InMedia

INCLUSIVE MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULA FOR YOUTH

Module 1
Curriculum for Inclusive Media and Information Literacy

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InMedia is a strategic partnership for youth, co–funded by the Erasmus+ Programme 2020–3–RO01–KA205–095147

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             The Turul Madár Association (RO)
             The Civic Resource Center (RO)

Contents

A chance at media literacy for youth from disadvantaged environments

Disinformation impacts our daily lives. It sparks polarization, it acts to confuse us and it ultimately affects our ability to make informed decisions, with direct consequences for our democratic societies. It poses an even greater threat when it weaponizes our differences to harm those most vulnerable.

InMedia comes in response to these issues by creating an inclusive media literacy program that addresses the needs of youngsters from vulnerable communities and the youth workers who are involved in these communities, with the ultimate purpose of ensuring the transferability of media literacy competencies that they develop.

Youth workers

Vulnerable Youth

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IO1: Inclusive Media and Information Literacy program

Because we value inclusion, we set out to empower youth from vulnerable communities to consume and produce media content responsibly. In doing so, they will manage to interact with media content in order to celebrate diversity, rather than allowing it to put an even deeper wedge between social groups.

To sum it up, InMedia is about inclusive media literacy education. Our project sets out to bring media literacy to vulnerable young people with difficult socio-economic backgrounds from Romania, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova, in order to help them develop media literacy competencies and guide them through the cobweb cast by disinformation.

To this end, the first Intellectual Output is an integrated inclusive media and information literacy program for youth workers employing non-formal methodologies with young people with social obstacles. It contains four modules:

Module 1: Curriculum for an Inclusive Media and Information Literacy Program

Module 2: Media Landscape and Fundamental Human Rights

Module 3: Misinformation in Traditional and New Media

Module 4: Inclusive Media: A Guide to Teaching Tolerance through Media Literacy

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The structure of the curriculum

by The Center for Independent Journalism

Module 1

Curriculum for an Inclusive Media and Information Literacy Program

The Center for Independent Journalism (RO)

Contents:

- Structure of the modules
- Framework of competencies for inclusive media literacy
- Map for content navigation within the project

Module 2

Media Landscape and Fundamental Human Rights

The Center for Independent Journalism (RO)

Contents:

- Media and mass-media
- Freedom of expression
- Message analysis
- Facts and opinions
- The News. Media landscape in Romania, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova
- Internet and social networks. Digital footprint

Module 3

Disinformation in Traditional and New Media

The Association of Independent Press (MD)

Contents:

- Disinformation vs misinformation
- Information verification
- Case studies and activities

Module 4

Inclusive Media: A Guide to Teaching Tolerance through Media Literacy

Artemisszió Foundation (HU)

Contents:

- Teaching tolerance through media literacy courses
- Stereotypes
- Fair and equal representation
- Hate speech
- Incitement to violence
- Teaching inclusiveness through media literacy

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The structure of the course support

Within each module, youth workers will find the information structured in such way to be accessible for individual study, as well as for preparing the activities meant for implementation with youth.

Each module will follow, most of the time, the same structure:

A. COVER PAGE

B. AUTHORS AND COPYRIGHT

C. CONTENT LIST

D. CONTENT (chapters)

D1. AIM OF THE MODULE

D2. SPECIFIC COMPETENCE DOMAINS AIMED AT THROUGH THE MODULE

D3. CHAPTER CONTENT

D3.1. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS (ABSTRACT OF THE SECTION)

D3.2. DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

The section will include structured theoretical information, examples, graphs/figures, tables, tip-sheets, case studies, activity plans.

Each case study and activity plan follow a given template detailing:
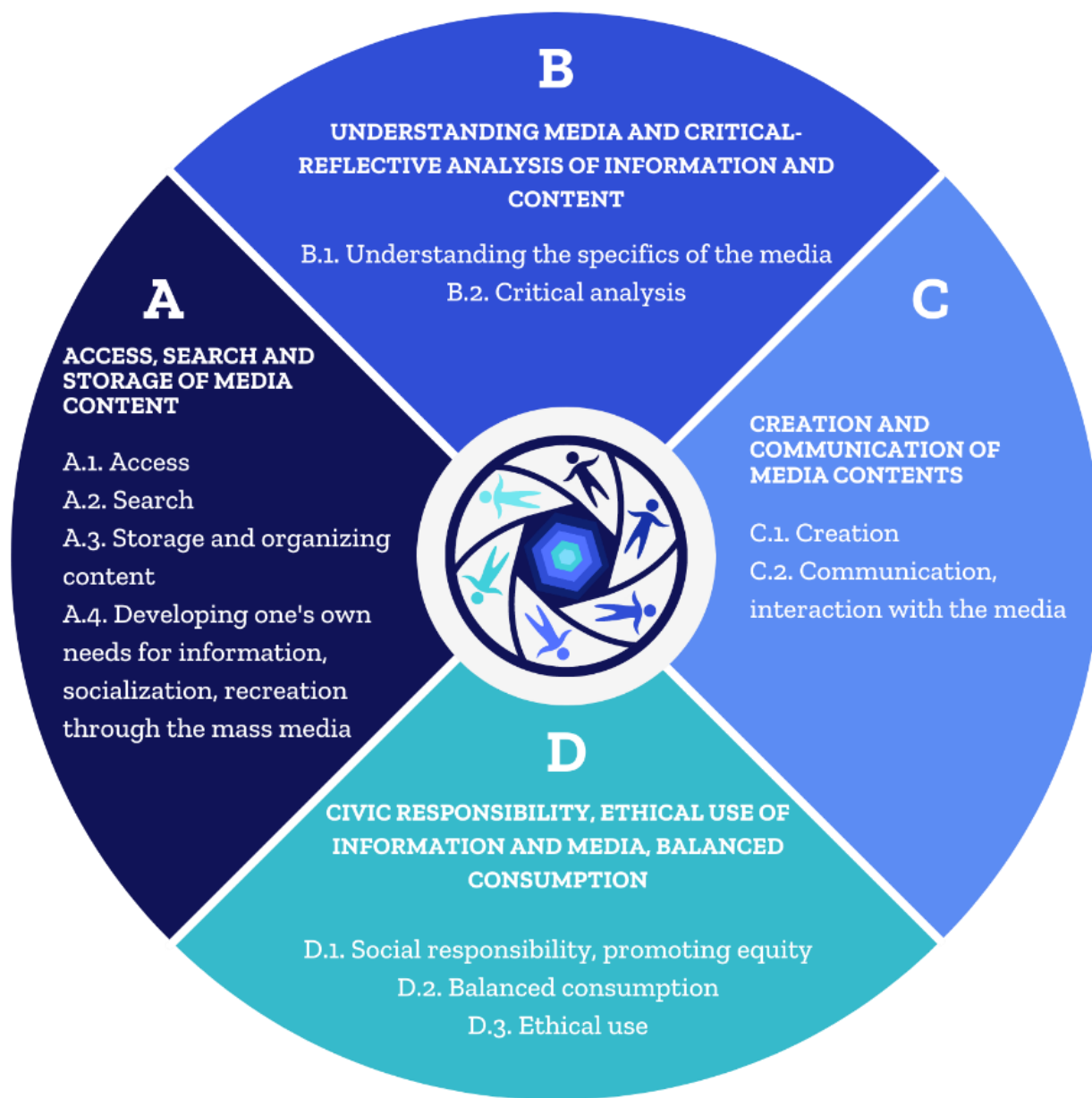
- **For case studies:**
    - Synopsis
    - Findings
    - Discussion points
    - Conclusion
    - References

- **For activity plans:**
    - Type of activity
    - Duration of activity
    - Age group recommended
    - Necessary materials
    - Preparation
    - Facilitation steps
   - Reflection
    - Tips for facilitators

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Profile of media and information competencies[1]

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[1] This profile of media and information competencies is based on the "Competencies Profile of Media Literate Citizens", created by Prof. Univ. Dr. Anca Nedelcu, in the Media Literacy Program, developed by the Center for Independent Journalism Romania. In the development of the profile, multiple relevant documents at EU level were consulted.

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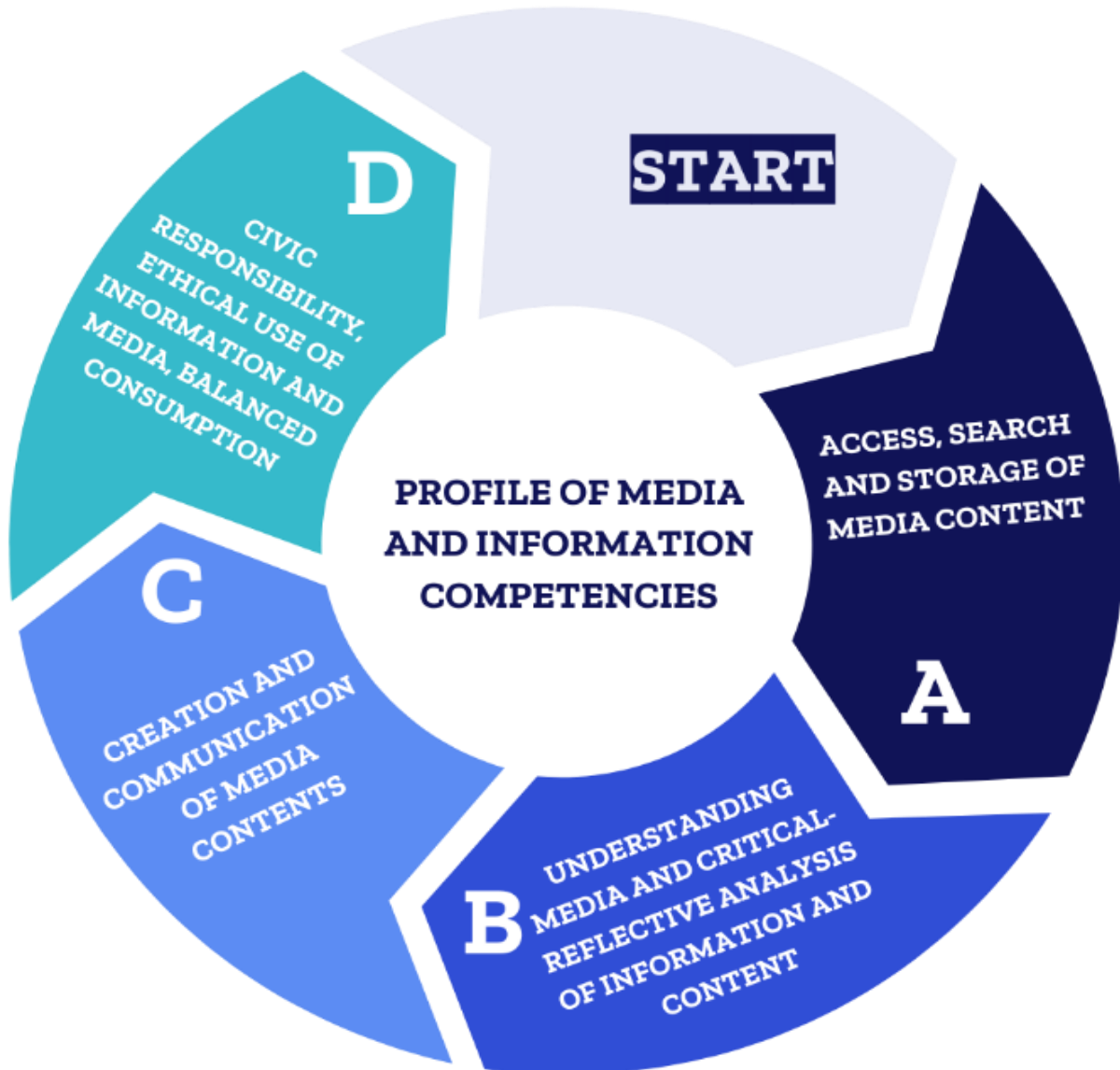
The cycle of competence-lead interaction with media

Domains of competence

A. ACCESS, SEARCH AND STORAGE OF MEDIA CONTENT

Competences in this field will help citizens to identify and explore available messages coming from a plurality of communication channels, and to effectively and efficiently

use them for the development of personal knowledge and skills, benefiting at the same time of emotional, cognitive and personal online security. They will also be able to recognize and define their own needs to access relevant information and content, which they will use in an autonomous and functional way.

B. UNDERSTANDING MEDIA AND CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION AND CONTENT

Competences in this field will help citizens to understand media phenomena in their complexity, to distinguish typologies, specific forms of expression, to argue the importance of mass media, new or old. By consistently understanding the specifics of the media, students will operate with these processes and products with discernment and critical distance, making informed choices, from a circumspect-reflective perspective. They will apply critical approaches to received messages, analyzing their accuracy, quality, veracity and credibility. They will also notice the existence of multiple perspectives in the construction and reception of messages, which can function as filters on reality, they will detect the ideological or commercial load of messages and will be able to develop their own perspectives and reasoned and balanced opinions.

C. CREATION AND COMMUNICATION OF MEDIA CONTENTS

Skills in this field will help citizens to not only be passive consumers, but also innovative media producers, participants in the process of building knowledge. As creators and authors, they will be able to confidently express their own opinions and creativity, to generate relevant content, expressed judiciously, through the use of specific composition techniques and distributed on specific channels. Their status as authors, message generators and contributors to knowledge requires not only citizens' creativity, but also their communication, organizing, and interaction with the media skills.

