals aged 16 to 24 possessing basic digital skills, exceeding the EU average of 71%.

Also according to the DESI Index, **Cyprus** ranks 20th in the EU, scoring below average in basic digital skills, higher digital skills, and basic digital content creation skills. In addition, adult individuals in Cyprus living in cities have a higher percentage of higher digital skills (25.56%) than those living in cities and suburbs (13.89%) and rural areas (15.42%). The Open Society Institute's European Policy Initiative Media Literacy Index-Sophia ranks Cyprus 25th out of 35 countries in the European region. The index assesses the potential for resilience to fake news and uses indicators for media freedom, education and trust in people. In Austria, a significant number of adult citizens possess average or above-average digital skills. However, recent studies show that many adults struggle to distinguish misinformation from accurate information, especially about social media (Biringer, 2023). In the third quarter of 2022, Austrians aged 16 to 64 spent an average of 5 hours and 22 minutes a day on the Internet, including more than 1.5 hours spent on social media. Time spent in media use decreased in most categories in 2022 compared to the previous year. Overall, Austria's values in most categories were below the global average¹⁰.

Lastly, **Lithuania** faces challenges in improving the population's media literacy. According to research conducted in 2020, despite ongoing efforts, the level of media literacy remains relatively low, registering only 37.8 points, as indicated in the 2017 "Spinter" study. Moreover, the DESI Index confirms that Lithuania ranks below the European average in terms of media literacy¹¹.

6 Viard-Guillot L., 82% of Internet users protected their personal data online, 2022

7 Agicom, L'informazione alla prova dei giovani, servizio economico-statistico, 2020

8 Censis, 18° Rapporto sulla comunicazione, I media della crisi, Roma, 2022

9 European Commission (2022), Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2022, Greece

10 Statista.de, Tägliche Nutzungsdauer verschiedener Medien in Österreich in den Jahren 2021 und 2022

11 European Commission (2022), Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2020, Lithuania

> Current trends in adult education & methodologies

IN BRIEF:

- **France:** Government, universities, and NGOs collaborate on media literacy initiatives, including educational programs and fact-checking resources.
- **Italy:** National Digital Skills Strategy and Digital Republic Fund aim to enhance digital literacy and support media education efforts led by public broadcaster RAI.
- **Austria:** Regulatory Authority for Broadcasting and Telecommunications and NGOs like “Saferinternet.at” promote media literacy and combat misinformation through training and resources.
- **Cyprus and Greece:** MedDMO and Fact Check Cyprus lead efforts to debunk fake news and promote media literacy, supported by academic institutions like Cyprus University of Technology.
- **Lithuania:** Strategic initiatives like “Lithuania 2030” focus on integrating media literacy into education and promoting responsible media consumption, with universities playing a key role in research and education.

Among all the countries involved in the research, national governments, universities and third sector associations are the main drivers for the creation and development of initiatives and projects dedicated to media literacy. In **France**, several programs and initiatives have been launched to tackle online misinformation and promote media literacy¹². The Center for Media and Information Education (CLEMI) plays a key role in developing educational programs and integrating media literacy into training curricula. This center is supported by the Ministry of Culture, which through dedicated funds also supports numerous local media outlets in organizing educational activities. France Info, for example, has created “Ateliers de l’Info” to encourage critical thinking about news, while national initiatives such as “Valeurs de la République” aim to promote ethical behaviour online¹³. AFP (Agence France-Presse) provides resources and training on fact-checking, while CLEMI incorporates examples of misleading content into its courses. In parallel, prestigious academic institutions such as Sciences Po Paris offer specific courses on media literacy for adults, providing opportunities to improve critical thinking skills and information evaluation. NGOs, such as the EU Disinfo Lab, actively contribute to the fight against disinformation by providing online resources, organizing webinars and educational workshops to raise awareness about recognizing and combating fake news¹⁴. Lastly, France Médias Monde, which brings together the international television and radio channels France 24, RFI, and Monte Carlo Doualiya, plays a significant role in the fight against disinformation by offering regular broadcasts on deconstructing false information, enabling participants to gain in-depth knowledge about journalistic practices¹⁵.

12 Ministère de la Culture, Media Mobilisation for Media and Information Literacy. 2023

13 Les Ateliers de l’info. 2023, Retrieved from <https://www.francetvinfo.fr/replay-radio/emissions-podcasts.html>

14 EU Disinfo Lab, 2023, Retrieved from <https://www.disinfo.eu>

15 Ministère de la Culture, Media Mobilisation for Media and Information Literacy. 2023

For the **Italian** government, the need for digital literacy remains high on the political agenda. The Digital Agenda, which set goals for 2020, followed the Digital Goals for 2030 and the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027. As part of the National Digital Skills Strategy, the government established a new fund (“Digital Republic Fund”) to promote initiatives to raise digital skills levels. Italy also launched a comprehensive National Digital Skills Strategy, implemented through an Operational Plan adopted in December 2020. The document identifies 111 initiatives and sets targets to be achieved by 2025, including equipping 70% of the population with basic digital skills, in line with the Digital Decade 2030 goal. As a key player in national Media Literacy and Media Education policies, Italian public television, RAI, is the main promoter of several initiatives and plays a role in research, control and monitoring of information quality¹⁶.

Already in the early 2000s, institutions and organizations were established in **Austria** to address the problem of fake news as the problem of misinformation and information falsification emerged and steadily increased. However, in recent years, institutions to counter this spread and promote awareness have become more crucial than ever to Austrian society. The Regulatory Authority for Broadcasting and Telecommunications (RTR) is one such institution and has been the originator of initiatives to promote media literacy and counter disinformation. This Austrian regulatory authority was created for the purpose of monitoring and ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations in the field of broadcasting and telecommunications. Moreover, NGOs and civil society organizations, such as the “Saferinternet.at” association, play a significant role. This organization strives to promote parents, teachers and young people in the area of safe Internet use and increasing media literacy¹⁷. It offers training, materials and resources with the intention of familiarizing Internet users with the challenges in the online world and helping them recognize and navigate misinformation and fake information¹⁸. Research institutes and universities, such as the University of Vienna, the Alpen-Adria University of Klagenfurt and the University of Salzburg, are indispensable for the exploration of the topic.

Moving instead to the Mediterranean, several funded projects have taken place or are ongoing concerning disinformation, with MedDMO, the Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory. This deals with fake news in the eastern Mediterranean, including **Malta, Greece, and Cyprus**, and involves various academic institutions and fact-checking organizations in the project. MedMo also funds fact-checking organizations in Greece (Hellenic Hoaxes) and Cyprus (Fact Check Cyprus) to debunk fake news circulating on the Internet. In addition to MedDMO, several other projects have also been implemented at Cyprus University of Technology (CUT). For example, the Department of Communication and Internet Studies offered seminars on digital journalism needed to address misinformation, aimed at journalists and journalism students. Lastly, the Center Against Disinformation was recently established at CUT as a coalition of the Fact Check Cyprus group and the Social Calculus Unit. The Center aims to promote media literacy in society and within the University, and to expose fake news in Cyprus’ cyberspace.

As for **Lithuania**, interest in media literacy has grown over the past decade, along with the number of initiatives and people involved in this area. In 2012, the advancement strategy “Lithuania 2030” was approved by the Seimas (the Parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania, envisioning the creation of a sustainable information society that promotes civically responsible media and educates the public to critically evaluate information in the public space, analyzing and assessing it. This goal also includes integrating media literacy into all educational programs and respecting freedom of the press, as well as encouraging self-regulatory processes in the media. Resistance to information threats and the development of media literacy skills are strategic directions of public information policy in Lithuania. Indeed, state institutions and NGOs seek ways to promote the development of media literacy skills. According to a study conducted by the Council of Europe in 2019-2020, 34 different stakeholder entities were identified that carried out 43 initiatives in Lithuania, mainly organized by nongovernmental organizations, state institutions, and cultural institutions, particularly libraries. Lithuanian universities, such as Vilnius University, Vytautas Magnus University, and Kaunas University of Technology, play a key role in scientific research and education on media literacy.

16 Aroldi P., et al., Media Literacy Versus Fake News. Esperienze e best practice in Italia, 2022

17 RTR.at (2023a), Medienkompetenz - Schlüssel “Bildung” als gesamtgesellschaftliche Aufgabe, 2023

18 Saferinternet.at, Das Internet sicher nutzen, 2023, retrieved from <https://www.saferinternet.at/>

> National episodes in which misinformation and disinformation have negatively affected marginalized people

IN BRIEF:

Disinformation and **misinformation** are widespread, targeting common issues across countries and exacerbating social divisions.

Geopolitical crises, international conflicts, and social issues provide fertile ground for the spread of disinformation, as seen during the war in Ukraine and the “Yellow Vest” protests in France.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an unprecedented proliferation of misinformation worldwide, undermining trust in public health measures and exacerbating tensions.

This session will briefly present some striking cases of disinformation and misinformation. The main targets of disinformation are common in almost all countries. Indeed, a number of issues can be traced where the role of the media has played a crucial role and social divisions have increased, not only in the countries involved but throughout the Western world. Geopolitical crises and international conflicts often become fertile ground for the spread of disinformation. An obvious example emerged during the war in Ukraine, when **France** uncovered a massive Russian disinformation campaign. Through the publication of fake news disguised as authoritative sources, Moscow orchestrated a “hybrid war” that undermined the clarity of information and fuelled uncertainty on an international scale¹⁹. Social issues and protest movements are also often subject to information distortion and manipulation. During the “Yellow Vest” protests in France, misinformation on social media contributed to heightened tensions, generating discord in society²⁰. Similarly, LGBTQ+ communities have been targets of false claims and hate campaigns, fuelling harmful prejudices and undermining social cohesion²¹. The COVID-19 pandemic has seen an unprecedented proliferation of misinformation around the world. In **Italy**, the false correlation between 5G and the spread of the virus has triggered unfounded fears, undermining confidence in prevention and vaccination measures²². In **Austria** as in Italy and elsewhere, conspiracy theories about the origin of the virus and the management of the pandemic have fuelled informational chaos, challenging the credibility of health authorities. Marginalized communities are often particularly vulnerable to misinformation. In **Cyprus**, episodes of misinformation have targeted groups such as the LGBTQ+ community and immigrants, generating tension and conflict. During pride month, false information about the negativity of adoption by same-sex couples generated a range of prejudice. In addition, the spread of fake news about immigrants has triggered indiscriminate attacks by extremist groups, endangering the safety of the most vulnerable. In response to these challenges, it is imperative to promote media literacy and critical thinking at all levels of society.

19 France 24, France says uncovers major disinformation campaign by Russia, 2023, Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230613-france-says-uncovers-major-disinformation-campaign-by-russia>

20 Vinocur, N., Yellow jackets “fake news” shared millions of times on Facebook, 2019, Retrieved from <https://www.politico.eu/article/yellow-jacket-protest-fake-news-shared-millions-of-times-on-facebook-study>

21 Abreu, C. M. de., Truth or fake - paris: Digital Artist's Pride Month Creation Sparks fake news and homophobia on Twitter, 2023

22 Ravazzani P., Scarfi M. R., Zeni O. La tecnologia 5G non diffonde il COVID-19, 2020

> Obstacles and opportunities

IN BRIEF:

Obstacles: Social fragmentation and digital skill disparities present significant obstacles to media literacy, fostering misinformation proliferation and distrust in media.

Echo chambers formed by social media algorithms distort perceptions and hinder media literacy efforts, exacerbating social polarization.

Opportunities for media education stem from EU initiatives, the expansion of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, and increased collaboration among stakeholders.

Artificial intelligence holds potential in fact-checking, debunking, and educational applications, offering a promising ally in combating disinformation.

Before approaching the chapters on legal and institutional aspects, it is important to focus on major obstacles and opportunities in the media literacy and information landscape in the countries concerned. First, the main difficulties stem from the marked social fragmentation of our societies and the resulting disparity in widespread digital skills. Socioeconomic and cultural divisions exclude certain segments of the population from educational and informational processes, the digital divide, as well as the possibilities of access to digital education remain issues to be fully addressed within the social fabric²³. This facilitates the proliferation of misinformation as well as widespread distrust of the media and the political class and exacerbates social tensions. In this context, language barriers, which are increasingly present in our multi-ethnic countries, and generational differences that create a profound asymmetry in media usage and awareness habits should also be considered: new generations, born in an already highly digitalized and interconnected environment, naturally develop greater familiarity and awareness regarding the use of new media and digital information.

Adults, on the contrary, finding themselves almost suddenly in a transformed world, have to make more effort to adapt their mental structures to digital language. This does not mean that younger people do not need educational paths dedicated to media literacy. Rather, it emerges a need to differentiate educational offerings and direct them toward issues more suited to the type of target audience. Another significant obstacle to the development of media education pathways is endogenous to the media world itself. The avalanche of information that is produced and disseminated daily strongly distorts people's perceptions of the world and directly contributes to social polarization. One of the main causes of this phenomenon lies in the nature of the medium itself. Channels of exchange such as the most widely used social networks, X/Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and others, respond to market logic and the satisfaction of their users. So, they develop their algorithms not on the basis of impartiality and fair distribution of information, but on what the user wants to read and see. This gives rise to phenomena now known as Echo Chambers, which increase the perception of being inside a bubble²⁴. Only in recent years are major social platforms activating mechanisms for fact-checking, as well as monitoring violent language. It is possible to identify as a further obstacle the slowness of state regulatory bodies to adapt to the ever-changing situation. Within the traditional school world, media education is still a rare subject and is not included in ministerial curricula.

23 <https://www.agendadigitale.eu/infrastrutture/il-digital-divide-culturale-e-una-nuova-discriminazione-sociale/>

24 <https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/digital-media-literacy/what-is-an-echo-chamber/1/>

At the same time, legal measures to protect against disinformation are still debated and clash with the need for the protection of the right to speech and free thought. Often, moreover, the authorities that oversee the monitoring of traditional media have no power in the world of the Internet, creating substantial regulatory holes. The legal aspects, however, will be explored in the next section of the guide.

On the other hand, several opportunities are emerging in the field of media education. The main opportunity is precisely the European Union, which is leading national governments toward greater attention to the issue. From European directives, national action plans are being developed that are giving a new impulse to the issue by funding projects to educate and curb misinformation. Another opportunity arises as an effect of the most catastrophic global event in recent years: the COVID-19 pandemic. The need to keep work and education alive during the COVID-19 emergency quickly spread distance learning and work practices, overcoming physical difficulties²⁵. In this way, doing training becomes easier, especially for adults, workers, marginalized people, and those with language and physical difficulties.

An opportunity comes from the increasing collaboration between civil society, academia, media organizations and technology companies. The awareness achieved about the media and its power, may lead to more effective strategies for dealing with disinformation. Lastly, it is important not to overlook the ambivalence that the phenomenon of artificial intelligence, a technology that is increasingly elaborate but also more accessible, is taking on. Nowadays, the risks regarding the protection of intellectual property rights and the spread of fake news are the main narrative. However, it would be important to explore more the potential of AIs in the fight against disinformation. Since AI can now process and analyse a huge amount of data in a very short time, it could find applications in fact checking, debunking, and the educational field and be a strong ally in this process.

25 <https://www.wired.it/attualita/politica/2020/11/11/pandemia-lato-positivo-cose-importanti/>

5. Analysis of the legal framework

IN BRIEF:

All involved countries prioritize freedom of speech and press, but variations exist in the scope of protections and legal limitations.

While each country has its unique regulatory framework for media supervision, there are common goals of ensuring freedom of speech, upholding ethical standards, and safeguarding public interest. Challenges such as the regulation of online content and ensuring independence remain pertinent across all jurisdictions.

Transparency laws play a vital role in fostering informed societies and ensuring accountability in the media landscape. While each country faces its own unique challenges, a commitment to transparency remains a common thread.

In most countries, there are no dedicated laws addressing misinformation and disinformation; each country approaches misinformation and disinformation differently within its legal framework.

All six countries use criminal law as a tool to combat the dissemination of untrue information, although the specific conditions vary.

Voluntary codes of conduct and self-regulatory mechanisms contribute to fostering trust in media institutions and protecting journalistic integrity. However, their effectiveness relies on the commitment of media organizations and professionals to adhere to the soft-law standards.

The analysis that follows examines the legal and regulatory frameworks in Austria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, and Lithuania regarding freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, media transparency, and combating misinformation, including by means of criminal and civil law. Although the research methods and survey structure were the same for all countries, it was not possible to collect information for some countries. This depends on the composition of the institutions and public authorities in the media field of the countries involved and the legal approach with which they legislate. For this reason, in some sections not all countries will be found.

> 5.1. Constitutional and legislative provisions that protect the freedom of speech, the freedom of expression and the freedom of the press at national level.

Austria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, and Lithuania are members of the European Union (EU); therefore, they are bound by EU law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. They are also members of the Council of Europe and they have ratified the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), article 10 of which reinforces the right to freedom of expression.

- ✓ **Austria:** Freedom of speech is constitutionally protected under Art. 13 of the “Staatsgrundgesetz” (StGG), which guarantees the right to the freedom of expression of opinion. The Media Act includes provisions on the protection of editorial confidentiality.
- ✓ **Cyprus:** The Constitution of Cyprus enshrines freedom of speech and expression in Article 19, along with the freedom of the press. The Press Law (Law 145/1989) ensures the unhindered circulation of newspapers and protects journalists’ right not to reveal their sources.
- ✓ **France:** Freedom of speech and press are protected by the French Constitution, particularly in Articles 1-93. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in 1789 also emphasises the value of free communication of ideas and opinions. The Press Law of 1881 defines the rights and responsibilities of the press. The Audiovisual Communication Law of 1986 protects freedom of the press and the right of expression in the domain of audiovisual media.
- ✓ **Greece:** Greece’s Constitution includes provisions regarding freedom of speech and press in its Article 14. Article 15 addresses the regulation of cinema, phonography, radio, and television, emphasizing the objective transmission of information and cultural development.
- ✓ **Italy:** Article 21 of the Italian Constitution protects the right to express thoughts freely through various means of dissemination. The Press Law 47/1948 regulates press activities, including rules regarding defamation and protection of the people’s right to honour.
- ✓ **Lithuania:** Lithuania’s Constitution, specifically Article 25, provides protection for freedom of expression, including freedom of the press. The ban on censorship and monopolization of mass media is also articulated in Article 44.

All six countries prioritize freedom of speech and press, but variations exist in the scope of protections and legal limitations.

> 5.2. Institutions / regulatory bodies that are responsible for the regulation and supervision of television, radio, and online platforms at national level

In Austria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, and Lithuania, public bodies are tasked with overseeing media operations, issuing licenses, monitoring content, and addressing complaints.

- ✓ **Austria:** The Constitutional Court is responsible for adjudicating cases that violate freedom of speech, freedom of the press, etc. The authority Kommunikationsbehörde Austria (KommAustria) is an independent organisation that monitors electronic, audio and audiovisual media products. It also supervises the public-law broadcaster ORF. The association Presserat sets ethical standards for journalism, promoting high-quality reporting by its members (newspapers, TV and radio stations).
- ✓ **Cyprus:** The Cyprus Radiotelevision Authority (CRTA) oversees broadcasting, issuing licenses and addressing complaints from the public regarding broadcast content. The Committee of Media Ethics Cyprus is an independent self-regulatory body, established by the Association of Newspapers and Periodicals Publishers, the owners of private electronic media and the Cyprus Union of Journalists. The Cyprus Advertising Regulation Organization (CARO) is a self-regulatory organization whose main purpose is the oversee advertising content on all media platforms, ensuring that advertisements comply with relevant laws and ethical standards.
- ✓ **France:** ARCOM is responsible for overseeing the audiovisual and digital communication sectors; it grants licenses to television and radio broadcasters, regulates content to ensure compliance with French laws, monitors media ownership to prevent monopolies, and protects minors from harmful content. ARCEP is a regulatory body that ensures regulation in the electronic communications, postal services, and press distribution sectors.
- ✓ **Greece:** The Secretariat General for Media and Communication supervises all media forms. The National Council for Radio and Television (NORTV) ensures compliance with broadcasting regulations. Greece lacks a dedicated supervisory body for internet content.
- ✓ **Italy:** The Authority for Guarantees in Communications (AGCOM) is the independent regulatory authority that oversees the media, including television, radio and the telecommunications sector. The National Council of the Order of Journalists (CNOG) is a professional body that regulates the journalism profession.
- ✓ **Lithuania:** The Communications Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Lithuania (CRA) regulates electronic communications, postal, and rail markets, ensuring fair competition and consumer-friendly services. It also supervises trust service providers.

While each country has its unique regulatory framework for media supervision, there are common goals of ensuring freedom of speech, upholding ethical standards, and safeguarding public interest. Challenges such as the regulation of online content and ensuring independence remain pertinent across all jurisdictions.

> 5.3. Laws that improve platform transparency

Across Austria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, and Lithuania, legislative frameworks and initiatives are in place to promote transparency in the media landscape. All six countries, as EU member states, will have to implement the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA), which will further enhance transparency and accountability in the digital sphere.

- ✓ **Austria:** The Medientransparenzgesetz aims to ensure transparency in the media sector. This law mandates entities to report advertisement-related costs to KommAustria. Additionally, the Presserat provides a platform for citizens to lodge complaints about media transgressions. However, the function of the Presserat is not part of any legislation, while the government reportedly wants to cut its funding.
- ✓ **Cyprus:** Cyprus lacks specific laws dedicated exclusively to platform transparency and media literacy.
- ✓ **France:** Laws like the 2017 Law for Trust in Public Institutions and the Sapin II Law aim to combat corruption, promote transparency, and ensure accountability.
- ✓ **Greece:** The Greek legislative framework aims to foster transparency, pluralism, and equality in the media sector. Laws like 3592/2007 and 4339/2015 and Presidential Decree 77/2003 emphasize equal transmission of information and transparency in media ownership.
- ✓ **Italy:** Italy's legal framework promotes transparency and access to information through laws like 241/90 and the Transparency Decree 33/2013. These laws ensure public access to government information and foster transparency in public administration. Furthermore, laws such as Law 150/2000 establish guidelines for media reporting and journalist conduct.
- ✓ **Lithuania:** Among the applicable laws, we can mention the Law on Public Information, the Law on the Right to Receive Information from State and Municipal Institutions and Bodies, the Law on National Radio and Television, the Law on the Protection of Minors from the Negative Effects of Public Information, the Law on Electronic Communications, etc.