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D. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, ETHICAL USE OF INFORMATION AND MEDIA, BALANCED CONSUMPTION

Competences in this field will help citizens to understand that the media are socio-cultural products, developed in relational contexts, with great community impact and, as a result, their use must be done responsibly and civically. Citizens will learn to show respect for the public space of communication, for the ethics of producing and disseminating messages in different contexts. They will pay attention to their personal behavior of communication and media consumption, they will understand the social dynamics of mass communication, which they will use responsibly and ethically for their personal benefit and of others.

Competencies specific to each field

A ACCESS, SEARCH AND STORAGE OF MEDIA CONTENT

A.1. Access
A.2. Search
A.3. Storage and organizing content
A.4. Developing one's own needs for information, socialization, recreation through the mass media

B UNDERSTANDING MEDIA AND CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION AND CONTENT

B.1. Understanding the specifics of the media
B.2. Critical analysis

C CREATION AND COMMUNICATION OF MEDIA CONTENTS

C.1. Creation
C.2. Communication, interaction with the media

D CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY, ETHICAL USE OF INFORMATION AND MEDIA, BALANCED CONSUMPTION

D.1. Social responsibility, promoting equity
D.2. Balanced consumption
D.3. Ethical use

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A. ACCESS, SEARCH AND STORAGE OF MEDIA CONTENT

Citizens will be able to:

A.1 Access

- use different media channels for information, documentation, recreation, taking into account their specificity and diversity and the contribution to their own development;
- identify reliable sources and to access the credible and secure ones, to know how to filter the contents relevant to their age and ability to understand;
- appreciate the plurality and diversity of information sources and communication channels, and to correlate their specificity with personal needs.

A.2 Search

- navigate efficiently in the world of media information, using specific tools (understanding syntheses, selecting TV channels, using digital links, protection against spam messages, etc.);
- use multiple sources of documentation, socialization, networking, recreation, as well as advanced (online) search tools;
- develop their own search strategies, to know how and where to locate the information they need (found either in textbooks, books, additional resources, printed or digital, or in other forms of media expression, etc.);
- verify the veracity of the information and the sources of origin; to distinguish between scientific and pseudo-scientific information.

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A.3 Storage and organizing content

- store relevant media content, in case of need for further use and organization, on personal equipment, organizing their own portfolios or libraries (digital or not) of content and data;
- develop data management tools, ways to take notes, to synthesize, organize, categorize and group the accessed and selected information.

A.4 Developing one's own needs for information, socialization, recreation, through the mass media

- establish the personal need for information and media content, elaborating personal plans for accessing new information and development;

B. UNDERSTANDING MEDIA AND CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION AND CONTENT

Citizens will be able to:

B.1 Understanding the specifics of the media

- know the diversity of media channels, models and forms of communication, types of languages (written, audio, video, images), as well as the criteria for classifying the mass media (content, support, periodicity, etc.);

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- understand media products as a medium for communication and entertainment, identifying their specific characteristics in terms of meaning (reality/fiction distinction, interpretation of meaning, organization and retention of a message), language and sound (specific linguistic registers, sound, music, orality, rhetoric), image (shape, color, space organization, framing, editing) and digital information;

- know the circuit of information, the process of production and reception of messages specific to mass communication, in the whole ecosystem in which they belong, including specific actors and institutions;

- analyze media products in order to understand how they are constructed and develop an appropriate perception of the meanings conveyed;

- know basic elements of the legal, economic, institutional development framework of the press;

B.2 Critical analysis

- develop balanced perspectives on the contents transmitted through the mass media;

- use in a reflective way the tools of message research (comparison of sources, interpretation of situations, authentication of information, distinction between facts and opinions, placement in appropriate spatial temporal contexts) to verify the validity, credibility and quality of content;

- detect the messages loaded with stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination, patterned representations of the surrounding world;

- decode and manage false news and information, biased or partisan positions;

- identify the manipulation, misinformation or propaganda techniques used by the media and to build personal alternatives to the received messages, as a way of resistance to manipulation;

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- analyze the power relations, the political, economic, commercial influences on the media institutions and on their products.

C. CREATION AND COMMUNICATION OF MEDIA CONTENTS

Citizens will be able to:

C.1 Creation

- understand the process of creating (multi) media and the stages of setting up a mass communication product;
- participate in collaborative or individual contexts of production of (multi) media content for a specific purpose, using appropriate techniques and distribution channels;
- correlate new information with previous acquisitions for the development of original products and content while respecting intellectual property rights.

C.2 Communication, interaction with the media

- interact functionally with the media, integrating their potential in everyday life (expression of ideas through audio, video, print or digital channels, electronic voting, discussion forums, etc.);
- know the basic rules regarding the expression in the public space;
- be aware of the risks of content distribution in the digital world, know how to responsibly manage their own digital footprint;
- distinguish between public and private virtual space;

D. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, ETHICAL USE OF INFORMATION AND MEDIA, BALANCED CONSUMPTION

Citizens will be able to:

D.1 Social responsibility, promoting equity

- recognize the obvious social values in different media texts;
- show sensitivity to the current emerging phenomena presented by the media, to participate in the identification of solution strategies;
- have a balanced attitude towards diversity (social groups, people, opinions, values, beliefs) and to reflect these beliefs in the messages distributed in the public space; understand how these differences influence the way that we relate to the composition and decoding of messages;
- know and assume responsibly the application in the public space of some key concepts and elements of social responsibility (freedom of expression, freedom of the press, right to image, privacy, copyright);
- participate in the identification of solutions for the specific problems of the community, to get involved in individual and collaborative activities;
- recognize and report situations of online harassment, virtual abuse and know what the addressing mechanisms are.

D.2 Balanced consumption

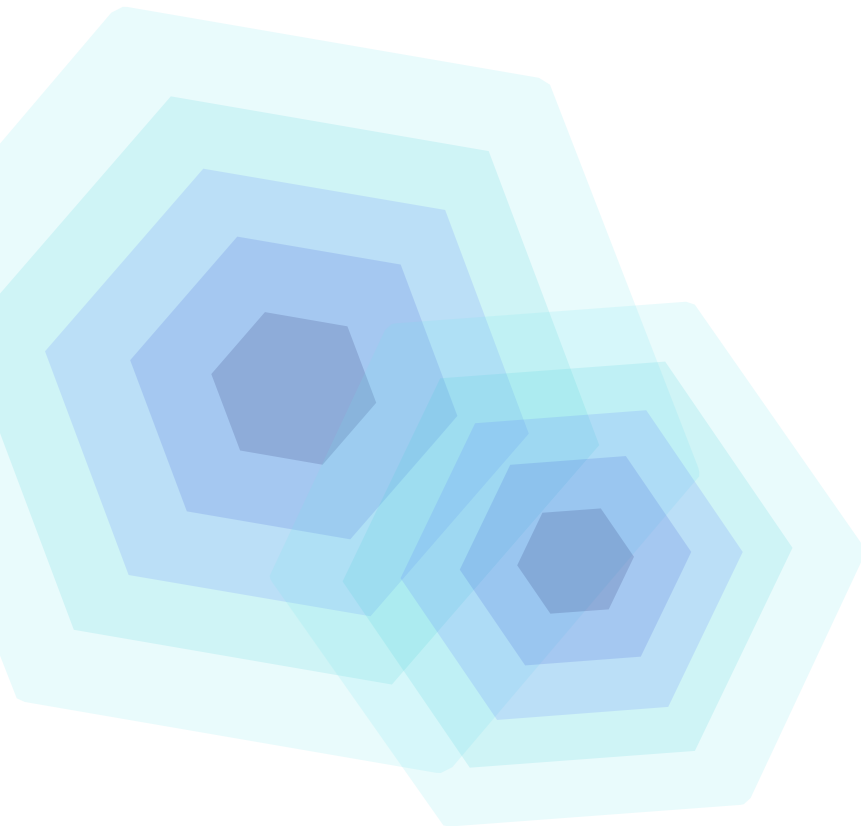- be aware of the impact of using the media for one's own well-being and development;

- be aware of their own (digital) footprint, of the fact that the excessive and indiscriminate distribution of data from private life can have consequences in future professional and personal development.

D.3 Ethical use

- recognize the authorship of ideas taken through mass communication, respect copyright, avoid plagiarism and false assumption of ideas;
- critically analyze the information consumed and differentiate between manipulation, misinformation and propaganda;
- produce messages that show respect for alterity.

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Competencies regarding inclusion, from the YouthPass Framework[2]

Within InMedia, through the planned activities, youth workers and youth shall develop inclusion competencies transversally – both in regard to media interaction and self-reflection, but also in regard to social and interpersonal interaction. We find that the competencies targeted below from the YouthPass Framework match and even add to our desired inclusive media literacy competencies that InMedia addresses and develops in youth workers engaged with youth from vulnerable backgrounds and then, consequentially – in the vulnerable youth themselves:

- have awareness of the impact of language on others and need to understand and use language in a positive and socially responsible manner;
- know societal conventions, and the cultural aspect and variability of languages;
- respect each person's individual linguistic profile, including both respect for the mother tongue of persons belonging to minorities and/or with a migrant background and appreciation for a country's official language(s) as a common framework for interaction;
- show tolerance, express and understand different viewpoints, as well as the ability to create confidence and feel empathy;
- respect diversity of others and their needs and be prepared both to overcome prejudices and to compromise;
- understand the multi-cultural and socioeconomic dimensions of European societies, and how national cultural identity contributes to the European identity;
- have knowledge of local, national, regional, European and global cultures and expressions, including their languages, heritage and traditions, and cultural products, and an understanding of how these expressions can influence each other as well as the ideas of the individual;
- understand one's own developing identity and cultural heritage within a world of cultural diversity and how arts and other cultural forms can be a way to both view and shape the world;

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[2] https://www.youthpass.eu/downloads/13-62-420/Leaflet%20-%20revised%20key%20competences.pdf

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Content map within InMedia

InMedia provides youth workers and any other interested parties with resources on inclusive media literacy. This map (see below) serves as a guiding tool through the process of preparing, developing and implementing inclusive media literacy programmes or activities. It comes with a recommendable title, as some activities may be implemented without necessarily following the order proposed below. For maximum efficiency in the development of inclusive media literacy competencies, the route displayed below serves best.

IO1: Inclusive Media and Information Literacy Program

We recommend starting with the first IO, which provides the framing of inclusive media literacy. It sets the framework of competencies in Module 1 and in the following modules, it offers a thorough breakdown of essential media literacy and inclusion concepts, with examples, case studies and suggested activities for implementation. It is important to firstly understand what media literacy stands for, what inclusion means and then how they both go together to nurture a profound understanding of the media reception and creation mechanisms. With this knowledge, anyone interested in teaching inclusive media literacy *inclusively* will be more than prepared – because our project approaches inclusion from two perspectives, transversally when delving into media literacy concepts and in terms of inclusive methods when furthering the facilitation and implementation of media literacy activities.

The modules of IO1 are recommended to be followed in their natural order (seen below), as concepts explained in the second and third module are later revisited in the fourth module in relation to the portrayal of vulnerable groups in the media, the

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IO1: Inclusive Media and Information Literacy program

IO2: Training of trainers methodology and training material on inclusive media literacy for youth workers

In a predictable manner, we encourage anyone interested in implementing inclusive media literacy activities to follow the study of IO1 with the two parts that make up IO2.