Transparency laws play a vital role in fostering informed societies and ensuring accountability in the media landscape. While each country faces its own unique challenges, a commitment to transparency remains a common thread.

> 5.4. Laws specifically dealing with misinformation and disinformation

- ✓ **Austria:** Currently, Austria lacks laws that specifically target misinformation and disinformation.
- ✓ **Cyprus:** Similarly, Cyprus does not have dedicated laws addressing misinformation and disinformation. Instead, existing criminal and civil laws are utilized to tackle these issues.
- ✓ **France:** The French Criminal Code encompasses sections addressing offenses related to defamation, false information, and incitement to hatred. Recent legislation, including the 2021 Law Reinforcing the Respect of Principles of the Republic and the 2020 Law Against Hateful Content on the Internet, targets hate speech and the manipulation of information online.
- ✓ **Greece:** Presidential Decree 77/2003 outlines provisions emphasizing the transmission of accurate information by media outlets. Law 4855/2021 specifically targets the propagation of fake news, whether publicly or through online platforms, if such news has the potential to instigate fear or concern among citizens, or undermine public confidence in the national economy, defence capabilities, or public health.

- ✓ **Italy:** Criminal and civil laws are utilized to tackle the issue of misinformation and disinformation.
- ✓ **Lithuania:** There is no legislation specifically dealing with misinformation and disinformation.

In most countries, there are no dedicated laws addressing misinformation and disinformation; each country approaches misinformation and disinformation differently within its legal framework.

> 5.5. General criminal law framework on libel, defamation, slander and whether it covers misinformation and disinformation.

The general criminal law frameworks on libel, defamation, and slander in Austria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, and Lithuania covers some aspects of misinformation and disinformation.

- ✓ **Austria:** Historically, Paragraph 276 of the Strafgesetzbuch (criminal code) addressed spreading false, disturbing rumors, albeit without notable enforcement. The 2021 law “Hass-im-Netz-Bekämpfungs-Gesetz” (Combat Hate in the net law) made it easier for individuals to sue single postings in the net that spread hate or violence against one individual person or one group for the above-mentioned reasons. In 2023, the European Court of Justice found that this law violated the ECHR.
- ✓ **Cyprus:** Article 50 of the Criminal Code addresses the dissemination of false news or information that may undermine public order or public confidence in the State or its institutions, or cause fear or anxiety in the public or violate in any way public peace and order. Penalties include imprisonment and fines. The Market Abuse Law of 2016 specifically targets the dissemination of fake news with the intention of influencing financial markets.
- ✓ **France:** Defamation is the primary offense; it encompasses both written defamation and spoken defamation. In addition, there is the offense of the publication of false news. For defamation, the individual must know that the information is false. However, in some instances, there is an offense if there was reckless disregard for the truth or falsity of the information. The sanctions for these offenses may include fines and imprisonment, with the severity of the penalties dependent on the seriousness of the offense.
- ✓ **Greece:** Article 362 of the Criminal Code aims to combat false statements that damage an individual's honour or reputation. The severity of penalties escalates for offenses committed publicly or through online channels. Article 363 of the Criminal Code mandates imprisonment for knowingly spreading falsehoods, with even harsher penalties for online dissemination.
- ✓ **Italy:** Article 595 of the Criminal Code imposes criminal penalties for those who offend others' reputation. If the offense is committed through the press or any other means of publicity, sanctions are more severe. In the case of slander, it is irrelevant if the offense is true or false. In fact, the offense is limited to the moral injury of the offended person. The norm also applies in the case of spreading and publishing defamatory content online.
- ✓ **Lithuania:** Article 154 of the Criminal Code states that anyone who disseminates untrue information about another person, which may disparage or humiliate that person or undermine trust in him commits a criminal offense and imposes fines or imprisonment for such offense. Information can be disseminated in written, oral or other material form.

All countries use criminal law as a tool to combat the dissemination of untrue information, although the specific conditions vary.

> 5.6. Civil law framework on libel, defamation, slander and whether it covers misinformation and disinformation

Civil law framework provides avenues for addressing libel, defamation, and slander, which can extend to misinformation and disinformation.

- ✓ **Cyprus:** Cyprus's civil law framework offers recourse for addressing misinformation and disinformation through defamation laws (Civil Offenses Act, Chapter 148). Defamation encompasses false statements that harm a person's reputation or expose them to contempt or ridicule. The plaintiff must prove the statement's falsity, dissemination to at least one other person, identifiable subject, harm to reputation, and either malice or negligence. Defences in defamation cases include truth, privilege, and fair comment. Remedies for defamation may include compensation in the form of damages or injunctive orders.
- ✓ **France:** Civil defamation cases in France typically require the plaintiff to prove the statement's falsity, harm to reputation or economic interests, and negligence or malice. Defences in defamation cases include truth, privilege, opinions, or public interest. Compensation sought in civil defamation cases may cover both material and moral damages.
- ✓ **Italy:** The Slander Law (Law 47/1948) protects individuals' honour. While not specifically targeting misinformation or disinformation, the law seeks to balance freedom of expression with the protection of personality rights. It allows for the exercise of the right to inform, even if it results in injury to others' personality rights, provided the information is of public interest, objective, and substantially true.
- ✓ **Lithuania:** Under Article 2.24 of the Civil Code, a person has the right to demand in a court of law the denial of published data that humiliates their honour and dignity and does not correspond to reality, as well as compensation for the material and non-material damage caused to them by the dissemination of such data.

Some common elements emerge from this analysis. To succeed in a defamation claim, the plaintiff must generally prove the falsity of the statement, its dissemination to at least one other person, the identifiable subject, harm to reputation, and malice or negligence depending on the case's circumstances. Defences in defamation cases include truth, privilege, and fair comment. Remedies for defamation include compensation in the form of damages or injunctive orders preventing further dissemination of defamatory material.

> 5.7. Relevant soft-law instruments that have been enacted at national level

Soft-law instruments complement legislation and regulations by promoting responsible journalism and upholding democratic values.

- ✓ **Austria:** The Presserat is a self-regulatory institution that oversees compliance with a code of ethics adopted by its members. Presserat's members include major players in the Austrian media sector. The code sets high standards for accuracy, distinguishes between opinions and factual articles, addresses third-party influence, and outlines various principles of journalistic work.

- ✓ **Cyprus:** The Code of Journalistic Ethics operates on the principle of self-regulation and has been ratified by various bodies representing the media industry. Cyprus's Radio and Television Stations Law empowers the CRTA Authority to impose administrative penalties on audiovisual media service providers for violating the Code of Journalistic Ethics.
- ✓ **France:** The French Press Council serves as an independent self-regulatory body for print and digital media. Initiatives like the European Digital Media Observatory and fact-checking organizations such as "Les Décodeurs" and "CheckNews" contribute to combating misinformation and promoting ethical journalism.
- ✓ **Greece:** The Code of Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility for journalists provides guiding principles for journalistic conduct. This code emphasizes truthfulness, non-discrimination, privacy protection, and responsible reporting.
- ✓ **Italy:** The Code of Ethics for Journalists, included in Law 675/96, provides ethical and professional guidelines for journalists. Developed by the Order of Journalists, this code emphasizes principles such as objectivity, impartiality, respect for human dignity, accuracy, independence, and the defence of freedom of the press.
- ✓ **Lithuania:** The Code of Ethics of Lithuanian journalists and publishers serves as a soft-law instrument to guide journalistic conduct and promote ethical standards within the media industry.

Voluntary codes of conduct and self-regulatory mechanisms contribute to fostering trust in media institutions and protecting journalistic integrity. However, their effectiveness relies on the commitment of media organizations and professionals to adhere to the soft-law standards.

> 5.8. New and relevant legislative initiatives / amendments of existing legislation that are underway.

Austria, Cyprus, France, and Lithuania explore legislative initiatives and amendments to combat the spread of false information and uphold journalistic integrity.


- ✓ **Austria:** The Austrian government is preparing a law ("Bundesgesetz über die Förderung des qualitätsvollen Journalismus in Medien des Print- und Online-Bereichs") to establish higher quality and transparency standards, particularly regarding publicly funded advertisements. The initiative aims to include online-based media providers. Additionally, the government plans to introduce a freedom of information law, ensuring proactive publication of public information starting from 2025. While the State Protection Office seeks better monitoring tools for combating fake news and misinformation, there are no concrete plans to change legislation yet.
- ✓ **Cyprus:** Despite many discussions on criminalizing offensive online content, there have been no concrete legislative initiatives regarding fake news in Cyprus.
- ✓ **France:** France is considering the implications of EU regulations, notably the Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA), which aim to enhance transparency and accountability for online platforms and social media across EU member states.
- ✓ **Lithuania:** Lithuania's government has supported a bill mandating social networks to remove disinformation spread by fake profiles or bots.

While Austria and Lithuania are actively pursuing legislative measures to regulate online content and support quality journalism, Cyprus is still in the debate stage regarding potential criminalization of offensive online behaviour.

6. Overview of the target group needs and analysis of the chances, obstacles, needs and concerns

This section will present the most important results of the field research, carried out involving the main target group and stakeholders, as specified in the section Methodology. This part of the research plays an important and essential role since it provides the perspectives not only of the people working with the media and the information and education sector, but also potential adult beneficiaries of the project. Specifically, this latter is crucial in order to develop tailor-made content close to people's real needs and also to get to know people's perceptions of the media.

In total, the partnership managed to involve 74 people, divided according to the following profiles and countries. In the following paragraphs, the results of all the consultations will be analyzed:

	Centro per lo Sviluppo Creativo Danilo Dolci ITALY	SYNCRIFY FRANCE	Athens Lifelong Learning Institute (ALLI) GREECE	Vsi Socialiniu inovaciju centras(SOCIN) LITHUANIA	Neapolis University Pafos (NUP) CYPRUS	BürgerInnen Forum Europa (BFE) AUSTRIA	TOTAL PEOPLE INVOLVED PER PROFILE
General public (adults)	5	4	20	5	5	6	45
Adult education providers and educators	1	1	1	1	3	0	7
Digitalization experts and web developers	1	1	2	1	0	1	6
Government or local or regional public authorities	0	1	0	1	2	1	5
Legal experts	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
News media agencies and channels	1	1	1	0	0	1	4
Social media influencers	0	1	0	1	0	1	3
TOTAL PER COUNTRY	9	10	24	10	10	11	74

IN BRIEF:

- **Disinformation and misinformation**

In some countries, the distinction is not recognised mainly for linguistic reasons. In general, there is consensus on both as dangerous phenomena. Some believe that disinformation is more harmful because it is designed to cause deliberate damage.