Module 1: Methodological guide Teaching and Testing Media Literacy Materials with Young People

Module 2: Toolkit: How to Train Youth Workers to Teach Media Literacy in an Inclusive Way

IO2 offers on one hand, a methodological guide for the facilitator – sharing an insight into needed competencies in order to efficiently and inclusively approach the implementation of media literacy activities and into the experiences, challenges and solutions of the project partners who have tested media literacy activities with various vulnerable groups. On the other hand, IO2 puts at the facilitator's disposal tools to ease the implementation of media literacy activities, development of personalized materials and ultimately, an entire collection of ready-to-use presentations, activity plans and worksheets, and evaluation tools when working with vulnerable youth on media literacy.
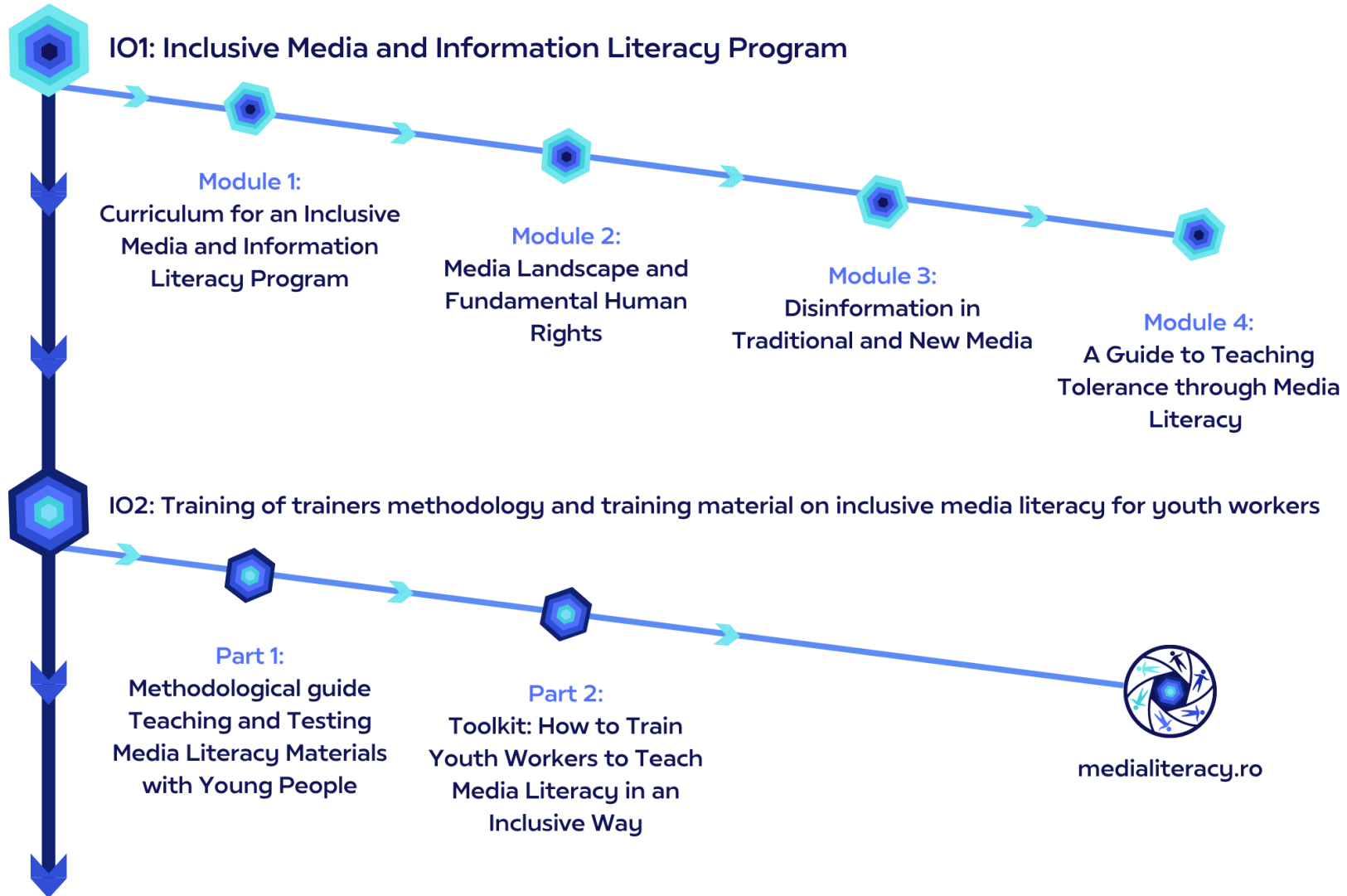
Medialiteracy.ro

Medialiteracy.ro is the InMedia platform that hosts all the resources produced: IOs, interactive online activities, educational videos and much more!

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Content Map

IO1: Inclusive Media and Information Literacy Program

Module 1:
Curriculum for an Inclusive Media and Information Literacy Program

Module 2:
Media Landscape and Fundamental Human Rights

Module 3:
Disinformation in Traditional and New Media

Module 4:
A Guide to Teaching Tolerance through Media Literacy

IO2: Training of trainers methodology and training material on inclusive media literacy for youth workers

Part 1:
Methodological guide Teaching and Testing Media Literacy Materials with Young People

Part 2:
Toolkit: How to Train Youth Workers to Teach Media Literacy in an Inclusive Way

medialiteracy.ro

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Resources

The Center for Independent Journalism's Framework of Competencies of the media literate citizen (Ro)

https://cji.ro/profilul-de-competente-ale-cetateanului-educat-media/

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)

Youthpass and the revised key competences

https://www.youthpass.eu/downloads/13-62-420/Leaflet%20-%20revised%20key%20competences.pdf

Medialiteracy.ro – InMedia online platform
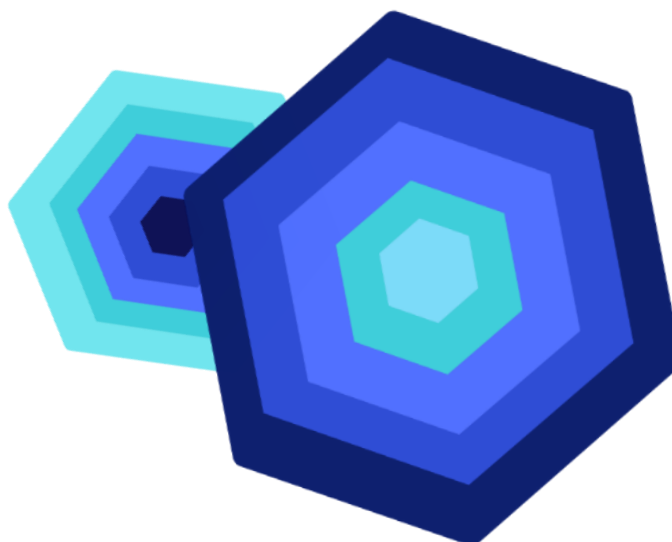
https://medialiteracy.ro/

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A chance at media literacy for youth from disadvantaged environments

INCLUSIVE MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULA FOR YOUTH

Module 2
Media Landscape and Fundamental Human Rights

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Contents

Aim of the module

Media Landscape and Fundamental Rights

by The Center for Independent Journalism (RO)

This module familiarizes the reader with the meaning of media literacy and its main concepts. It sets a framing in which these concepts are explored, bringing context by presenting the rights and limits that come with the exercise of the freedom to expression in the first part.

The media landscapes of each of the three countries involved in InMedia is briefly presented, in order to bring a fuller picture to how media actors interact with each other and to offer explanations for the state of the press in the present.

Lastly, the module explains the phenomena that appear from our interaction with social media.

Competence domains addressed:

A ACCESS, SEARCH AND STORAGE OF MEDIA CONTENT

A.1. Access
A.2. Search
A.3. Storage and organizing content
A.4. Developing one's own needs for information, socialization, recreation through the mass media

B UNDERSTANDING MEDIA AND CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION AND CONTENT

B.1. Understanding the specifics of the media
B.2. Critical analysis

C CREATION AND COMMUNICATION OF MEDIA CONTENTS

C.1. Creation
C.2. Communication, interaction with the media

D CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY, ETHICAL USE OF INFORMATION AND MEDIA, BALANCED CONSUMPTION

D.1. Social responsibility, promoting equity
D.2. Balanced consumption
D.3. Ethical use

1. What is media literacy?

1.1. General considerations

What "inclusive media literacy" stands for

In the Digital Era, almost all the dimensions of our lives are driven or interlaced with or by data. Everywhere we look, the media surrounds us, shaping our perception of the world and influencing our daily actions and decisions.

Media entangles our existence from the first morning glance on the smartphone's screen checking out voraciously what is new, to our way back from work or school as we pass hundreds of signs or ads, while we listen to the radio or some music. Media is there at work, during breaks, on screens, big or small, as notifications from our smartwatches or talking to us as Alexa or other smart assistants. It shouts or whispers from labels in stores and it embraces us to the moment before we go to sleep, sluggishly scrolling on a tablet or phone.

As we cannot hide from the media, it is fundamental to understand how it works and how to use media products to make informed decisions.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, as well as to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".[1]

Media literacy gives us the tools to exercise this right.

Media literacy is the learning process through which we develop the abilities to identify different types of media, understand media messages and their impact, and learn to create and disseminate messages responsibly.

In an over-saturated media society, **media literacy develops essential critical thinking skills** like the ability to identify key media concepts, making connections between ideas, or asking relevant questions and identifying logical errors. Exercising critical thinking transforms us into active, informed and independent citizens even when emotions, uncertainty or "background noise" are at alarming levels.

In our increasingly super-diverse societies, in a maze of information, media literacy incorporates issues related to diversity, inclusion, stereotypes or hate speech. From this perspective we can talk about **inclusive media literacy** that provides **means to develop non-discriminatory, open-minded and biased-free communities through empowering young people to think critically** and be able to share knowledge and collaboratively solve problems. With beliefs and assumptions rooted deep in individuals, groups, smaller or larger communities, manipulation and discrimination can find solid soil for social "monsters" to emerge and divide people, leading to verbal violence online and even, violent acts offline.

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[1] https://www.ohchr.org/en/udhr/documents/udhr_translations/rum.pdf

Understanding how biases work and developing a habit in deconstructing messages we can develop a shield against fake information.

And thus, we can build powerful, thoughtful and tolerant communities in which freedom of expression is not just a line in pacts and laws, but a daily reality used as a powerful tool toward joint progress.

1.2. Definitions and concepts

1.2.1 Media and Mass-media. Types of media.

Name of the activity: Discover the Media Universe
Synchronous activity (face to face or online)
Duration: 20 minutes
Task: The participants will evaluate for themselves the time they spend interacting with the media during the day. They will also mention which type of media they follow.
Expected results: The participants will become conscious about their daily media use and interaction. They will understand that the daily time of interaction with the media exceeds personal perception and will come into contact with the concept "**Media is everywhere**".

Preparation:
- The facilitator will invite the participants to respond to two questions (free answer).
- The facilitator will create a list for participants to note the types of media they interact with on a daily basis.

*The activity can also be done online. In this case,
- The facilitator will invite the participants to respond to two questions (free answer) in the chat (Zoom, Google Meet or others).
- The facilitator can create a Jamboard sheet so that participants can list the types of media they interact with on a daily basis. (https://jamboard.google.com/)

For both questions, the facilitator will ask the participants not to post the answer before indication, so that all participants publish the answers at the same time. They will also be asked to write answer 2 as a single list and not to send them as individual, multiple answers.

Facilitation:
- 2 minutes: The facilitator will start with question 1: "How many hours on average do you spend interacting with the media daily?". The trainer will invite the participants to answer the question. If online, the trainer will read some of the answers.
- 3 minutes: Continue with question 2: "What types of media do you interact with in a day?" The trainer will invite participants to answer the question. If online, write down the types of media they interact with on a daily basis. Participants will answer or write their answers in the chat.

Usually, the participants do not mention - music, games, books, street ads, etc.

Additional questions for the facilitator: Do you think there are media types missing from the list? What would you add to the list?
- 5 minutes: The trainer will add the missing media types to the list and introduce the definitions of media and mass-media, as well as the concept of passive media consumption (e.g. street signs, shows watched in the doctor's waiting room, TVs displaying ads on the bus or on the subway etc.)

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The conclusion of this exercise is that the media is diverse and everywhere. We interact with the media from the moment we wake up until we go to bed, or even beyond. We can't hide from the media, even if we don't have a TV or give children access to cell phones. Cartoons, for example, are all media. As well as books, music or comics. Therefore, it is fundamental to understand how the media works, and media literacy is the tool by which we can do this.

Also, media consumption can be active or passive.

Media is the plural of the Latin medium, which means "intermediary", so a channel through which information is transmitted, and the mass-media is the totality of mass communication channels.

Mass-media can be defined as the **sum of means and channels of communication** - used to disseminate information to a wide audience. In current language, the term can cover either a diverse array of **media technologies and platforms** (newspapers, television, radio, books or internet/social networks and so forth) or, **media content** (journalistic products, commercials, games, music, podcasts, vlogs or movies), but it can also refer to **content producers**: (journalists, photographers, cameramen or even media companies).

Nowadays, mass-media facilitates the transfer of information within society, covering a diversity of roles: it informs, educates, entertains us, and it also helps us communicate and be more connected.

In terms of media content and technologies, there are different types of media: print, broadcasting, digital or outdoor, etc.

Media includes:
- Print newspapers, magazines, books
- TV and radio shows, news
- Online websites, online newspapers
- Blogs, vlogs, podcasts, music, games, photos
- Street, print or online commercials and advertising
- Social networks (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, etc.)
- Product packaging or ingredient tags.

When talking about content producers - in this case journalists and the press, their role is mainly to provide citizens with relevant information, as well as to keep the societal balance between the other three powers (legislative, executive, and the court).

We can't hide from the media, even if we don't have a TV or don't give children access to cell phones. Cartoons, for example, are also media. Likewise, books, music or comics. Therefore, it is fundamental to understand how the media works, and media literacy is the tool by which we can do this.

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1.2.2. The 5 pillars of media literacy

Media literacy, in the European Commission's view, is the ability of people to **access, understand, create and critically evaluate** different types of media.[2]

Media literacy evolves around 5 main pillars: **access to media and media content, critical approach, creativity and communication skills, reflection and action.** They translate into competencies that children and youth acquire, in order to conscientiously interact with media.

1.2.3. Analyzing media messages

Deconstructing media messages is a critical skill in our media-saturated culture. It is a learned and exercised ability that can help one cut through the noise and reach one's own conclusions. This term refers to understanding the relationship between "text" and meaning, therefore being able to "read" the multimedia world and to discover its layers.

Deconstructing media messages involves examining closely, breaking it down into elements, and putting the message into context to understand how it works.