- **Attitudes Towards Media**

Growing criticism of traditional media as non-objective. Preference for online media with concern about the influence of artificial intelligence on the credibility of information. In general, tendency to prefer certified, high-quality information sources

- **Lesson learnt and experiences Social networks**

General acceptance of social media as an information tool.

Increased awareness of the risks associated with the use of social media. Importance of social media for coverage of topics not covered by traditional media. General awareness of the risks of disinformation and news manipulation on social media.

- **Trade-off: Quality or quantity of information**

General preference for high quality information, even if this means receiving less. Awareness of the need for more attention to the quality of journalism.

- **Critical Thinking and Analysis**

Awareness of the complexity of discerning the truth and interpreting news accurately and objectively. Negative emotions when discovering that a piece of news considered true is false.

- **Proactive Measures and Education**

Importance of providing tools to assess the reliability of information and to distinguish between verified and fake news. General emphasis on education in critical thinking, information security and data privacy. Adaptation of programs to emergency situations and differentiation of teaching according to age, profession or interests.

All project partners organized focus groups, involving at least five adults aged between 18 and 65. The focus groups were structured by six thematic areas, in order to address different aspects related to the topic. The thematic areas were: Disinformation and misinformation; Attitudes Towards Media; Lesson learnt and experiences; Social networks; Trade-off: Quality or quantity of information; Critical Thinking and Analysis; Proactive Measures and Education. What will be offered below is a comparative summary of the research results, but for more information please refer to the research on each country, available under request. Lastly, it is fair to mention that these results do not claim to have statistical validity, rather they serve to observe multiple viewpoints and issues that are dear to the project's target audience.

> Disinformation and misinformation

To start with, participants were asked if they knew the distinction between disinformation and misinformation and which of the two they considered more dangerous. The results varied; in some countries the distinction between the two terms is not known, mainly for linguistic reasons, because there is no correspondent for the term "misinformation" and it tends to be considered synonymous to disinformation. In **Italy**, the distinction between disinformation and misinformation is not clear to many participants. However, there is a general consensus that both phenomena are dangerous. Misinformation is wrongly

perceived as distorted information with a minimum degree of truthfulness, while disinformation is seen as completely wrong news. In **Cyprus**, participants understood that misinformation and disinformation are different concepts in English, but they found it difficult to define them. Some felt that the two terminologies were different in terms of the scale of inaccuracy, while others felt that both were equally dangerous. In Lithuania, many participants were curious about the distinction between disinformation and misinformation, but most did not know the difference. Some participants thought they were similar phenomena and saw no distinction. In **Greece**, it was noted that disinformation is considered more dangerous than misinformation because it is designed to cause deliberate harm. However, according to the Greek participants both phenomena can have a negative impact on society, especially among the older citizens and vulnerable groups. In **Austria** and **France**, all participants were well informed about the difference between misinformation and misinformation. It is agreed that deliberate disinformation is more dangerous, especially in relation to recent crises such as the Covid19 pandemic and international conflicts, which have contributed to the spread of fake news.

> Attitudes Towards Media

Participants were asked which information medium they feel safest with and why. In Italy, distrust of traditional news media is clearly evident, with a preference for online sources such as podcasts and social media. This suggests a growing search for authenticity and transparency in information, with greater trust in sources managed by individuals rather than large media organizations. In **Cyprus**, distrust of traditional media is also predominant, with a preference for online sources that offer a wide range of viewpoints. However, unlike Italy, it appears that Cypriot participants are more inclined to consult multiple sources to gain a more comprehensive view of events. In **France**, the most widely used are TV and social networks, chosen more out of habit than the need to retrieve information. In **Austria**, there is a variety of sources used by participants, ranging from traditional newspapers to sensationalist media. However, there is an emerging criticism of public media, which is considered to be unobjective and geared toward a specific age group. This points to an increased focus on the plurality of sources and their neutrality in news coverage. In **Greece**, participants primarily seek reliable and verified sources of information, preferring online media where information can be verified and cross-referenced. Concern about the influence of artificial intelligence on the credibility of information is a recurring theme, indicating a growing awareness of the risks associated with news manipulation. Finally, in **Lithuania**, there is some trust in TV news, but participants are also aware of the spread of misinformation and try to confirm news through reliable sources. However, some also show trust in political commentators, who are considered reliable sources. So, it emerges in general a trend toward **greater distrust of traditional media and a preference for online and other alternative sources in all partner countries**. However, there are **significant differences in the approach to seeking reliable information and attitudes** toward public media, indicating the importance of considering each country's cultural and social context when analyzing media behaviour.

> Lesson learnt and experiences Social networks

When participants were asked for their thoughts about social media, a variety of opinions and attitudes toward them emerged, reflecting cultural differences and participants' individual experiences. In **Italy**, participants expressed broad acceptance of the usefulness of social networks as a tool for staying informed. They highlighted the diversity of topics covered and the immediacy of information available on social media. Specifically, some participants, especially younger ones, mentioned using platforms such as Instagram and Facebook to follow news and updates, while others preferred platforms such as Telegram to participate in thematic groups and share information with people with similar interests. However, there was also an awareness of the need to check the reliability of sources and accuracy of information, given the widespread presence of misinformation and specifically misinformation on social media. In **Cyprus**, participants showed similar attitudes toward the use of social media as a source of information. They emphasized the convenience and accessibility of information on social media, but also expressed

concern about the spread of fake news and misinformation. Some participants emphasized the need to be cautious when selecting sources and evaluating information found on social media. In **France**, everyone agreed on the usefulness of social networks and used them regularly, with no difference of opinion. Even those who had preferred the newspaper to inform themselves recognize the usefulness of social networks. In **Austria**, opinions were more divergent than in other countries. While some participants said they did not use social media at all to stay informed, others recognized its value as a source of news. However, there was widespread awareness about the risks associated with its usage, such as polarization and lack of dialogue between groups with different opinions. In **Greece**, participants highlighted the importance of social media in covering topics not covered by traditional media and in facilitating information sharing among groups with similar interests. However, concern was expressed about the risks associated with the spread of fake news and the collection of personal data on social media. Finally, in **Lithuania**, participants recognized the usefulness of social media in providing information, but they also emphasized the risks associated with privacy and the possibility of being exposed online. Some participants emphasized the need to be critical of information found on social media and to verify its credibility. Overall, the results reflect a widespread awareness of the importance of social media as a source of information, but also of the risks associated with its use. Concerns emerge regarding the spread of misinformation and disinformation, as well as online privacy and security. However, there is also recognition of the value of social media in facilitating information sharing and participation in online communities with common interests.

> Trade-off: Quality or quantity of information

Participants were asked if in a paradoxical trade off they would prefer to receive less but quality-certified, “slow” information or to have a constant flow of information – as it is the case now - without having the guarantee of being 100% true . The results show a strong common trend toward a preference for high-quality and reliable information, although this preference is expressed in slightly different ways. In Italy, participants emphasized the importance of having certified and quality information, even though this might mean less news. Some highlighted the need for more control over the source of information to ensure its reliability. There is also a preference for a more careful selection of news, rather than an overabundance of low-quality information. In **Cyprus**, most participants agreed on the importance of both elements, but emphasized a preference for quality over quantity. Some highlighted the problem of conspiracy theories invading social media and the difficulties in distinguishing between truth and conspiracy theories. This suggests a growing awareness of the risks associated with the dissemination of unverified and uncertified information. Also in **Austria**, as well as in **Lithuania** and **France**, all participants opted for less but higher quality information, indicating a preference for information based on quality rather than quantity. In **Greece**, most participants highlighted the importance of critical thinking and similarly to the other countries agreed on a preference for high-quality information. There was also a discussion of the - sometimes wrong - perception that Internet contains only low-quality information and a call for more emphasis on quality journalism.

> Critical Thinking and Analysis

Regarding critical thinking, participants were asked how consciously they can be objective when reading the news, what their reactions were when they find out that a news story they believed in turns out to be false and whether they considered the truth always attainable. The results indicate a general awareness of the challenge in discerning the truth and interpreting news accurately and objectively, with differences in individual levels of confidence in their ability to do so and emotional reactions to the discovery of fake news. Specifically, In **Italy** and **Austria**, participants shared some confidence in their ability to read news critically, especially on topics that interest them. However, when confronted with news that turns out to be fake after being considered reliable, they feel a sense of discouragement and distrust. This suggests an awareness of the complexity in discerning the truth and a certain caution in blindly relying

on information sources. In **Cyprus** and **France**, participants recognize the importance of reading news critically, but are less confident in their ability to do so successfully. When they discover that a piece of news they believed in turns out to be false, they feel disappointment, although some believe that the nature of the news influences the degree to which they react emotionally. In **Greece**, there is greater awareness of limitations in the ability to read news critically and objectively. Participants emphasize the importance of media literacy and critical thinking, recognizing the complexity in discerning the truth in an era of abundant and often contradictory information. In Lithuania, participants recognize the need to critically evaluate news, but admit that they do not always actively do so. When they discover that a piece of news they considered to be true turns out to be false, they experience a range of negative emotions, highlighting the fragility of trust in information sources.

> Proactive Measures and Education

As a final question, participants were asked what topics they think should be included in a media literacy education program, from the perspective of the information consumer. Participants from all countries agreed on the importance of **providing tools for assessing the reliability of information, teaching methods for distinguishing verified from fake news, and developing basic skills for correctly interpreting information and analyzing sources**. In addition, it is important to enhance critical reading of news, encouraging the ability to discern and defend against unverified or false information. This also includes **education on media operations and analysis of hidden messages in media content**. In parallel, practical guidance should be provided on properly **verifying information and promoting attention to reliable sources**. In addition, the importance of developing critical thinking and the ability to form informed opinions is emphasized, as it is education on cybersecurity and data privacy. It is crucial to adapt the program to changing situations, especially during times of crisis, such as wars or other emergencies. Finally, it was suggested that media literacy should be taught differentially according to age, profession, or interests, and also include other topics such as **artificial intelligence** and journalistic and **ethical** practices.

Individual interviews

IN BRIEF:

● **Adult education providers and educators:**

- Adapted content to adults' interests and experiences with media.
- Practical sessions and interactive approaches such as gamification.
- Importance of raising awareness of the impact of digital media on real-world decisions.
- Need to combat hate speech.
- Flexibility and constant updating of contents to adapt to changing media

● **Digitalization experts and web developers:**

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) fundamental to handling large amounts of data.
- AI as a tool to identify sources of fake news and detect manipulated content
- Concern about the potential for AI to spread disinformation.
- Innovative practices such as citizen journalism and tools such as internet plugins.

● **Government and public authorities:**

- Approaches to ensure quality information and improve media literacy programs.
- Stricter enforcement of existing laws and European regulations.
- Promoting fact-checking skills among citizens.
- Awareness-raising campaigns and resources such as CheckMate to combat disinformation.
- Strong role of the EU in promoting media competence among voters.

● **Legal experts:**

- International cooperation in the fight against disinformation.
- Need for Europe-wide regulations and awareness campaigns.
- Stricter regulation of social platforms and laws against hate.
- Integration of media literacy into school curricula.
- Measures such as personal identification for Internet access to combat fake news.

● **News media agencies:**

- Changing role of journalists in the digital age.
- Importance of fact-checking and transparency.
- Opportunities and risks associated with social media.
- The challenge of maintaining credibility despite information overload.
- The importance of balancing visibility and reliability.

● **Social media influencers:**

- Shared responsibility to disseminate accurate information.
- Need to promote media literacy.
- Need to actively engage in critical awareness and verification of information.
- The importance of collaboration between influencers, social platforms and educational institutions.

In this section, the results of interviews with project stakeholders will be summarized. Those professional figures working in the field of media and education were identified as stakeholder categories:

- ✓ Adult education providers and educators;
- ✓ Digitalization experts and web developers;
- ✓ Government or local or regional public authorities;
- ✓ Legal experts;
- ✓ News media agencies and channels;
- ✓ Social media influencers

Each respondent was asked the same questions as in the focus groups plus some questions more inherent to their work in the topic of media literacy.

> Adult education providers and educators

For the adult education providers and educators interviewed, the focus of the interview was more on what topics should be included within a media literacy educational program, how to increase adult engagement for media literacy educational programs, and what innovative educational tools or methods can be included in a media literacy program for adults.

Overall, from all the interviews participants stated that to ensure an effective media literacy educational program for adults, it is crucial to take an engaging and direct approach that takes into account their prior experiences and knowledge regarding media and social media use. Starting from this base, it is possible to build a training course that provides them with the tools they need to understand and critically evaluate the information they encounter online. This could include hands-on sessions in which adults can explore the various features of social media and learn to distinguish between trusted sources and fake news. In addition, it is important to make adults aware of the impact that the digital world can have on the real one, highlighting how information conveyed through media can influence opinions, emotions, and everyday decisions. This aspect is pretty crucial since it can be also interconnected to the hate speech issue, which is widespread in many online environments. To increase adults' interest and engagement with media literacy programs, it is crucial to make the content relevant to their daily lives and areas of interest.

This could mean exploring topics such as the use of pictures on social media or the impact of digital communication on interpersonal relationships. Using interactive approaches, such as group discussions, hands-on activities, and simulations of real-world situations, can help adults better understand the concepts covered and apply them in their everyday lives (especially gamification would be an approach to be included in this educational offer). Lastly, it is important to ensure that media literacy programs for adults are flexible and able to adapt to changing situations and new challenges that may emerge in the contemporary media environment. This may require constant updating of content and integration of new educational tools and resources, especially during times of crisis such as wars or health emergencies. In this way, it will be possible to provide adults with the skills needed to critically and consciously navigate today's media landscape.

> Digitalization experts and web developers

Regarding digitalization experts and web developers, they were firstly asked about what are the main innovations that can be adapted to the world of news, according to their opinion. The answers were unanimous: in the digital world, the main innovation is artificial intelligence (AI), which can handle large amounts of data and organise information efficiently, helping humans to process information. However, AI raises concerns about the manipulation of public discussions and the dissemination of misinformation. At the same time, the increasing availability of AI-powered technologies could lead to the creation of

algorithm-generated news. Other developments include citizen journalism, reported in some cases as a positive trend. The Internet and podcasts are seen as important innovations in the news sector, more because of the impact their new applications are generating. To the question “What are the tools that can be developed to find out the truthfulness of circulating news?” the answer was always centred on AI, identifying a viable alternative in training artificial intelligence to independently identify news sources and to detect which photos and videos have been artificially created, although this process is still at the beginning. The use of artificial intelligence and geolocation services can in fact be very useful, just as other fact-checking tools and reporting platforms are equally crucial for verifying news. However, developing effective tools is difficult, as fake news changes as quickly as it is created, and the development of critical and analytical thinking by citizens is necessary. Finally, when asked how search engine and social network algorithms can improve the quality of information, the interviewees mentioned some interesting approaches. One is to use algorithms to identify the origin of news, avoiding the dissemination of articles without substantive content and carefully analysing the text against the title to identify discrepancies. However, the willingness of social media companies is crucial to make significant changes, as algorithm changes can directly affect revenue and user interaction. It is therefore necessary to improve regulations and the legal framework to incentivise responsible behaviour by platforms. It is therefore possible to monitor algorithms and develop systems to predict the reliability of news, although large-scale implementation requires the reprocessing of a massive mass of data. In addition, the use of AI-algorithms to filter spam and reduce advertising could help improve the user experience.

> Government or local or regional public authorities

Public authorities in the field of media and education were met for the interviews. In some cases, there were difficulties in tracking them down, which means on the one hand a significant distance in some countries between the authorities and the citizens, and on the other hand the lack of clear and uniformly spread institutional roles in the different countries. The interviewed authorities were basically asked about two main topics: a) how laws can further ensure quality information and protect the community and the democratic process from the impact of misinformation and disinformation; b) what governments or local/regional public authorities can do to improve the effectiveness of adult media education programmes. For the first question, the answers highlight different approaches to ensure quality information. In **Cyprus**, harsher penalties and their strict enforcement are proposed; in **France**, the challenges of enforcing strict laws without compromising democracy, especially on social media, are emphasised. **Austria** promotes the adoption of European regulations such as the Digital Services Act to increase online transparency and counter disinformation, insisting on the importance of strict enforcement of these regulations. Finally, **Lithuania** proposes strengthening freedom of speech and journalistic ethics as a preventive measure. Regarding actions to increase the effectiveness of media literacy programmes, **Cyprus** suggests an approach that focuses on correct information through the organisation of seminars, conferences and workshops, which aim to provide an adequate understanding of media issues. In **France**, a greater involvement and allocation of resources for updating and optimising educational programmes is proposed, along with the creation of incentives to stimulate the active participation of adults. In addition, the importance of raising awareness of disinformation issues is highlighted, with a focus on the use of artificial intelligence resources. In **Austria**, the interviewed authority suggests promoting specific projects such as CheckMate, aimed at raising awareness about disinformation and teaching people how to recognise it. These programmes also include the acquisition of fact-checking skills, which are essential for identifying correct and trustworthy information. In addition, the active role that the European Union and the European Parliament can play in raising awareness of the challenges associated with misinformation & disinformation is emphasised, especially in the run-up to the European elections, in order to ensure a fair and fact-based election campaign and at the same time strengthen the media competence of voters. Finally, **Lithuania**'s proposal focuses on the importance of informing society about false information, suggesting a direct communication strategy to counteract the spread of misinformation and raise awareness of the importance of critically evaluating information sources.

> Legal experts

The first question asked to the legal experts concerns how the countries involved cooperate internationally to combat disinformation. In general, all countries involved cooperate within the European institutions, mainly through their elected representatives. Moreover, in **Italy**, the fight against disinformation involves several fronts, although it is not yet significantly developed. The country cooperates through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by funding projects to verify information procedures. Currently, a revision of the 2018 EU action plan against disinformation is being discussed, with a number of meetings and steps being taken, including the creation of an alert system to monitor defamation and disinformation campaigns. On the other hand, **Austria** recognises the need to find new ways to fight fake news on a European level rather than a national one, considering the possible consequences of too strict rules on social media. The main approach should respect the constitution. Given the presence of authors of fake news outside the EU, it is considered very important to cooperate on effective campaigns and regulations against propaganda. **France** emerges as an active participant in the fight against disinformation, with numerous national campaigns and frequent statements from the Elysée Palace. Its participation is clearly visible on the national and international front. When asked about international agreements in the field of education, the **Italian** expert indicates that although there are international agreements within the European Union (EU), no international agreements have been established exclusively between Italy and other countries outside the EU concerning the fight against disinformation. However, in 2017, a legislative draft was presented that would have introduced new criminal offences to prevent the manipulation of information online.

Currently, this draft law represents the main legal framework concerning disinformation in Italy. **France**, on the other hand, introduced the 'loi infox' in 2018, aimed at countering information manipulation and fake news. **Lithuania** reported a strengthening of the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation in June 2022. The aim is for this code to be recognised as a code of conduct under the Digital Services Act. The EU code of practice to combat misinformation is being strengthened by encouraging signatory countries to report their actions against misinformation concerning the coronavirus every month. The question as to whether there is a legal obligation for schools to have media education programmes reveals a not very up-to-date picture of the countries involved: in **Italy**, although there is no legal obligation, the expert interviewed considers it necessary to introduce more public education and awareness of disinformation through a reform of the educational structure, starting from schools up to universities. In **Austria**, the ultimate goal is a society 'vaccinated' against disinformation, with a focus both on prevention, through media education and fact-checking, and on exposing disinformation itself through information campaigns and investigations. In **France**, there is no legal obligation, but awareness is advocated, although it may be difficult to legalise it in public education.

Lithuania, on the other hand, refers to the Law on Public Information of the Republic of Lithuania and the methodology already in place in the country to deal with disinformation. In general, there is a common opinion on the importance of increased public education and awareness-raising on disinformation, although the details of implementation vary from country to country. Finally, our legal experts were asked for a recommendation for legal measures to combat the spread of disinformation more effectively. The responses offer a number of significant points of view. The Italian expert drastically proposes access to the Internet based on personal identification to make the creators and promoters of disinformation responsible for their actions.

In **Austria**, the need for an EU-wide awareness-raising campaign and the formation of a network of experts to regularly identify and report fake news is emphasised. Greater EU cooperation and the creation of EU-wide regulations are also recommended. In **France**, the expert suggests stricter regulation of social platforms, along with anti-hate laws, data and privacy protection, digital transparency and content regulation. Lastly, in **Lithuania**, there is a need to coordinate activities at government level, strengthen strategic communication capacities and include media literacy in school curricula, as well as an adaptation of legal regulations to counter new media disinformation.

> News media agencies and channels

The comparison with information professionals was particularly useful for the research. Indeed, professionals' profile in this field are rapidly changing, just as people's demand for information is changing. Among the questions posed to this category of stakeholders, the one concerning precisely the changing role of information professionals in the post-truth era provided very interesting insights. The answers highlight a significant change in the role of the contemporary journalism. In **Italy**, the risk of losing credibility and professional prestige is emphasised, but also the need to adapt to new tools and maintain the quality of own job. In **Austria**, the growing role of fact-checking is highlighted, especially considering the impact of artificial intelligence and text-generative engine such as Chat GPT on the production of journalistic articles. In **Greece**, the importance of communicating the usefulness and reliability of news to the public is emphasised, while in **France**, the challenge of always finding and reporting the truth in a context of information overload, especially with the advent of social media, is highlighted. These responses reflect the necessary adaptation of journalists to the challenges of the digital age and post-truth, with an increasing emphasis on fact-checking and transparency in informing the public. This shows how crucial the role of journalism actually still is, despite the fact that it often tends to be devalued. Then, it was asked what are the opportunities and risks for news media agencies related to the use of social media. The answers were more or less similar: the danger of losing credibility due to the overabundance of information is emphasised, but similarly it is the opportunity to adapt to the new tools and consolidate authority in the digital context. The wide reach of social media as a means of disseminating news is recognised, but the risk of spreading unverified information is also emphasised. The opportunities for greater visibility offered by social media are also mentioned, but so it is the risk of loss of creativity in trying to reach larger segments of the public. Undoubtedly, the answers reflect the complexity of the contemporary media environment and the importance of finding a balance between accessing the large social media audience and maintaining the quality and reliability of journalistic information.