All the messages we send or receive are constructs, they are built by someone, for a certain public, with a certain purpose. No one will tell a complete story, only parts of it, from a personal point of view, intentionally or unintentionally omitting other elements. Likewise, the media cannot present the full reality of a situation, but only parts of it. For example: a photo cannot show the full beauty of a famous landscape, as we would see it with our own eyes, but only a capture of it.

At the same time, each of us interprets the messages received differently, articulating judgments based on our previous knowledge, beliefs, values, and experiences.

The process of message deconstruction has **five elements**: identifying the **author**, understanding the **format** of the message and the **public** it targets, what are the values and opinions presented in the **content**, and finally, what is the **purpose** of the media message.
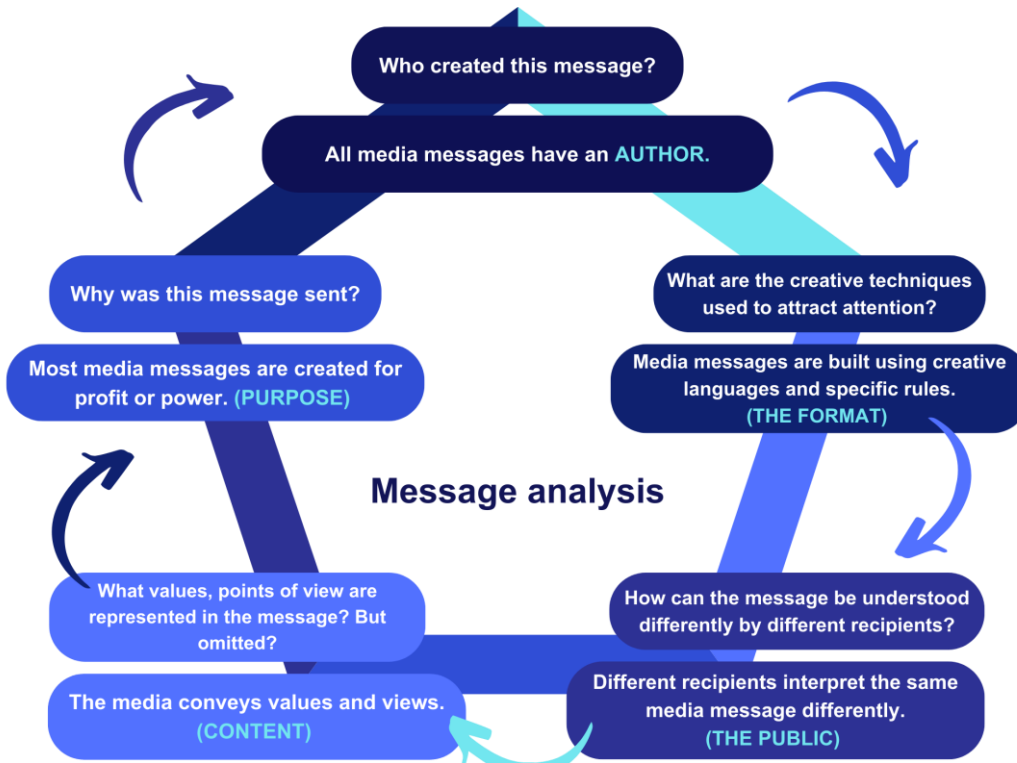
The five elements are associated with **5 essential questions**[3], which help us discover how a media message works, addressing all its angles:

> a) Who created this message? (author)
> b) What are the creative techniques used to attract attention? (format)
> c) How can the message be understood differently by different recipients? (public)
> d) What values, lifestyle, points of view are represented in the message? But omitted? (content)
> e) Why was this message sent? (scope)

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[2] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52007DC0833

[3] Thoman, E., Jolls, T. (2008), "Literacy for the 21st Century. An Overview & Orientation guide to Media Literacy Education", California, the Center for Media Literacy

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The process of message deconstruction starting from the 5 fundamental concepts of media literacy

The diagram contains the following text elements:

- Who created this message?
- All media messages have an AUTHOR.
- Why was this message sent?
- Most media messages are created for profit or power. (PURPOSE)
- What are the creative techniques used to attract attention?
- Media messages are built using creative languages and specific rules. (THE FORMAT)
- Message analysis
- What values, points of view are represented in the message? But omitted?
- The media conveys values and views. (CONTENT)
- How can the message be understood differently by different recipients?
- Different recipients interpret the same media message differently. (THE PUBLIC)

1. All media messages have an AUTHOR - Who created this message?

Every message creates its own world, a representation of reality, which the author structures according to his needs. Before sending a message, the author considers different perspectives, linguistic formulations, frames or photographs, etc., selects those that serve his purpose and passes the message through a repeated editing process.

Therefore, the analysis of the message starts from the identification of the creator and his intentions, thus exposing the "constructed" character and positioning the receiver in the situation of questioning the received information.

One of the first questions we ask is about the credibility and relevance of the author in the field he is talking about (ex: Is a star who promotes a medication really entitled to talk about it? Does the creator of the message have a set of moral values and was he consistent over time in their expression?).

2. Media messages are built using creative languages and specific rules (THE FORMAT) - What are the creative techniques used to attract attention?

Every message has its own creative language - eg: the shooting angle of a frame is an artistic expression through which the author wants to generate a certain emotion, the headlines can signal the importance of an information, or can indicate a clickbait, in order to arouse interest. The way elements are arranged in an image, the phrasing a text or the camera movement in a TV show - all these details are long prepared by the transmitter to generate an impact with emotional resonance (joy, anger, fear, nostalgia, etc.). By understanding these specific languages, the receiver can separate information from emotional content and become more resilient to misinformation.

3. Different recipients interpret the same media message differently (THE PUBLIC) - How can the message be understood differently by different recipients?

Media messages are built for a specific audience, whose media preferences, lifestyle and consumption habits are known. This profiling guides the creative language so that the message is accepted without restraint.

With social media, profiling has migrated to the pursuit of personal indicators: social networks deliver new content or advertising, taking into account topics and things that already attracted our attention. For example: on Netflix, after we click on a police movie, the subsequent priority recommendations will be such movies).

The receiver interprets the messages through his own lens of the world, building meaning around past experiences, things learned, the culture he/she is part of, and his/her own values.

4. The media conveys values and views (CONTENT) - What values, lifestyle, points of view are represented in the message? But omitted?

What we see or hear in the media are points of view that reflect ideologies, lifestyles and worldviews of those behind the message. This is an aspect increasingly visible on social media, where we are all message creators, and some even become influential messengers.

Media products have meanings that the author wants to convey, visions that he wants to convince the receiver about and get his consent.

Deconstructing messages helps the receiver discover these points of view that have crept into the content, or to ask questions about the ones that are missing, before making a decision on its quality.

5. Most media messages are created for profit or power (SCOPE) - Why was this message sent?

In this stage of analysis, the receiver looks at who is behind a message, the benefits it pursues and how these interests influence the final message.

For example, a company that produces biscuits wants to increase its sales. It chooses an advertising company and orders a video spot, and the creators build a concept and propose specific production techniques. The company decides the final concept, according to its objectives. The video message is broadcast on television, through a media buying company, which negotiates the price that the company pays to the TV station. The practice is perfectly legitimate, given that the media was created as a commercial structure, which brings profit to its owners.

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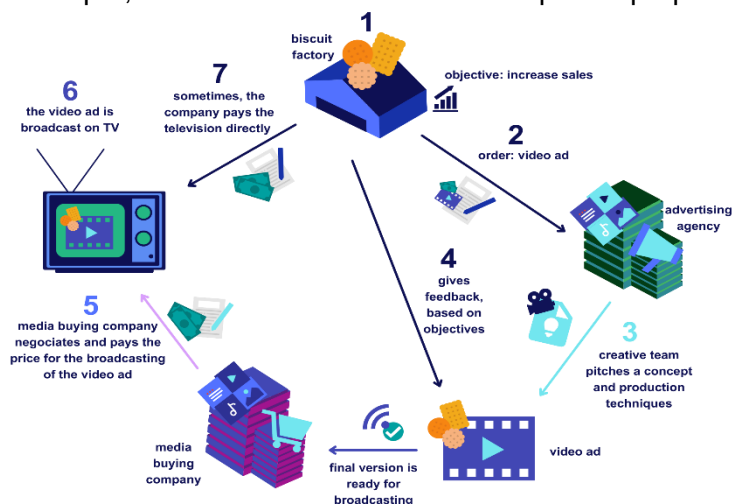
The media is not good or bad. There is always a content creator, who may have different intentions, and a receiver, who correctly or incorrectly understands the message.

Name of the activity: Discover the five elements of media messages deconstruction
Synchronous activity (face to face or online)
Duration: 20 minutes
Task: The participants will analyze a media message and answer key questions of the message deconstruction process.

Expected results: The participants will know the process of deconstructing the media message, starting with the 5 essential questions.

Preparation:
- The facilitator will prepare a media message to illustrate the basic concepts of message deconstruction - AUTHOR, FORMAT, PUBLIC, CONTENT, PURPOSE and to answer the essential questions.
- The message will be printed and given to the participants or it will be shared online, via mail or group with the participants.
- Also, the participants will be given a worksheet with the five elements and questions, to complete their answers.
- The activity can be frontal, with each participant phrasing their own answers, or it can be done in groups.

Facilitation:
- Participants will note on the worksheet the answers to the main questions of message deconstruction.
- The facilitator will centralize the answers, by asking two-three answers for each concept, if the activity is frontal, or will ask each group to present their work. Starting with this, the facilitator can introduce other questions to develop each concept.

Note: The selected message will be as simple and clear as possible to facilitate the process for the following deconstruction and analysis exercises.

Working example 1 (Worksheet 1):
Analyze the received media text and answer the deconstruction questions of the media message.
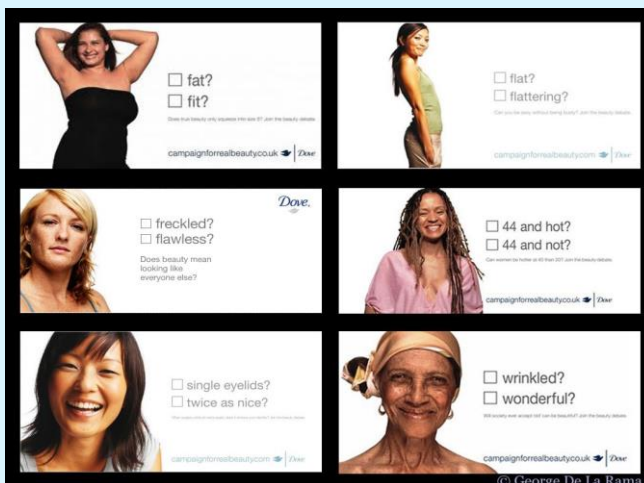
Author:
Who created this message?
Format:
What are the techniques used?
Public:
Who is this message for?
How is it interpreted?
Content:
What values or points of view are represented, which are not?
Purpose:
Why was this message created?

Interpretation support for the example provided:

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- The difference between the creator of the message (Ogilvy & Mather, the creative agency that defined the message, starting from the brief received) and the organization behind the message and its purpose with the campaign (Unilever - Dove).
- The creative techniques are not accidental: the women belong to different races, have different styles and reactions, but they all stand proud and confident. The colors have their symbolistic too: black and white (positive and negative), change into a complex meaning: real beauty is diverse, we can't only judge between two opposites. Also, the format of a quiz directs the audience to recognize their prejudices or perceived faults.
- The target audience is mainly women and girls who want to build self-confidence and be more at ease with themselves.
- The direct language of the slogan: real beauty. How can it be interpreted? What does "real" mean?
- What are the values conveyed through the message? (eg. positive values - diversity, natural beauty)
- The purpose of the message is to raise awareness on the impossible standards of beauty imposed on women, and change the perception of beauty and self-appreciation for women. Still, we have to take into account that Dove is a for profit brand, and its purpose is also to sell as much as it can.

Alternative image from the same campaign:

Working example 2 (Worksheet 2):

Author: Who created this message?

Format:
What are the techniques used?

Public:
Who is this message for? How is it interpreted?

Content:
What values or points of view are represented, which are not?

Purpose:
Why was this message created?

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Interpretation support for the example provided:

- The difference between the creator of the message (McCann, the creative agency that defined the message, starting from the brief received) and the organization behind the message and its purpose with the campaign (L'Oreal).
- The creative techniques: the colors are very powerful: red and gold. The text is simple and a powerful statement, almost menacing. Also, the small text needs the reader to linger on the message and take a careful look at it. The black mascara drawn like a statistic suggests that beauty does not exclude competence.
- The target audience is clearly stated, and purposely diverted from women to men. Men have to conscientiously take part in women's ascension to leadership positions. Still, the message is also addressed to women, in order for them to feel and act on their power and abilities.
- What are the values conveyed through the message (eg. positive values - equal chances and professional opportunities, reducing a form of subtle discrimination)?
- The purpose of the message is to raise awareness on the lack of access to women to leadership roles, despite their abilities. A woman can also be beautiful and smart, and ace her profession. Still, we have to take into account that L'Oreal is a for profit brand, and its purpose is also to sell its products.

Alternative images from the same campaign:

Note: the facilitator can ask participants to analyze each message and then discuss the different perspectives of the two companies: real beauty vs. professional women in leadership roles.

The conversation can evolve toward the stereotypes they are enforcing or trying to break.
Also, participants can explore the prejudices that affect women in their society and what measures are necessary in order to offer equal chances.

2. The fundamental rights of media content consumers and creators

2.1. Freedom of expression. Definition and traits

Freedom of expression is a human right and a fundamental value on which media literacy competencies are built. Freedom of expression covers our right to opinion, as well as our access to information. If this right was missing, we would not have our voice heard, our will would not matter and we would lack information to help our development as individuals and as societies. **Educational video on freedom of expression.**

Freedom of expression is a **fundamental human right** to be enjoyed by all, and guaranteed by international, European and national laws, and the guarantor of other human rights.

We note five important elements of freedom of expression:

1. **Everyone has the right to freedom of expression**, no matter age, ethnicity, race or social origin. Also, one doesn't have to have citizenship of a state, to pay taxes or to have a "clean" record to enjoy this right. Children also enjoy freedom of expression.

2. Freedom of expression **covers different forms of expression** (language, appearance, mimics and gestures, etc.). It covers any type of discourse, regardless of its nature (political, journalistic, literary or artistic, commercial, etc.) or its medium. Only one type of discourse is exempt from this right's protection: hate speech, promoting extremist ideologies and inciting to ethnic or racial discrimination.

3. Freedom of expression **also covers information and ideas that are offensive, shocking, or disturbing.** The European Court has repeatedly stated that freedom of expression refers not only to information or ideas that are favorably received in society, or are considered harmless or indifferent, but also those that contradict, shock or disturb us. This is a requirement for pluralism, and a characteristic of tolerance and openness in a democratic society.

4. Freedom of expression **has two major components: freedom of opinion and access to information.**

   Freedom of opinion covers everyone's right to express thoughts, opinions, or beliefs, as well as freedom of creation, by words, in writing, in pictures, by sounds or other means of communication, without any interference.
   Access to information states that everyone has the right the freedom to seek and receive information and ideas, as well as the freedom to communicate information and ideas, through any media and regardless of frontiers.

5. Freedom of expression **is not an absolute human right**, which means states are entitled to impose legitimate restrictions on the exercise of freedom of expression under certain conditions. In any case, freedom of expression remains the rule, and restrictions - the exception.

2.2. Main Documents talking about Freedom of Expression

The first international document that affirms freedom of expression is "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights"[4], passed on the 10th of December 1948, at the UN General Assembly. Its ratification came as a reaction to the horrors of World War II, in an attempt to prevent their recurrence.

A powerful political statement throughout history, the Declaration has no legal force though.

In 1966, the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**[5], adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution, gave judicial power to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

1948	•	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
The European Convention on Human Rights	•	1950
1966	•	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	•	1989
	•	Constitutions
Civil codes	•	2009
2010	•	Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
Special laws	•	
	•	Codes of Conduct

enabling people to enjoy a wide range of human rights, including those relating to: freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, fair trial rights, freedom of thought, religion and expression, privacy, home and family life and equality and non-discrimination.

The principles embodied in international documents have been later integrated in national laws. At the national level, freedom of expression is consecrated in the Constitutions. **In Romania, the Constitution** enshrines freedom of expression and the right to information in **Article 30** and **Article 31. In the Republic of Moldova, the Constitution** extensively addresses freedom of expression in Articles 31, 32, 33, 34. **In Hungary,** article IX in **the Constitution** speaks about freedom of expression**.**

Although the Constitutions are symbolically called the "fundamental laws" of a country, they are not directly enforceable in court - that is, a person cannot file a lawsuit citing articles of the Constitution. In order for its provisions to become effective, they must be regulated in laws, which provide the limits of application and the penalties for their violation.

In Romanian legislation, freedom of expression is found in laws such as the Civil Code, and the Audiovisual Law. In the Republic of Moldova, the situation is similar, with freedom of expression being covered in laws such as the Law on Freedom of Expression (2010)[6], the Press Law (1994)[7], or the Audiovisual Media Services Code (2019)[8]. In Hungary, regulations

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[4] http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/22751
[5] http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/82590
[6] http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?id=335145&lang=1
[7] https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=109428&lang=ro
[8] https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=33713&lang=ro

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regarding freedom of expression are contained by the Media Act and by the Act on Freedom of the Press.

There are also documents without legal power, such as self-regulatory codes, which deal with freedom of expression. The best known are those of journalists, adopted by professional associations and applicable only to those who openly adhere to them, individually or by joining an association that assumes the code. In Romania, all radios and televisions are obliged to adhere to a code of ethics and bring it to the attention of the public. In the Republic of Moldova, The Press Council is a national structure for self-regulation for the activity of media institutions and journalists, independent in relation to the public administration, the political environment, the business environment or other interest groups. In Hungary, the situation presents slightly differently, as the Media Act of 2010 stipulates a system of media co-regulation.[9] This means that the self-regulatory bodies that activate in Hungary are under the supervision of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority, an autonomous body who reports to the Hungarian Parliament. As a consequence, the self-regulatory bodies are no longer independent[10] and are responsible for ensuring compliance to the media content rules issued by the National Media and Infocommunications Authority.

Most of the Codes of Conducts in journalism share these basic principles: truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and public accountability.

2.3. Limitations of the right to freedom of expression

Human rights can be: **absolute and relative.** Absolute human rights refer to those which cannot be limited or suspended under any circumstances. An absolute human right is freedom from slavery. Our right to be protected against slavery and servitude is absolute, which means it can never be restricted. The right to not be objected to forced labor is also absolute.

Relative human rights are those for which limitations are set in application or compliance. Freedom of expression is a relative human right, which means it has some constraints.

States are entitled to impose limits to exercising freedom of expression under certain conditions. Freedom of expression is balanced in societies in order to protect other values such as public order, justice and the personal rights of others. The right to freedom of expression may also be limited in the interest of national security, safety, health and morals. In any case, freedom of expression remains the rule, and restrictions - the exception.

Some of the limitations for freedom of expression:
● the right to privacy
● the right to human dignity (honor and reputation)
● the right to one's own image
● the right to the protection of personal data
● copyright

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[9] https://nmhh.hu/dokumentum/2791/1321457199hungary_new_media_regulation_eng_web.pdf

[10] https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Hungary%20draft.pdf

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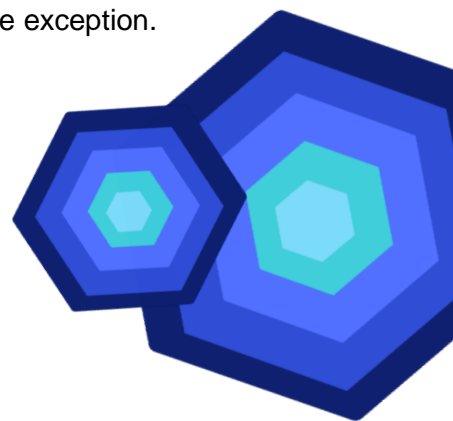
One of the strongest and legitimate restrictions on freedom of expression is that on **hate speech**, which includes inciting the public, by any means, to hate or discrimination against a category of people (eg.: xenophobic discourses, etc.).

Limitations for freedom of expression may be infringed if there is an overriding public interest, if the benefits of the infringement are greater and more important than the damage caused by overcoming them.

In matters of human rights, the provisions most favorable to the principle of liberty always apply, which means that when talking about freedom of expression, the right remains the rule, and restrictions - the exception.

2.4. Facts and opinions

Making the difference between facts and opinions:

Facts	Opinions
Real circumstances, actions or phenomena that can be observed or objectively verified.	Impressions, appreciations or interpretations on a subject.
They can be demonstrated objectively, based on evidence.	They cannot be verified and demonstrated.
They are objective.	They are subjective, personal, we may or may not agree with them.
Universal, they appear the same no matter who looks at them.	They can differ from person to person, from group to group.
Expressed in neutral terms.	Expressed in emotional terms.
Words to help identify them: confirm, proves, shows that…	In my view, from my point of view, I suspect that...

Any opinion is legitimate because everyone has the right to their opinion. Even if they don't have to be justified, especially those that express value judgments (good/bad, right/wrong), opinions based on **factual information** are more credible.
Still, in order **to be trusted, opinions have to be pertinent**, which refers to the ability of a person issuing an opinion that he/she is an expert or has relevant experience or expertise on the subject.

More often than not, it is not easy to tell if a message is either 100% a fact or an opinion. Then we call it **an ambiguous message** (eg.: I did well in the exam - If it is formulated before the result is displayed, it is an opinion, because it is a subjective assessment. If it is formulated after the result is displayed and you get 7/10 correct answers, then it is a fact).

Name of the activity: Identify facts and opinions in media messages
Synchronous activity (face to face or online)
Duration: 30 minutes

Task: Participants will analyze a series of media messages and determine whether the information provided is based on a fact or an opinion.

Expected results: Participants will understand the difference between facts and opinions and identify them in the media messages they consume.

Preparation:
- The facilitator will have at his disposal a set of example messages, which he proposes for analysis to the participants.
- The facilitator will prepare a presentation with each message on a slide, for analysis. (Calculate 5 minutes/message to determine how many messages you want to include.)
- The facilitator can prepare a Google or Kahoot form with messages for analysis.
- The facilitator can print the messages (pasted on the board/flipchart), and they can be evaluated in plenary by the participants.
- The activity can be frontal, or it can be done in groups.

Facilitation:
- In the beginning, the facilitator will briefly mention the difference between facts and opinions (5-10 minutes)

Questions for participants:
- What are the facts?
- What are the opinions?
- Can you tell the difference between them? How?

- The facilitator will present the task to the participants.
- The facilitator will show each message and survey the group about the nature of the information/send the link to complete the form and give participants time to complete their answers. It is recommended that each message be discussed separately.

Question set for participants:
- Is the information presented based on fact or opinion?
- How can we figure out what we are looking at?
- Is it demonstrable? (Then it is based on fact.)
- Is it expressed in neutral or emotional terms? (fact - neutral terms, opinion - emotional terms)
- Does it express someone's opinion about a certain thing? (opinion)
- Is it something that can be observed by all of us equally? (fact)
- Is it something that can have different meanings for each of us? (opinion)

Final questions (reflection):
- What is your conclusion from this exercise?
- Is it important to be able to distinguish between facts and opinions? Why?
- How will you apply what you have learned today to the future? Will you pay more attention to the media messages you see?

Example 1:

Message	Fact	Opinion	Ambiguous
It's raining. We can look out the window and we can all see that it is raining.	x		
The weather is awful. The taste of each person intervenes: some love the rain, others hate it.		x	
The dog is man's best friend. That's what dog lovers say! Ask cat lovers too, see what they think! :)		x	
Millions of people have pet dogs. Statistics show that in 2018, there were 65 million domestic dogs. https://www.statista.com/statistics/515475/dog-ownership-european-union-eu-by-country/	x		
Tourism brings money to the state budget. In 2018, tourism brought over 158,000 million euros to European Union countries. They can be checked here: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/f/fb/Travel_receipts_and_expenditure_in_balance_of_payments%2C_2013%E2%80%932018.png	x		
Tourism is good for the country. It is a subjective assessment. It can be beneficial because it brings money and jobs, but it can also increase the level of pollution or discomfort for the locals.		x	
The vaccine saves lives. Systematic vaccination has led to the eradication of diseases that cause death or paralysis, such as polio, chickenpox. You can see the effects of vaccines here (in the US). https://graphics.wsj.com/infectious-diseases-and-vaccines/	x		
Everyone should get vaccinated. For some diseases, vaccination is mandatory in some countries. For others, it depends on each person whether or not they want to be vaccinated, and the point of view of someone else cannot be imposed on others.		x	
I did well on this test. The value of the answer depends on the context.			x
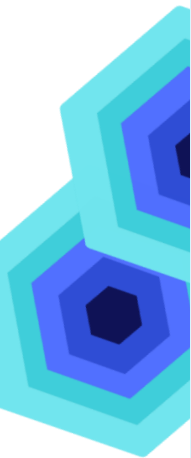
Example 2:

Message	Fact	Opinion
This is an opinion. There are too many variables in Jaden Smith's message that cannot be proven. Can he change his race? Can he change who his parents are? Can he relive his life to prove what he claims?		x
Slightly more than 10% of the population of Romania is formed of minorities. This can be proved by searching for statistics on the percentage of minority populations in Romania.	x	
Roma will try to cheat or scam you. It is a statement that can't be proven and has no backup information to prove it.		x
We can verify if the 3 flavors are the best-selling ones in multiple ways, like consulting sales reports.	x	
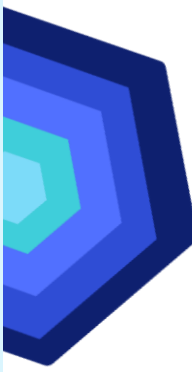
"I'm more of a Jew than Soros is... " Rudolph W. Giuliani, 2019 The sentence is an opinion. What does being "more" Jewish mean? How can the extent to which someone is more or less Jewish be quantified?		x
Alexander J.A Cortes @AJA_Cortes How to be a Beautiful Woman - Be thin - Be able to cook - Have long hair - Wear make-up - Be feminine This is an opinion. What is beautiful for someone may be different for someone else. The author of the message is stating his opinion about women based on beauty standards that are constantly changing and cannot prove beauty. For example, being thin was not a beauty standard for women in the past.		x
Nze @nzekiev Train to Poland got here, I and other two Africans entered first, few mins later, the police came in and dragged us down from our cabin. Only Ukrainians are allowed. The succession of actions is described by Nze as they happened - they are provable, and appear the same to all witnesses.	x	
Andrew Tate ✔ @Cobratate If you are over 15 and like cartoons you are a loser. Anime dragon ball Z etc. No excuse. Andrew Tate is emitting an opinion about how people should behave at a certain age; it is not based on facts. Maturity is a social construct and it is not defined by our taste in media.		x

3. The Journalism Landscape and the News

3.1. The journalist's role in delivering public interest information

Free, independent and pluralistic journalism is a core element of any functioning democracy.