> Social media influencers

We conclude this section with a summary of the results of the interviews with social media influencers who were asked questions about the degree of responsibility their public persona implies. Influencers are new players in the world of information and their role can be very different. Some of them are carriers of countercultural voices and young or alternative thinking; in other cases they are real celebrities with a strong power over public opinion. The responsibility of social media influencers in the spread of fake news is the topic of one of the questions asked. Moreover, they were asked what role they should play in this context and how they can contribute to educating the public on media literacy.

The interviewees all agreed that influencers, due to their wide reach, have a significant impact and also a great responsibility. The sharing of unverified or false information can fuel misinformation and have serious consequences for society. On the other hand, influencers could play a positive and important role in media literacy education programmes. They can use their notoriety to promote critical awareness and teach the public to critically evaluate online information. This requires an active engagement of influencers in promoting the accuracy and precision of information. It is essential that they act responsibly and aware of the effect of their actions on public opinion.

Finally, the responses call for collaboration between influencers, social platforms and educational institutions, a meeting that could be crucial in addressing this challenge in an effective and participatory manner.

7. Analysis of the best practices identified

In this section of the guide, the most important best practices in the field of media literacy identified in the countries involved will be presented. Each partner was asked to identify best practices on educational initiatives or policies on the project topics, following specific criteria, thus providing a benchmark through which the partnership will be able to develop the project following steps. The examples given here stand out for their innovations in education and effectiveness, and are initiatives implemented in recent years. For a more in-depth look at all best practices for each country included in the partnership, please refer to the individual country studies, which are annexed to the guide. Subsequently, selected best practices identified in countries that are not part of the partnership will be described, thus providing a more complete framework useful for the purpose of the project.

List of the best practices from the partner countries

For the purpose of clarity and better discursiveness of the guide, the good practices are organised by typology, although it is difficult to categorise many initiatives. In fact, these types of projects often address different aspects of the media theme simultaneously, using a multidisciplinary and transmedia approach. Each good practice is briefly described, highlighting its main features and the innovations it brings.

> Training programmes

The identified media literacy training programs vary significantly, ranging from university curricula to educational programs lasting a few weeks. Specifically, in Cyprus, since 2022, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute has been conducting a Media Literacy Program designed to improve media literacy among teachers, students, and children. The program aims to enable them to access information, become critical consumers and creators of content, protect themselves against misinformation and cyberbullying, and responsibly and safely use their knowledge and imagination to create and communicate messages and ideas. Additionally, the program includes a competition for the Production of Videos by Students for the Creative and Safe Use of the Internet, a crucial aspect of the initiative aimed at applying the acquired knowledge¹.

In **Lithuania**, a university course on media literacy is offered, divided into three main modules: Media, democracy, informed and inclusive citizenship; Digital resilience and media literacy in the era of disinformation; Information verification and fact-checking tools².

In **Italy**, several significant initiatives have been identified: “Digital technologies for actively living” is a training program developed in 2022 to enhance the digital skills of individuals over 60. The project addresses the increasing need for older citizens to use technological and digital tools critically and consciously for active citizenship. The program’s innovation lies in its curriculum, which addresses topics relevant to participants’ daily lives, including health monitoring and online shopping, which are areas where the target group faces challenges. “Educating in digital reading” is a training program developed by the Associazione Literacy Italia for teachers, librarians, and reading promoters.

¹ <https://medialiteracy.pi.ac.cy/>

² <https://www.vdu.lt/lt/study/subject/11156/>

A key aspect of this project is the personalized mentoring offered during the course, allowing participants to explore topics in depth with experienced professionals³. The FREEYOU project, developed in 2021 by MEET - Digital Culture Center and Fondazione Cariplo, consists of five online workshop sessions covering various topics such as misinformation, fact-checking strategies, social media dynamics, and artificial intelligence. The project's main innovation lies in addressing important yet unusual topics such as social media memes and deepfakes, which are highly relevant in today's digital landscape⁴.

Another **Italian** project is Schoolmedia - Journalism Writing Laboratory, a training program developed by Zai.net, School-media, and approved by the Ministry of Education. It is aimed at high school students and young adults, with the objective of teaching how to write articles, emphasizing the process of checking sources and selecting information. This is one of the main reasons why this project has been identified as virtuous, the use of learning by doing: participants develop their skills in media literacy by experiencing all phases of the journalist's work⁵.

In **France**, two training programmes have been identified: the first is Media and Information Literacy - Classroom Activities for Teachers which are workshop sessions organised by CLEMI. CLEMI trainers intervene in schools and organise Déclic'Critique workshops in the first and second degrees. These workshops are filmed and then edited into a 5 minutes video illustrating concrete cases of media and information literacy for teachers. The video modules, broadcasted on CLEMI's YouTube channel, are accompanied by a pedagogical kit including pre-requisites for teachers, the pedagogical sheet and the resources used, so that teachers can implement this activity in class. This approach combines experiential learning with digital accessibility, reaching a broader audience. The use of technology and video content not only enhances engagement but also makes the information more accessible and appealing to a visually-oriented generation, ultimately contributing to improved media and information literacy among students and teachers. The second one is an online course⁶. The *Media Defence's* e-course on digital rights and online freedom of expression litigation is composed of ten modules designed as a reference guide to advocate digital rights cases. The content of these modules spans from key Principles of International Law and Freedom of Expression to hate speech, false news, misinformation and propaganda. To this end, it is designed to educate and equip individuals, particularly legal professionals and activists, with knowledge and skills related to digital rights and online freedom of expression. Participants can leverage their understanding of international legal principles to address similar issues in different regions, promoting freedom of expression. The advocacy skills honed during the course are adaptable to various settings, from legal practice to civil society organisations, enabling individuals to champion digital rights globally. Furthermore, the course equips learners to navigate emerging challenges like defamation, privacy, hate speech, and misinformation, offering valuable expertise applicable in distinct cultural, legal, and political environments.

In **Greece**, the initiatives identified relate more to digital skills than to media literacy, with which, however, it shares many topics. With regard to training programmes, a good practice is the *National Academy of Digital Skills*. It is an initiative of the Ministry of Digital Governance to develop and collect educational content aiming to develop digital skills for all levels of citizens. At the Academy, citizens can find courses that meet their personal needs and help shape their professional profile to meet the demands of the digital era. Moreover, an online platform has been developed, including educational material accessible on a free basis. The self-assessment tool, included in the platform, allows to assess the level of digital skills by answering a few simple questions. Subsequently, and according to the result of the self-assessment, it proposes a personalised course proposal that is perfectly suited to your needs.

3 <https://www.cremi.it/tecnologie-digitali-per-vivere-attivamente-un-progetto-di-educazione-ai-media-rivolto-alla-terza-eta/>

4 <https://www.meetcenter.it/it/freeyou-il-corso-di-formazione-per-la-media-literacy/>

5 <https://schoolmedia.it/Laboratorio-di-scrittura.html>

6 <https://www.cleml.fr/fr/ressources/nos-ressources-videos/ateliers-decllic-critique.html>

> Skill Competence Frameworks

A skill competence framework is a structured outline that delineates the specific skills, abilities, and knowledge required for success in a particular field⁷. These frameworks are designed to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the competencies necessary for individuals to perform effectively in their roles. They serve as a roadmap for curriculum development, training programs, and performance evaluation and typically outline the skills and competencies at different proficiency levels. In the field of media literacy, two frameworks have been identified in the countries involved.

In **Greece**, the Skills Workshops program is divided into four thematic modules, derived from the Global Sustainable Development Indicators (environment, well-being, security, civil society, modern technology, and entrepreneurship) and adapted by age. Each thematic module provides the opportunity to cultivate children's digital skills, particularly: 21st Century Skills, Digital Learning Life skills, Engineering and Science Technology skills, Media Management Skills, and Skills of the Mind. Within this framework, considerable emphasis is placed on skills in the field of media literacy in the digital environment⁸.

In **Cyprus**, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute serves as the coordinator of the Cyber Safety project, which aims to enhance efforts in Cyprus for the creative and safe use of the Internet and to promote the National Strategy for a Better Internet for Children in Cyprus. The project has developed educational and informational materials, resources, and tools, as well as organized campaigns to empower children, young people, parents, and teachers with skills and knowledge about Internet safety. Moreover, it has established a Helpline and Complaints Line, which offers information, advice, and support to children, young people, parents, and teachers⁹.

> Practices or methodologies aiming at boosting critical media literacy skills uptake

Boosting critical media literacy skills uptake involves a range of practices and methodologies designed to help individuals analyze, evaluate, and understand media messages critically. The *Mediterranean Digital Media Observatory* (MedMO) is a regional hub of the European Digital Media Observatory covering **Greece, Cyprus** and Malta. Launched on December 1, 2022, the project, which runs up to May 2025, has received funding from the European Commission Digital Europe programme (2021-2027) for the creation of national hubs on digital media aimed at extending the reach of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO). MedDMO provides new avenues for collaborative fact checking by focusing on emerging disinformation campaigns relevant specifically to the Mediterranean territory. It aims to be a crucial source of knowledge on local information environments. It brings together research, fact-checking and media organizations that conduct internationally acknowledged research work and activities in the area of disinformation. The meddmo.eu portal is the digital gate that hosts the fact-checking work conducted by journalists and researchers from the three participating countries. It also includes the detailed activities of the consortium regarding further promotion of media literacy and news verification methods. Partners are expected to address issues journalistically and scientifically, such as immigration, climate change, health, elections matters and technology – topics that often appear at the center of disinformation campaigns that have polarized the EU¹⁰.

Moreover, in 2023, The Department of Communication and Internet Studies at the Cyprus University of Technology, the Horizon 2020 European project Co-Inform, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, and the U.S. Embassy in Cyprus, announced a funding program to promote a multilateral approach in addressing the problem of misinformation, as a follow-up action of the 2019 Combating Misinformation through Media Literacy conference. As a result of the competition, the Evaluation Committee chose the following two proposals for funding: *Antibodies to MisInformation* by the Open University Cyprus and *Co-creating Media*

7 Gillis A. S., What is a competency framework?, retrieved from <https://www.techtarget.com/searchsoftware/definition/competency-framework>

8 <https://elearning.iep.edu.gr/study/course/index.php?categoryid=44>

9 <https://cybersafety.cy/>

10 <https://meddmo.eu/>

Literate Youth by the Cyprus Youth Council. The first one aims to design, develop and apply to pilot schools a model experiential program for media education against MisInformation; the aim is also to develop the metacognitive attitudes and skills of adolescent students of critically coping with information in digital media. The aim of the second one is to introduce young people of Cyprus, as well as the general public, to media literacy concepts, tools, and skills, such as verification tools and structural issues in media that lead to the rise of misinformation. The project also aims to develop awareness on how misinformation affects democratic processes and leads to the rise of extremism, racism, sexism and other kinds of hate speech as well as to address examples where stereotypes in certain subjects such as gender equality, climate change, LGBTQI+ rights, are wrongly promoted.

In **Austria**, different initiatives of this type have been identified. Mimikama - Fake News Checking: The high amount of fake news circulating in the web has motivated the Viennese organisation Mimikama to develop a channel where individuals can send potential fake news postings or other type of information. Mimikama then analyses every single case in order to provide the user, but also the general public, with a fact check of the related article. The fact-checking process is done not only by the staff but in cooperation with a public forum. The platform itself collects various cases of fake news and dis- and misinformation examples from all the German speaking area. The platform is accessible via hoaxsearch.com and lists all relevant fake news checks already done by the organisation linked to a specific argument. Based on an argument that is brought in by someone, the forum and the Mimikama community tries to investigate the case by checking if the information is correct or not. The collective research activity allows it to reach faster better and more diverse results and facilitates the exchange of ideas and information. The process also guarantees transparency and traceability. After the research is done, the Mimikama editorial staff puts together the results and creates an informative article with the relevant information for users. The results are then published on the website as well as on hoaxsearch.com.

Remaining in **Austria**, The Fake News Bingo is a playful way to examine political discourse and promoting media literacy. It can be utilised in various ways as a part of teaching and other educational work. The tool was originally created under the name “Populism bingo” by a Finnish organisation. The Austrian organisation “Safer Internet” then transformed it to Fake News Bingo with the aim to offer a playful way to improve competences of adults to identify Fake News. The tool is designed to be used when working directly with social media and news. The only thing needed is the bingo chart – that can be downloaded – and the newsfeed of a social media platform. The bingo card functions as a framework for analysis when examining media. The card contains various examples of typical fake news examples, and the purpose of the game is to recognise elements of typical fake news rhetoric in media texts. The tool is not bound to any party politics, but can be used to examine any political text or rhetoric. As in the traditional game of bingo, the winner is the player who first gets to check all the boxes in a row (horizontal, vertical, or diagonal) on their bingo card. The preparation is very simple and it allows adults to directly get involved into fake news on social media. The playful character helps to improve competences in an easy way without long theoretical introductions to the topic. The WebAngels 2.0 project is a methodology designed to enhance the acquisition of critical media literacy skills. This initiative is centred around pragmatic approaches and methods for engaging with online users, with a primary focus on encouraging critical thinking and fostering reflective dialogues to stimulate positive changes in online behaviour.

Engaging eight to ten dedicated volunteers per platform, known as WebAngels, the project initiates targeted interventions, aiming to foster positive changes in the online behaviour of users navigating the thin line between freedom of expression and hate. A key innovation of WebAngels 2.0 is its proactive approach to address online hate. Utilising dedicated volunteers for direct engagement sets it apart, facilitating a reflective dialogue for positive behavioural changes. The incorporation of both established and novel information and counter-speech strategies showcases adaptability and effectiveness in addressing evolving online challenges. APA – Faktencheck is a project specifically designed to address the needs of both individual information consumers and media entities seeking to fortify their fact-checking capabilities. The initiative aims to empower these groups with the skills and resources necessary to discern fact-based information from the vast sea of misinformation prevalent on the internet. The goal is not only to debunk misinformation but also to provide insights into contemporary research methods. Fact-checks

cover diverse topics, extending beyond political statements, ensuring readers derive tangible benefits—access to vital information and protection from misinformation. Relevance is gauged based on the virality of information, impacting societal interest and influencing public opinion. The approach is innovative as it goes beyond reacting to false information; instead, it proactively equips readers to discern between true and false facts. It also sheds light on how news is created in the digital age. The comprehensive fact-checking approach covers various topics, promoting critical thinking across different contexts¹¹.

Another important **Austrian** initiative selected for this guide is the MILES project, by COMMIT an NGO with the aim to further develop non-commercial media players. The organisation sees itself as a platform to further develop the competences and skills of journalists, non-commercial broadcasting operators and adult education institutions. The project produced various material and conducted trainings in several European countries. The media partners are a diverse group of transdisciplinary professionals, whose commonality is that their work is focused on media and information literacy as an integral part of their workshops and training programmes. Projects are realised using participatory methodologies for audio and audio-visual creation and all put community at the centre. Participants that are involved in the trainings got introduced with ethical codes of journalism and learned about the responsibilities that comes with the media production. Activities over 24 months include structured exchanges, local research, five partner meetings, and a teaching/learning event to engage partners, trainers, and trainees¹².

> Policies

In the field of media literacy, policies play a crucial role in shaping educational initiatives and public awareness regarding critical media analysis. These policies outline guidelines for integrating media literacy into school curricula, promote teacher training, and establish partnerships with the media industry to ensure the production of informative and reliable content. Starting with **Greece**, as we have seen above, the practices identified relate more to digital skills than media literacy specifically. The Digital Transformation Bible serves as a documentation of necessary interventions in the technological infrastructure of the state, in the education and training of the population to acquire digital skills, and in how Greece utilizes digital technology across all sectors of the economy and public administration.

Through a collaborative process involving stakeholders, organizations, and civil society, the Digital Transformation Bible outlines the strategy for digital transformation and its execution plan. It goes beyond being a mere declarative strategy document, placing a strong emphasis on implementation, focusing not only on “what” needs to be done but also on “how” it should be done. The interventions outlined in the Digital Transformation Bible aim to fulfil both the essential requirements and the execution of the national digital strategy. The initial cataloguing of crucial projects supporting digital transformation implementation is not exhaustive or restrictive. The action plan remains open and dynamic, subject to continuous co-development and annual updates in coordination with relevant public administration bodies. This iterative process ensures that emerging needs or priorities may lead to additional projects, both horizontally and at sector level, aligning with the overall strategy, guided by the overarching philosophy, and serving the core objectives of the Digital Transformation Bible. The essential measures of the Digital Transformation encompass a range of initiatives and projects categorized into seven distinct strategic axes. This categorization is intentional, taking into account the nature and content of the interventions, aiming to transparently outline the approach to implementing the Digital Transformation Action Plan. Furthermore, there is a deliberate focus on harnessing emerging technologies to create sophisticated solutions that facilitate the achievement of the plan’s objectives¹³.

In **France**, there is ARCOM, the regulatory authority for audiovisual and digital communication. It guarantees freedom of communication and ensures the financing of audiovisual creation and the protection of rights. It is responsible for the systemic regulation of platforms with online intermediation activity, such as video sharing platforms, social networks, search engines, aggregators and application stores.

11 <https://apa.at/service/faktencheck-2/>

12 <https://www.commit.at/projekte/miles>

13 <https://digitalstrategy.gov.gr/en/>

Since the law of 22 December 2018 on the fight against information manipulation, online platforms must annually inform this authority on their efforts against the manipulation of information. The primary objective is to bolster transparency, accountability, and the integrity of digital communication by compelling online platform operators to report on their actions against information manipulation, reducing the dissemination of false or misleading information. Moreover, it ensures regulatory compliance, striking a balance between safeguarding user rights and upholding freedom of expression while countering harmful content. The publication of annual reports promotes transparency, enabling stakeholders and the public to assess the measures taken by online platform operators to preserve the authenticity of digital communication, thereby fostering a more trustworthy and responsible digital environment¹⁴.

> Innovative use of technological supports

Innovative technological approaches have become integral to enhancing media literacy skills in the digital age. This section highlights some exemplary practices leveraging technological innovations to foster critical thinking and digital literacy. Among the most significant initiatives in this area, many involve online fact-checking platforms or networks. In **France**, for instance, AFP Factuel is a service within Agence France-Presse, a multilingual and multicultural news agency whose mission is to constantly provide accurate, balanced, and impartial coverage of news. AFP launched its digital verification service in France in 2017 and has grown to become the leading global fact-checking organisation. Its journalists monitor online content in local languages, from Amharic to Hindi, Polish or Portuguese.

They take into account local cultures, languages and politics and work with AFP's bureaus worldwide to investigate and disprove false information, focusing on items which can be harmful, impactful and manipulative. The main objective of AFP Factuel is to debunk false and harmful claims circulating on the internet, with a particular focus on highly viral and potentially dangerous misinformation. They prioritise investigating claims that could endanger people's health, disrupt democratic processes, or promote hate speech and racism. AFP Factuel maintains strict standards of impartiality and independence, fact-checking information based on its veracity rather than its source or political affiliation. Their approach is characterised by transparency, using multiple independent sources and expert opinions, and they employ both traditional journalistic techniques and technical tools to verify claims. They select claims for verification based on virality and public interest, prioritising those with the most significant impact¹⁵. Fact Check Cyprus is an online platform to tackle misinformation and disinformation in **Cyprus**. The team involved in this initiative consists of people with longstanding knowledge in the fields of Biology, Medicine, Physics, Engineering, Food Science, Pharmacology, Philosophy, Psychology, Linguistics and Sociology. Each article is supported by researched sources are chosen with care, so that our information is reliable and based on the scientific method. Each article is reviewed by multiple team members and thoroughly researched to be as accurate as possible¹⁶.

The Ellinika Hoaxes platform was founded in 2013 as the first coordinated effort to control news and claims in the media and social networks in **Greece**. The creation of Hellenic Hoaxes arose from the need to cross-check the huge amount of information circulating mainly through the internet. It is a non-profit organisation focusing on research and data collection from reliable sources. It is a member of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) global event control network. They are audited annually and are in line with the IFCN principles of political independence, transparency of sources, funding, methodology, and commitment to open and honest corrections. In addition, it is a member of the European Observatory against Misinformation (SOMA), the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) and participated in the FactCheckEU.info project¹⁷.

Remaining in **Greece**, the Check4Facts/Science project is a Fact-checking platform implemented collaboratively between several research organisations. This project responds to the need for scientific knowledge and dialogue on the control of the credibility of public discourse in Greece.

14 <https://www.arcom.fr>

15 <https://factuel.afp.com>

16 <https://factcheckcyprus.org/>

17 <https://www.ellinikahoaxes.gr/about-us/>

More specifically, the Check4facts/Science website focuses on four particularly important thematic areas of public discourse: the health issue, the climate change issue, the refugee/immigration issue, and crime. In order to verify the information, Check4facts/Science public information verifiers draw information from available primary and/or secondary data and collaborate with qualified scientists, officials, experts from public and private bodies, in order to check the validity of the information by accessing all available primary and/or secondary sources¹⁸.

Lastly, in **Italy**, a significance initiative is *Pillole contro la disinformazione* (Pills against misinformation), The project is an innovation in the method of using the media. Pills Against Misinformation is a RAI (the Italian public television) format consisting of short videos of maximum 5 minutes, broadcasted on TV and web platforms. Each video addresses a specific topic on the subject of media, from fake news, to artificial intelligence, to misinformation. The project is part of the digital inclusion program launched by Italian public TV, in a path aimed at including something in the media literacy activity that informs the viewers about what is right to take seriously and what is not, and how to understand which news is true instead of others. During the last season, in 2023, the episodes faced interesting topics such as Images created by artificial intelligence, Emoji and misinformation, Metadata and misinformation, Unconsciousness and misinformation. The main innovation of this project is to do edutainment on topics related to media literacy, using the TV language addressed to the generic public¹⁹.

Selected best practices from countries not included in the partnership.