Journalists are the ones who collect information, verify and contextualize it. They do this in the name of public interest. They identify relevant topics, with an impact in society, state the facts and explain the causes of the problems. The way journalists select and present the events to the public - the chosen topics, the sources used, the order of information in a material, the tone of the presentation, sound and illustrative music - influences the public perception of reality. Because it mainly focuses on the problems within society which demand to be solved, journalism is often considered "critical at all costs" or "negative". In fact, it is its mandate to monitor and criticize those in power on behalf of the public.

Given the major impact on the smooth running of society, we say that journalism acts in the **public interest**.

Public interest: the concept describes the general welfare or benefit of the large public, as opposed to the particular interests - individual or group.
The term reflects the belief that certain interests apply to all or most individuals, regardless of their status or position in society, and that deliberate action is needed to protect them.

The term **"public interest"** is often judged together with **"the interest of the public"**. The interest of the public refers to other things/situations, not so important and sometimes frivolous, but which offer various small, personal and momentary benefits: things that help us to forget, to relax, sensationalist information, worldliness.

An example to help us differentiate them: a piece of information about new cases of Covid-19 infection in one day is public interest information. The fact that an actress ended up in intensive care, being ill with Covid-19, is part of the interest of the public.

Name of the activity: "The killer bear" - public interest vs. the interest of the public
Synchronous activity (face to face or online)

Duration: 30 minutes

Task: Participants will write a news story, following the instructions: You are a field reporter in the local press. You return from the field with a set of information. Write a story based on the information gathered. You can order information as you see fit, including or ignoring some of the information provided, but without adding new information. Give the news a headline.

Expected results: Participants will develop the skills to identify information of public interest and distinguish it from those that only arouse the interest and curiosity of the public.

Preparation:
- ▪ The facilitator will prepare the materials for the activity (slide with the exercise, handout with the set of information), and will decide the number of groups that participants will be parted in.

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- The facilitator will explain the instructions for accomplishing the task that the participants must perform, and will leave them in place, so that they are visible to all participants.

The set of information received:

1. Three villagers from Dâmbovița are attacked by a bear. One dies from his injuries.
2. One of the surviving victims turns out to be the aunt of the Minister of the Environment.
3. The Minister of the Environment requests the Ministry of Internal Affairs to use the equipped helicopters to identify and hunt the bear, allegedly to be mad.
4. A bear is hunted, which turns out to be mad, but which was not the one that had attacked the villagers.
5. This is the fifth such attack in the last two months in the county, but it is the first time that the central authorities have taken action.

Facilitation:

- 5 minutes: The facilitator presents the tasks to the participants, invites them to the working groups and transmits all the necessary information.
- 10 minutes: During the activity, the facilitator can check if the participants have understood the task, they can be offered clarifications.
- The groups will write down the created news and will designate a member of the group to read it.
- 15 minutes: The participants return to the plenary and read the news.
- Support question set: What kind of news did you create? How was the creation process? What was the decision of the groups - how did you present the story? What were the major themes reflected in the news we went through together? What information have you excluded, if such? Does the news reflect the public interest or the interest of the public? Can we differentiate between the two concepts?

Interpretation: From the information gathered, three major themes of "public interest" can be identified:

1. Preferential use of state resources (the Ministry of Internal Affairs helicopters) for inappropriate purposes.
2. There is an environmental problem signaled by the large number of cases of attacks in a single area. What is the cause: deforestation - legal or illegal? Overcrowding with bears? Recent work that has disrupted the "corridors" of wildlife movement?
3. The hunted bear was mad, the aggressive one is suspected of being mad. Is there a risk of a rabies epidemic in the region? Are local health and veterinary authorities ready to respond to such an epidemic? Are there enough rabies vaccines? Are medical staff properly trained?

Conclusion: We tend to be seduced by the "sensational" aspects of messages. From now on we will look more closely and we will know better to look beyond the immediate temptations and identify the public interest.

3.2. The news

We are exposed, day by day, to a variety of information. Not all of them turn into "news" or press materials. To become news, information must have certain qualities, go through a process of evaluation, verification and processing. At the heart of this process is the journalist.

News is a journalistic genre that presents current information, transmitted through mass-media.

- News exposes factual information, which can be easily observed and proven.
- News goes directly to the target, transmits the information as it happened, and the journalist avoids expressing his opinions in its content.
- The relevance (public interest) and novelty of the reported event give the news value.
- The journalist must verify the information with the help of at least two other sources before publishing a news story, in order to extract the essential facts and differentiate them from opinions.

What makes news... news? Let's talk about **newsworthiness**, which translates in the quality of a fact or event to be interesting enough in order to become news.

- *Novelty:* is the most common quality of a news story.
- *The prominence of the actors:* the better known the protagonists, the more interesting the information will be.
- *Proximity:* the closer to us an event happens (in our community, in our country), the greater interest it will attract.
- *Impact and consequences:* the magnitude of the impact and the direct consequences of an event give news more value.
- *Conflict:* the reported event is generated by a conflict between two or more people, ideas, beliefs, etc.
- *Human interest:* a group of people, a community, etc. finds its interests in a certain information.
- *Rarity or uniqueness:* the information presented refers to an unusual situation.

The inverted pyramid

The construction of news follows a set of rules, starting from the newsworthiness criterion, in order to deliver us relevant information. The reader finds out the most important information from the first paragraph - who is the main character of an event, what is the event about, when did the event happen, followed by why, where, and how the event happened.

The main elements of the inverted pyramid:

a) **The lead -** the introduction (the first paragraph of the news, in which the main information is synthesized and answers are given to the 6 essential questions: who? what? why? where? when? how?

b) **The body of the news** - contains information that enlarges the picture: the conflict is introduced; details of the event are reported and evidence that supports the facts is brought. Also, in this stage quotes of the sources that the journalist consulted are included.

c) **The "tail" - the context -** puts the event in a context, provides a broader framework for it, and introduces information that is helpful, but not essential.

The Lead
Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
Approx. 30 words (1-2 paragraphs)

The Body
Main information: arguments, controversy, the unfolding of events, the evidence. Quotes that reinforce the above.

The tail: the Context
Interesting information, history, statistics.

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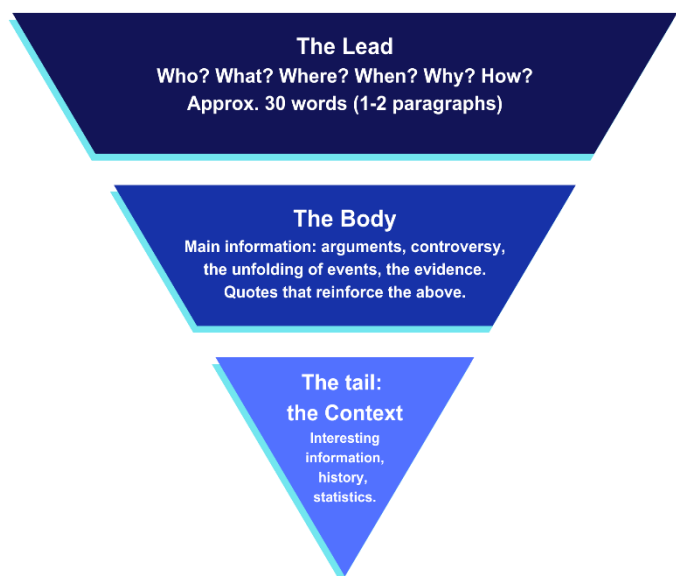
The benefits of the inverted pyramid technique are that readers can quickly assess the most important information and can stop reading at any point and still come away with the main information.

In writing good news, not only the construction techniques are important, but also the way the message is constructed, the way the journalist articulates the subject, the language used, phrases the sentences, chooses the words. From this point of view, **well-constructed news** is:

- *Relevant* - they deal with an important topic for the public. The more the newsworthiness criteria an event meets, the more relevant the final product will be to the public.
- *Accurate* - information is accurate and verifiable, one of the main requirements in journalism.
- *Clear* - the language is simple and clear, so that the subject is easy to understand. Simple words and grammar, short paragraphs of one or two sentences, can give clarity to the news.
- *Balanced* - all the points of view involved are presented.
- *Equidistant* - all "voices" receive the same visibility.
- *Credible -* the sources used are clearly mentioned and have expertise in the field. The quotes animate the news.

How can we verify that news is well constructed?

- we check other sources to see if the information presented is correct (we can research if the information is not biasedly presented);
- we look carefully if the quotations have the source mentioned and if the excerpt is not taken out of context;
- we verify that all parties involved in a conflict express their position within the news, or if not, the journalist mentions that he tried to contact that source, but did not receive a response (if a source accuses someone of something, the news will present also the position of the accused one, even if it is contrary to the journalist's beliefs);
- we pay attention if in the news the journalist expresses his/her opinions; A journalist must always remain equidistant;
- we can check the use of the attribution verbs ("supports", "claims", etc.)

Name of the activity: News - analysis of news items
Synchronous activity (face to face or online)
Duration: 40 minutes

Task: Participants will analyze a news story, starting with the essential questions that a journalist must answer.

Expected results: Participants will know the essential questions that a journalist answers and will be able to analyze whether a story is constructed correctly or not.

Preparation:
- The facilitator will print the worksheet, along with the news that the participants will analyze.
- Attention: select a recent news relevant for the participants (even if 2 examples are provided, they might not be of interest anymore to participants, as they are old, or from another country).
-
Example 1: https://www.romaniajournal.ro/society-people/education/the-first-interactive-educational-econtent-for-ukrainian-refugees-developed-by-polish-company/

Example 2:
https://polishnews.co.uk/russias-attack-on-ukraine-the-roma-have-stolen-a-russian-tank-and-they-promise-it-will-serve-ukraine/

Facilitation:
- The facilitator will have a short discussion with the participants about news (5 minutes):

  - Do you read, or watch the news? Where do you receive them from? (Online sites/social networks)
  - What kind of news? (Traffic, weather, what's going on in our city, cancan, niche - about a video games/artists, etc.; if they mention that they also see fake news, ask for examples).
  - Who creates the news? (Journalist/reporter/editor; point out that an honest journalist will not publish fake news)
  - Why does news exist? (To bring us up-to-date information about what's going on in our communities, to reveal what's not working properly in society - in other words, journalists and media outlets guarantee us access to new information, through the materials they provide. Without this fact-based information, we would not be able to make decisions about the situations we face every day - for example, when we check traffic, or when we want to know what is happening at the border with people fleeing the path of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, etc. The false news does not give us all these things, but they want to confuse us precisely so that we cannot make informed decisions.)

- The facilitator presents the task to all participants and clarifies where there are doubts. (Working time for participants - individual: 15 minutes)

After completing the working time, the facilitator will discuss the results of the exercise in plenary.

Processing: First questions for all participants: How was it? What was the most complicated?

- What items did you identify in the worksheet? Analyze with the participants the value of the identified elements.
- What is your opinion about this news now that you have reviewed it? Is it correct and complete news?
- What did you learn from the analysis of this news?
- How will you apply what you have learned?
- How will you react when you read/see/hear the next news?
- What will you be paying attention to the next time you read/view/hear a news story? (It is recommended that as many participants as possible identify one item at a time)

* Note: The discussion should be conducted towards reflection - what the participants will do in the future, how they will act based on the conclusions they can reach now, by knowing how to better relate to the news they encounter.

Conclusion: In this exercise, it is important to ask questions and pay attention to all the elements of a news story. The angle of approach chosen can create reality. The journalist is subjective precisely by the simple decision to choose whether or not to include certain information in the news, or to include certain terms that reflect his personal opinion. If it does not give us sources for the information it presents, or makes it difficult for us to access it, it puts us in a situation where we cannot verify the information, to convince ourselves that it is true, and then, based on it, we can make decisions.

4. The Context in Media Messages

In the section above, about news, we found out that the context is part of journalistic reporting. The inclusion of context in news and other press materials allows for a more complete image of the reported event, as well as for a more in-depth analysis.

For example, one expert talks about the long-term effects of social isolation of students, which could lead to poor school results, if not complemented by remedial methods and cooperation with parents to emphasize the work at home. The journalist - inattentive or in a rush for sensationalism - writes: "Expert: Students are getting worse every day". This simplification and elimination of nuances puts the message out of context.

So, in this first sense of the term, the **context puts the facts in a certain light.**

The second meaning of the term introduces us to the **types of context**:

- **historical** - describes the evolution over time of a narrative or process, the stages that led to the event described;
- **comparison** - compares the described event with similar ones, in order to highlight its inclusion in a series of similar events, or its exceptional character;
- **connections** - the links between the actors of the event and others, external, who can put the described event in a network of other similar events;
- **predictions** - what cascade of other events the related events may entail and what their consequences are.