In order to have a broader view of the phenomenon of media literacy, this section of the guide will be completed by introducing other good practices, designed and implemented in other parts of the world. In fact, there are more and more initiatives on media literacy and more and more research efforts in this field, both in methodology and contents. In some cases, small projects have become large institutions with important roles and have created strong networks with research institutes, policy makers, news companies, broadcasting companies, schools and universities around the world. In other cases, such as the next example, large-scale structural strategies and intervention policies are designed

On the European continent, a really interesting strategy in the policy field was developed in 2021 by the UK government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport as a response to the media crisis sparked by COVID. *The Online Media Literacy Strategy* aims to improve the media literacy skills of users in the UK through education and empowerment. The strategy identifies key challenges to be addressed and provides a strategic framework to guide the efforts of media literacy organizations.

Strategically identified priorities include creating greater coordination and collaboration among industry organizations to collectively address key challenges. It also proposes to promote positive citizenship on online platforms by encouraging respectful and tolerant behaviours toward others on the one hand; on the other hand, it proposes to close regulatory gaps to support users who experience online abuse, such as providing specific support for individuals who are victims of racism or sexual violence. Another challenge is to create an inclusive environment in media literacy processes through the creation of educational resources for certain user groups, such as those with disabilities or special educational needs.

Finally, the strategy aims to engage online platforms in promoting media literacy through design choices that promote the identification and management of false information. The strategy then recommends targeted actions to improve the effectiveness of media literacy processes: the adjustment of online platforms toward greater transparency and clarity in policies and rules related to the presentation of content; greater clarity for the algorithms used; and, the targeting of sponsored content. In addition, collaboration with external experts in the field of media literacy is encouraged to develop effective solutions in countering misinformation, online hate and manipulation of public opinion.

It also calls for taking social responsibility in promoting a healthy and ethical online environment, improving user feedback mechanisms for reporting problematic or fraudulent content, and continuously me-

¹⁸ <https://check4facts.gr/about/project>

¹⁹ <https://www.raiplay.it/programmi/pillolecontroladisinformazione>

assuring the impact of initiatives to improve users' media literacy, using key indicators such as increasing critical awareness or changing negative online behaviours.

Staying in Europe, many important international initiatives are organized by the *European Association for Viewers Interests* (EAVI), a Brussels-based international nonprofit organization that advocates for initiatives that enable citizens to participate in public life through the media. EAVI was formed to help bring together those who support the interests of citizens and consumers in the media world. It was officially founded with the support of the European Commission and received approval from the Belgian authorities in March 2005. EAVI works for greater media literacy in the global context of the information society. Achieving this goal requires animating debate and encouraging dialogue, as well as mobilizing the various actors that make up social and economic groups.

EAVI works with all actors, from international institutions to individuals, paying special attention to the interdisciplinary analysis of issues related to the impact of media literacy on young people. The variety and number of initiatives organized by EAVI is really high. Indeed, on their website they publish research, studies, toolkits for educators, guides, very intuitive infographics, self-assessment tests, lesson plans for students of different age groups, with different types of content. EAVI also produces educational videos and has produced a four-episode cartoon on media literacy available in 21 languages, so that even young children can understand the topic.

This educational approach represents a major innovation in the theme because it represents the idea of a media literacy that is adapted to different contexts and age groups, an idea that sees media education as a lifelong process and thus perceives media as a continually changing factor in life. EAVI also organizes several events dedicated to information each year: workshops, international conferences, summer camps, and an international festival during which prizes are awarded in these five categories: *AI Trending Now: Clever ways to use Artificial Intelligence technology for ML*; *Digital Well-Being: Nurturing mindfulness to contribute to a healthier digital environment*; *Digital Parenting & Generations*; *ML initiatives to benefit parents, children, young and older people*; *Empowering Citizens' Engagement and Participation: Initiatives for election integrity and to fight disinformation*; *ML Multipliers: Effective practices to replicate, multiply and transfer media literacy knowledge and skills*.

Undoubtedly, more than a good practice, EAVI is a container of good practices, built on branched and established networking processes among European countries. However, it is an excellent demonstration of how media literacy is a complex issue addressed with multiple approaches, through multiple perspectives and dedicated to each citizen. The latest good practice comes from overseas, from the United States. It is an initiative developed by Media Education Lab and is called the *Media Literacy Implementation (MLI) Index*, a survey-based research tool that measures the uptake of media literacy education in schools and communities. They are a survey adapted for students aged 4-12 and a survey for school leaders, teachers, librarians, parents, community members, and elected public officials. Any organization wishing to use the index where they work can contact Media Education Lab and have the tools to conduct the analysis.

There can be three types of collaboration with the organization, ranging from free collaboration in which questionnaires are tailored to the target audience, to partnership that involves the production of a report of the results that will serve as a guide for the development and implementation of educational curricula. The services that Media Education Lab offers are also others, such as forums, webinars, books, videos, and podcasts, but for the purposes of our research, the MLI Index represents an innovation that needs to be disseminated for a few reasons: first, an ongoing practice of data collection is essential, in order to have more information on the diffusion of media literacy practices in educational communities²⁰.

This index can be adapted to various school contexts but proposes a single approach for data processing and standardizes the results obtained. This makes it easier to have single parameters to produce meaningful research. In fact, the survey system created by Media Education Lab is having a good uptake among North American states and is leading to the production of a lot of research. In conclusion, this step proves to be crucial: strategies, policies and targeted actions for the dissemination of media literacy cannot be planned without knowing the current state of media literacy, just as effective school curricula on this topic cannot be introduced without knowing what the level of student awareness is.

20 <https://mediaeducationlab.com/>

Overview of the main features from the good practices analysis

Based on the analysis explained above, it is possible to identify the following main features of interest to be taken into account when developing a course or approach both to boost media literacy and to counteract fake news, misinformation and disinformation:

Type of practices	TOPICS	METHODOLOGY/APPROACH
Training program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become critical consumers and content creators • Fact checking tools • Daily lives of participants • Social media dynamics • Artificial intelligence • Memes & Deepfake • Digital rights and online freedom of expression • Propaganda • Advocacy skills • Legal principles • Digital skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning by doing • Online lessons • Personalized mentoring • Experiential learning • Visual learning • Digital accessibility • Pre- and post- Self-assessment • Blended approach
Skill competence framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment • well-being • security • civil society • modern technology • entrepreneurship • Media management skills • Cybersecurity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to participants • Blended approach
Practices and methodology aimed at boosting media literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration • Climate change • Health • Elections matters • Technology • Metacognitive attitudes and skills • Misinformation affecting democratic processes • Rise of extremism, racism, sexism • Fake news rhetoric in media texts • Critical media literacy skills • Critical thinking • Online behaviour • Counter-speech strategies • Misinformation debunking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative fact-checking • Providing source of knowledge on local information environments • Use of digital platform • Pro-active involvement of users in sending potential fake news postings or other type of information • Transparency and traceability • Identification of fake news through gamification • Proactive approach to address online hate

Innovative use of technological supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple independent sources and expert opinions • Short videos • TV broadcasting • Fact-checking taking into account local cultures, languages and politics • Prioritising fake news with greater impact. • Cooperation among experts of several areas of expertise
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital parenting and generations • Debate and dialogue • Social responsibility in promoting a healthy and ethical online environment • Digital wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdisciplinary approach • Counteracting hate speech • Adaptation to any contexts or age group • Survey-based research tool to understand the level of media literacy before implementing a training program with a given target in a given context.

8. Conclusions & suggestions

Given the complex, multifaceted and ever-changing world and the subject of the current document, the awareness of providing just a glimpse of the *state of the art* of the topic is clear. After all, disinformation was not born in these years and the history of our civilisation is studded with episodes of distorted information to manipulate public opinion, find public enemies or justify wars and repression. Media and topics have changed, the world of information has become more complex as much as our society. A complex society that follows technological innovations and the need to shorten space and time.

Though, the smaller, lighter and faster information becomes, the greater its weight within democratic systems: if people's votes can be conditioned by a distorted narrative of reality, the structures of power and representation are more likely to follow. Fortunately, awareness of this phenomenon has also changed, and media literacy is becoming a highly structured and widespread subject of study, involving many professionals and adaptable to different contexts. The purpose of the last part of this guide is to outline an idea of what a media literacy education course for disadvantaged adults can be, based on the research that has been done. As it has been previously shown, information consumption habits are changing in our countries and there is also a strong expansion of distrust towards mainstream channels.

Moreover, from a legal and institutional point of view, the balance between the protection of the rights of expression and the creation of effective instruments to punish those who spread fake news is still a crucial issue that the institutions are facing with difficulty. Moreover, there are the crisis of journalism, the expansion of social networks and their emerging as main channels of communication, and the spread of AI, capable of creating any kind of text, image and audio in a few seconds. A media literacy programme must necessarily take all these factors into account and develop in several directions. One fundamental direction is digital skills: it's crucial to increase the digital skills of adults, both basic and advanced. AI can be a strategic ally in the fight against disinformation, trying to maximise all its benefits towards this purpose. In order to use AI consciously and positively it's important to know how to use it and taking advantage of all its important features.

The digital skills and competences to address are also those ones which usually are taken for granted, such as the **use of social networks**: if we consider them as virtual squares where we meet other people and where we can express ourselves, we can easily imagine how necessary it is to know how to behave, exactly as we would do in person.

Therefore, working on the awareness that a virtual square has an impact on real life and violence in the digital world is just equivalent to the offline world. Working on **netiquette** practices, on how to behave online, on how to defend against violence on the web and how to fight it. Another direction concerns **critical thinking** and consequently deep reasoning about what is news. Among the good practices identified, some concern workshops specifically on the development of news.

This includes the development of several skills ranging from knowing **how to critically and objectively represent a fact**, to its reverse, namely **fact-checking, the process of checking sources**.

Another direction to explore concerns widespread responsibility: that is, developing awareness of the impact of one's actions on others and vice versa. Thus, teaching practices of **active citizenship, participatory journalism, direct democracy and protection of collective well-being**.

In fact, it is fundamental to recognise the search for objectivity as a common good and as a treasure that is achieved through a process that involves everyone, from citizens to institutions. How to develop a media literacy education programme? The comparison with the educators interviewed and the search for virtuous practices are able to give us important points of orientation on the modalities. To begin with, it is fundamental to continue researching and mapping: to know the most interesting realities and experiences, to know information consumption habits, to identify the areas and segments of the population with the greatest problems, and to act effectively.

Moreover, the educational practices that have proved most effective are those that make the **participant's role more active**. **Media education** should be understood not only as transmissive but also as participatory, through non-formal practices and innovative methodologies. Among the most interesting methodologies in this field are **gamification, learning by doing and edutainment**. These are all methodologies that activate the participant and act on the development of skills through their internalisation and personalisation of what is taught.

Obviously, these are methodologies that achieve maximum effectiveness through a **conscious use of language**, which must be simple, non-technical, inclusive and direct. There is probably no universal solution for an effective media literacy course, and the speed of innovation requires a continuous updating exercise. It is crucial not to stop and to continue along this participatory and democratic path, in which all the members of the community are involved and for which this partnership hope to have given a small contribution with the current work.

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