The context can also change the emotional balance of a story.

5. The Journalism Landscape in three countries

To better understand the press, we need to look at how it works - what are the internal and external rules, and what are the reasons why it exists. All of these elements will help us to deconstruct media messages more effectively and become savvy consumers.

The press must be seen as an ecosystem and not as a static landscape. Relationships between the types of media institutions, journalists, employers, politicians, companies that buy advertising space, the public, the legal framework, forms of self-regulation, economic or social context are vital to understanding how we inform ourselves.

The Journalism Sector

When we talk about the press ecosystem, we analyze three main components:
- **The forms of financing of the press** - commercial advertising, payment for content, or from the state budget
- **Editorial independence** - censorship, or other forms of biased editorial decisions.

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- **The role of the public** - the public has a moral duty to support journalism both financially and also through civic engagement, in order to ensure a democratic framework in which to properly inform citizens.
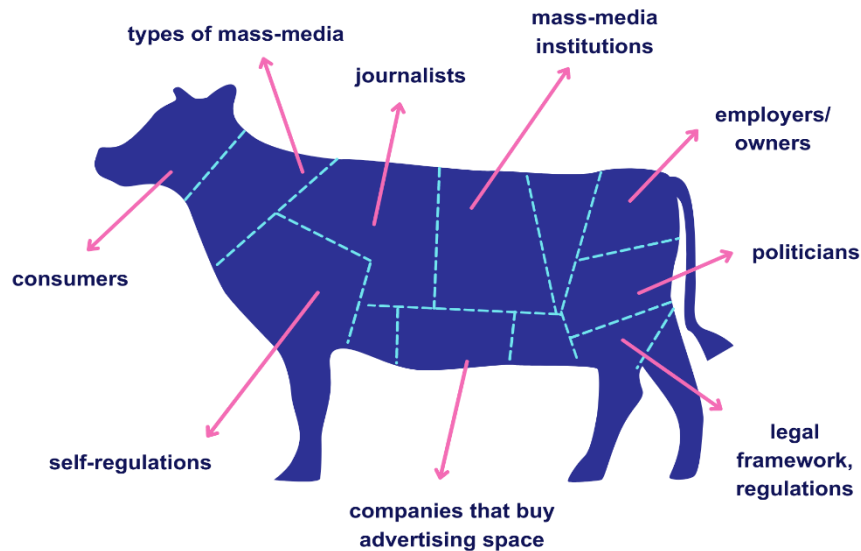
The actors of the mass-media ecosystem

5.1. The forms of financing of the press

As we learned in the previous session, the public interest should be the basis for journalism practice. But our right to information cannot be exercised without resources, because content, like any other product, costs money. In order to exist, media institutions, like any other organization, need funds and budgets.

If we consider the sources of funding, we can divide media institutions into two categories:

- **private media organizations** (commercial or non-profit), funded from private sources and
- **public media organizations**, financed mainly from the state budget.

As states recognize the importance of informing their citizens, the public media should play a key role in a country's media landscape, in the context that there is no pressure on these institutions to make a profit. However, in both cases, the context can dramatically influence the work of media organizations.

Private media institutions are mainly funded by commercial advertising. Television and radio broadcast advertisements, the print media or the public electronic press, in turn, deliver advertisements or small adverts, for which companies pay.

Thus, when we talk about commercial media institutions, the most important element to consider is the **audience** - how many people watch that radio or television station, buy the newspaper or magazine, and watch the information on web platforms. It is the audience that decides the value of advertising and therefore commercial media institutions will be motivated to produce those types of content that have the largest audience.

In Romania, a study from 2019 run by The CMDS shows that, while the media landscape may look "diverse and vibrant"[11], a very big part of the Romanian private media is actually owned by only a few big players, such as Intact Group, RCS&RDS and Central European Media Enterprises. The same study also notes that the main financing source of Romanian media is through advertising. As a result, smaller local media or independent outlets, who pull in lower audiences, are more vulnerable and exposed to risks of losing their editorial independence over their financial wellbeing. The local news outlets, especially the print press, are often subject to pressure from local politicians, because they heavily rely on advertising and most local companies that would advertise in the print press are owned by politicians or people in tight closeness to those politicians.

The Romanian public media is provided through SRTV (Societatea Română de Televiziune), has multiple media products like TVR1 (television) or Radio România (radio) and it has a total national coverage of 90-98%[12]. It offers a wider variety of services, including programs in the languages of the minorities in Romania, even - most recently, in Ukrainian (2022).

In the Republic of Moldova, most Russian television stations, many radio stations and some newspapers are relayed and broadcast by local media companies that insert a certain share of Moldovan information product in the foreign editorial content, this being the only measure to stimulate the development of the local market media, provided by law with almost zero effect. At the same time, there are a number of television stations with predominantly Moldovan products on the domestic media market (the public stations Moldova 1 and Moldova 2, Radio Moldova Actualități, the private stations Jurnal TV, TV8, Publika TV, etc.). Several Romanian media channels also are broadcast in the Republic of Moldova, including the public television station TVR, through the TVR Moldova branch; a public radio station, through Radio Chișinău; a private channel PRO TV, through PRO TV Chișinău.

The financial sources of the Moldovan media institutions consist of the money obtained from advertising, donations, co-productions, subscriptions valid for the written press and so on. However, a large part of the politicized media institutions does not have transparent sources of funding.

In Hungary, the media market has been slowly slipping under the ownership of the government. April 2022 Viktor Orbán (FIDESZ) gained a 2/3 majority for the 4th time in the Hungarian parliament. Since 2010 Orbán and his party have built a political-communication apparatus that is unprecedented throughout Europe. This apparatus now forms a complex system that is coordinated by an independent communications ministry within the government; includes a network of research firms, consultants, opinion polls, foundations, dozens of media influencers, a broad network of paid activists, more than 10,000 billboard spaces, citylights; and a media empire with more than 500 outlets fueled by public money.

In the early 2010s it was feared the Media Council would regulate the media with fines, which would have evoked a classic censorship, but it quickly became clear that ownership changes should be monitored. Experts say it is absurd that there are newspapers where 90 percent of

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revenue comes from state advertising, or that the state is the largest advertiser in a country. This is completely contrary to European competition rules.[13]
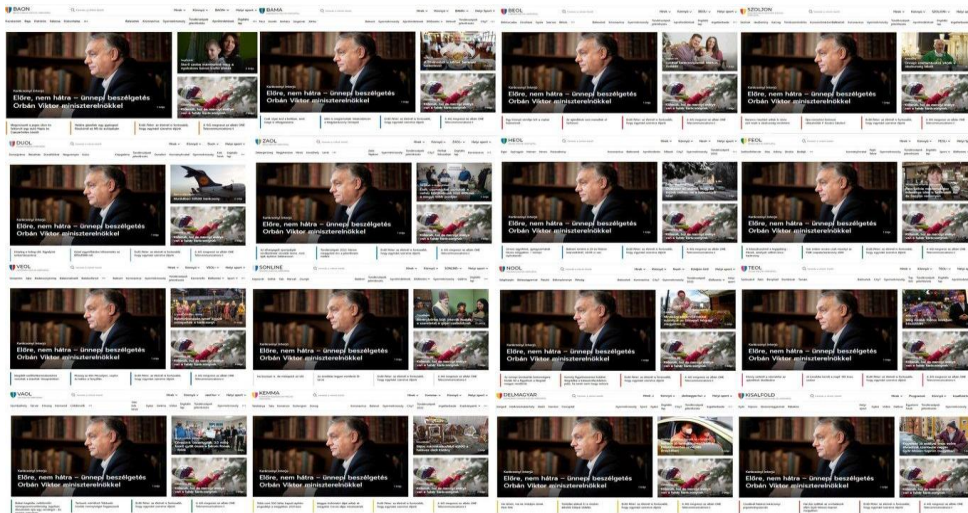
Cover pages of the online edition of 16 different independent county newspapers at Christmas 2021

5.2. Editorial independence

The Romanian state guarantees freedom of expression and expressly prohibits censorship. It is considered censorship if it is the state that applies the measures. If it comes as a result of an editorial decision, it is not considered censorship - it is called an "editorial decision".

The newsroom has **editorial independence**. This means that decisions on journalistic content are made by journalists and editors, and the editor-in-chief has the final decision. The owners cannot decide what is published or broadcasted. Still, problems of editorial independence can arise when journalists document and publish material about influential politicians, companies that buy advertising in those media institutions, or even about the actions of their own bosses.

In the area of freedom of expression, legally, censorship is strictly defined by the relationship between the state and the person (natural or legal). Thus, states are forbidden to stop the publication of material, to close down publications or to decide what journalists or publications are and are not allowed to write.

Romanian journalism struggles to be independent, in a socio-economic and political climate where the public support barely exists and news outlets are highly dependent on advertising to make end's meet, and thus, often find themselves at the hand of politicians and companies with connections to them that buy ads, especially in the local media. On top of it, the past years have also brought a couple of physical attacks and death threats towards Romanian journalists (like Emilia Șercan)[14], alongside some cases where the judiciary system has been pushing for journalists to reveal their sources, as Reporters without Borders report.[15] The latest

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[13] https://444.hu/tldr/2022/04/25/legyozhetetlen-orban-viktor-partallami-kampanygepezete

[14] https://www.euractiv.com/section/media/news/romania-joins-eu-black-sheep-over-declining-media-freedom/

[15] https://rsf.org/en/country/romania

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press freedom index places Romania 8 spots lower in 2022 than the previous year, pointing to its vulnerability.[16]

A study[17] by The Romanian Center for European Policies (CRPE) shows that the Republic of Moldova remains a testing ground for projecting Russian influence to Eastern Europe, with local politicians and local media as real vehicles for promoting Russian and anti-European narratives. According to the 2018 edition of the *Disinformation Resilience Index in Central and Eastern Europe[18]*, the Republic of Moldova ranked first among the Eastern Partnership countries in terms of vulnerability to Russian propaganda. This is also due to the fact that most television programs broadcasting Russian programs promote the Kremlin's policy, a significant part of the population is exposed to information manipulation, and the measures taken by the authorities are insufficient and do not contribute to effective information protection and increased resilience to misinformation.

In Hungary, **editorial independence** is virtually **non-existent** for news programming at the public radio and TV, which uncritically amplifies Fidesz's messaging. During the 2022 election campaign, the public broadcaster has provided unbalanced and unprofessional news coverage. Political control over the state news agency is extremely high, with the prime minister's press office explicitly dictating coverage.[19]

5.3. The role of the public

Currently, media institutions are going through a period of transformation, where the old funding mechanisms are no longer functional. Advertising money is insufficient and goes to the big players, accelerating the chase for the audience at any cost, while money from state budgets often comes with editorial constraints, leaving citizens less and less informed.
To ensure that their right to information is respected and that they have multiple sources from which to get information, the public needs to consider its role in providing a functional framework for the media.

Journalism is the tool through which citizens keep a watchful eye on the authorities and make sure they know their work is being scrutinized.

The questions journalists ask those who govern are asked on behalf of citizens, and the authorities have the obligation to answer them.

Public engagement must operate in two ways - paying for journalism and ensuring, through civic involvement, a democratic framework in which media institutions can fulfill their mandate. What media literacy tries to do is precisely that, to lay the groundwork for this kind of behavior, in which each of us understands both the role of the media in a democracy and their own role in this ecosystem.

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[16] https://www.euractiv.com/section/media/news/romania-joins-eu-black-sheep-over-declining-media-freedom/

[17] **Intoxicare și propagandă în gestionarea crizei COVID-19 în Republica Moldova**, CRPE, July 2020

[18] http://prismua.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/DRI_CEE_2018.pdf.

[19] PressFreedomMission_Report_IPI_2022

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Media funding models anchored on public contributions are undoubtedly the most sustainable and transparent forms of funding in today's digital economy.

Demand-driven, direct-from-audience payment models also allow media institutions to build a closer and more stable relationship with their audience, which is the best form of defense against attacks from politicians, governments, corporations or other market players.

The latest report by Reuters Institute (2022) shows that the levels of trust of the public in the Romanian media is very low, concerning both publicly and privately owned media. [20] This has a direct impact on the public's willingness to pay for the media they consume, resulting in a disengaged audience. Moreover, low levels of media literacy and a lack of general understanding of the media's role in the upkeep of democratic values within the state are also at fault for the almost non-existent support by the public for the independent media. It is reported that only 16% of consumers actually pay for the content they consume. Another cause for the lack of engagement from the public is also the fact that 19-20% of the Romanian public considers that the media is under political influence or seeks to satisfy commercial interests.

In the Republic of Moldova, a study by the Thomas Reuters Foundation (2021) reveals that, while the trust levels of the public in various differently financed media is even lower than in Romania, it seems that the Moldovan people also lack awareness of what independent media is and which are the active outlets nationally. "Around a third of respondents (33%) did not think there were independent media13 in Moldova, a third (33%) thought there were, and a third (34%) were unsure. Older people were less likely to think independent media exists."[21] This brings forth an issue that makes it that much more difficult for Moldavian independent press to gain support from the public, especially financially.

The report also notes that the independent press is often associated with foreign financing sources in the Republic of Moldova and it reveals that 41% of interviewed consumers do not engage with foreign media.

While a strong and independent press needs the trust of the public, in Hungary the perception of the media is one of the lowest in the world in 2020, and a significant number of people do not trust the press and journalists at all, according to the Ipsos Global Confidence Index survey (based on data taken in 2020 in a representative sample).

This makes the nurture of a mutually trusting relationship between the media and the public very challenging.

Trustworthiness in media companies

	Trustworthy (%)	Untrustworthy (%)
Global average	19	43
Saudi Arabia	37	30
China	36	20
India	34	34
Malaysia	30	29
Brazil	23	34
Germany	23	30
Netherlands	22	32
Canada	20	42
Mexico	20	34
Poland	20	47
Sweden	19	45
Argentina	18	49
South Africa	18	45
Spain	18	38
Romania	18	42
Australia	17	49
Belgium	17	41
South Korea	17	35
USA	17	52
Russia	16	51
France	15	47
Japan	15	35
Italy	14	37
Turkey	13	54
Peru	13	55
Great Britain	12	56
Chile	11	58
Colombia	10	61
Hungary	9	64

Q: Please look at this list of different types of organisations and institutions. In general, do you think each is trustworthy or untrustworthy? **Source:** Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Monitor: Global Country Average of 21,503 online interviews across 29 countries c.500-1000 online interviews per country aged 16/18-65/75, June 25-July 9 2021

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[20] https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2022/romania

[21] https://epim.trust.org/application/velocity/_newgen/assets/TRFMoldovaReport_ENG.pdf

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*Name of the activity***:** The Press System - what does it look like?
Synchronous activity (face to face or online)
Duration: 30 minutes
Task: Participants will identify different elements of the press sector.

Expected results: Participants will know the essential components of the press sector and understand their role in the ecosystem.

Preparation:
- The facilitator will print the worksheet in a big format, and will prepare some post-its to give to the participants.

Facilitation:
- The facilitator will explain the task to the participants: each participant should write on the post-its they received the elements of the press system they identify (one element on one post-it).
- Then participants will come to the front of the room, where the big poster with the cow silhouette is visible, and stick the post-its on it.
- The facilitator will organize the post-its into clusters, with the same or similar information.

Processing:
The facilitator will then ask participants:
- What items did you identify?
- What is the role of that element in the ecosystem?
Then show on the screen the picture with all the elements and try to synthesize their role in the ecosystem.

Additional questions for reflection:
- What did you learn from this activity?
- How will you apply what you have learned?
- How will you react when you interact with the press?
- What will you be paying attention to the next time you interact with the press?

Conclusion: In this exercise, it is important to ask questions and pay attention to all the elements that the participants are talking about. It is also very important to clarify once again the role of the press, which is in the public interest, as well as the conditions that affect their activity (from the financing perspective, the independence one, as well as the role of the public). Insist on clarifying the elements that construct the press system and what their influences are.

6. Internet and social networks. Relationship with online information.

The Internet and social networks, in particular, have become the main source of information for an ever-growing percentage of the public and are structuring human behavior, exposing citizens to new opportunities but also to new complex risks, including cultural, political, social and psychological aspects.

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Name of the activity: User targeting criteria on FB and/or Google
Time: 20 minutes
Task: Sign in to your Google and/or Facebook accounts. Check how each platform builds your profile based on the data they collect about you.
Recommendation: Select which platform the participants will use (it is difficult to be able to go through both platforms). Go through the steps they need to follow together.

Option 1: To check in Facebook (minimally), go to Settings > Ads, and you will be able to see from whom you have received ads recently (Advertisers), which are your commercial interests identified by Facebook (Ad Topics).

You can tell the participants that there is also a more complicated way to find out what types of data Facebook collects about them, but it requires downloading an archive (for those interested, you can note in the chat how to get to this archive: from Settings > Privacy > Your Facebook Information > Download Profile Information, where they can select what they want to download). They can see what other apps connected to Facebook are collecting data about them, they can see which apps have uploaded their data to Facebook for targeting, they can see an extensive list of interests identified by Facebook for any time period they want, etc.

Option 2: Invite them to try Google Verification.

To check in Google, go to the link: https://adssettings.google.com.
Also put the link in the chat for participants.

Remind participants that they must be logged into their accounts to be able to see the profile that Google has created based on their online activity - searches, sites visited, content consumed on Youtube (which is owned by Google and collects an additional set of data , which is added to those collected by the search engine).

Ask them to share with the group what they think about how Facebook or Google sees them:
Example questions:
- Are they within the age range described by Google?
- Do their interests match those described by Google? Are there interests that match recent searches they've done on Google?
- Are there any interests listed that you find unfamiliar/unsuitable/don't understand where they came from?
- How does Facebook know so much about us? And how does it use this information?

Conclusion:
What we can conclude is that, although we make an effort to impose conscious limits on data collection, Google will still know something about us and will be able to identify possible interests by comparing our profile.

Optional, if there is time:
You can ask the question: Why does Google need our data? to lead the group to the topic of the next slide - What happens to our data online.

(A: Because Google makes these data sets available in bulk to companies that place advertising in exchange for money, so that these companies can reach more "targeted", i.e. directly to the audience that might be interested in the products they make advertisement, so as not to waste money by releasing advertising messages to a wider audience, but which will not necessarily respond to them.)

Let's see how this information about us gets to Google, for example, and what happens to it further.

In our online activity, we develop a **complex digital footprint** through our presence (profile, declared interests, etc.) and activity (cookies, posts, comments, opinions, interactions, etc.). Our personal data and the data resulting from our Internet activity are very valuable to online advertisers and marketers, institutions and interest groups who aim to persuade us with their campaigns. IT companies such as Google or Facebook, with the help of algorithms, collect and store our data and build statistics about our online behavior. These datasets play an important role in the way advertising or propaganda messages reach us, because the algorithms identify almost exactly what our interests are, and then deliver those messages that match our interests, thus increasing the chances we react to those messages.
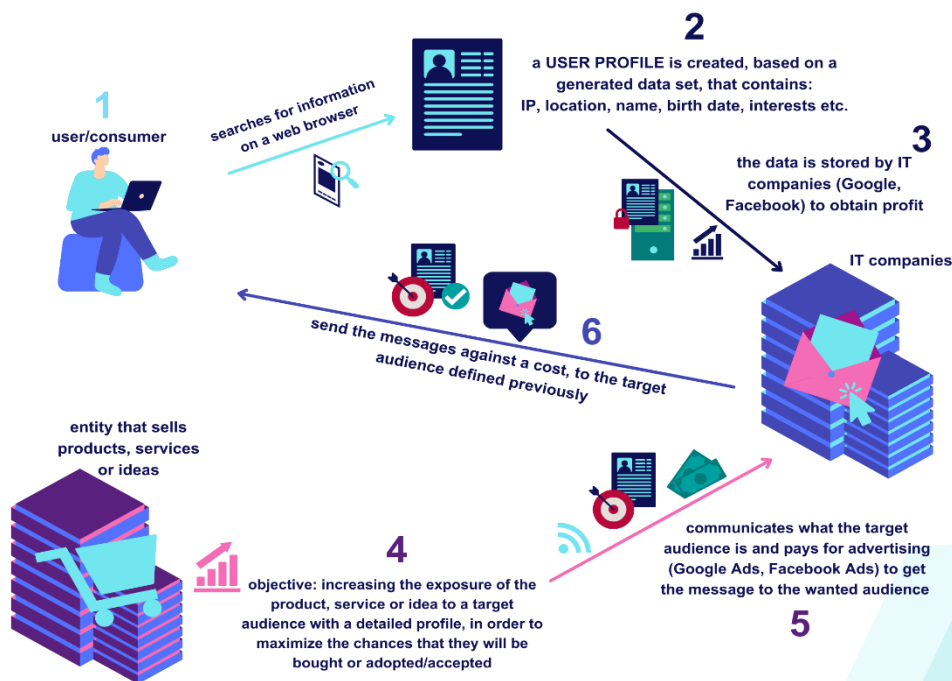
6.1. Digital footprint / Digital identity[22]

Every moment we spend online, from visiting a website, making an online purchase, chatting on a social network or playing a game, using a search engine or posting on social media, leaves a trace of our online activity.

This digital footprint creates a permanent entry and can easily be seen by anyone with an interest and an intermediate skill set. The things we do online can be copied, saved or shared by others, and their trail is very hard to trace in order to take them off the Internet.

The **digital footprint** designates the persistent traces that digital behavior and online presence leave about us in the digital space.

It includes:
- Personal information such as our social media profiles, accounts created on websites,
- Photos we post online or that others post about us,
- Anything we say online, contributions on social media, forums, articles, etc.

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[22] Blue J., Condell J., Lunney T. (...), Digital footprints: Your unique identity, University of Ulster, UK

Every time we add information about ourselves online (or when other people add information about us), our digital footprint grows.

The elements that build the digital footprint:

Active digital footprint refers to conscious and engaged participation in online activities such as, but not limited to:	**Passive digital footprint** (Kutz&Hoffmann, 2017) refers to data generated by algorithms, by analyzing our online behaviors, or information made public by other users, such as:
1. Choosing to be a member of a community - being a member of a community contributes to our social identity online, therefore it is necessary to be careful about how we construct our online image and how we present ourselves. 2. Sharing information about ourselves - we post identifying information, photos, videos, and texts, and these can be stored, processed or shared by other users. 3. Browsing online for information, entertainment, shopping, etc. - the websites we visit inform us of the security policy they apply to protect our personal data. Accepting the security policy as it is when entering the website, without further investigation, means an automatic acceptance given to the website to store and process our data.	1. Browsing history - the browser remembers what we do online, every website we entered, every page we visited. 2. Cookies - those small sets of information used by websites to personalize the information we receive. 3. A mention in someone else's post (Tag), others' testimonials about us, comments, others' searches about us, etc.
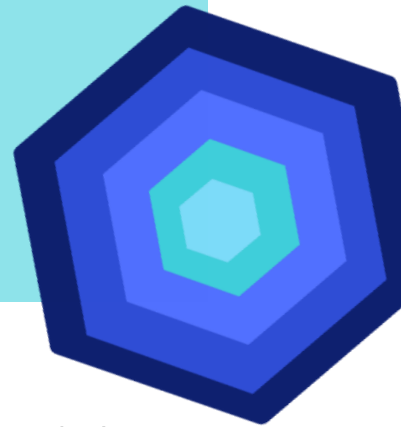
The digital fingerprint is persistent.

The information we share about ourselves online remains stored somewhere on the Internet, even if we delete it (e.g. when we close an account, Facebook actually archives it, with the ability to reactivate it).

Information, once posted, can easily be copied and shared with others, which means we lose control over information about ourselves.

That's why it's important to carefully consider what information we want to share about ourselves and what we allow others to share about us on social media. Just as we, in turn, will make sure that we don't share information about others without their permission.

6.2. Filter bubbles and echo chambers

Filter bubble: a situation where the person is exposed only to news and information that supports what they believe and like, at the risk of isolating them in their own cultural and ideological systems. Term introduced by Eli Pariser (2011).

Echo chamber: a situation in which, through the communication and repetition of news and information, beliefs are amplified and reinforced within a closed cultural and ideological system shared by a group of people, and information that contradicts those beliefs are rejected. Term introduced by Cass Sunstein (2001).

Information bubbles lead to the creation of echo chambers.

Filter bubble	Echo chamber
Excludes information by omission, sometimes accidental.	Manipulates trust and beliefs to actively deny other voices, which it undermines and discredits.
The sources are diverse, but fall into a register that answers the user's preferred messages.	Increases dependence on a single source of information and resistance to other sources.
The messages do not necessarily come from opinion leaders, but the user repeatedly receives messages from the same people, whom he follows and interacts with more often on social networks, often in agreement with his own opinions.	Built around charismatic leaders who train members to have an almost blind faith in their messages and to distrust outsiders, systematically isolating their members from the outside world and any opposing viewpoints.
The discourses to which the user is exposed support what they like, the things they believe in.	The speech uses a private language, alternative expressions and specific jargon, which increase the level of trust and intimacy between members and demarcate the group from anyone on the outside who might want to intervene, discrediting message from the get-go: the unshared language positions the one proposing a different message as the "Other", external to the group, and therefore untrustworthy.

Filter bubbles and echo chambers are responsible for our poorer information diet and, consequently, for the development of communities that support opposing perspectives and ideologies against a strong emotional, often counterfactual background. Both phenomena are problematic because they mislead members, manipulate their trust and reinforce ideological separation.

Both are spaces of exclusion.

Polarization: a situation in which the opinions, beliefs or interests of the members of a community or society are at opposite and irreconcilable extremes.

Why is it important to be aware of filter bubbles and echo chambers when we interact with information and content online?
Both minimize the variety of information and sources that we have access to. Echo chambers do not necessarily have to be created within a group that we can define, they can migrate and aggregate members spontaneously in other spaces in which they manifest as if they were in a closed group, by rejecting different points of view, by adamantly defending a certain positioning pro/against the discussed topic leaving no bridges to meet halfway, thus feeding the polarization and isolation of people in spaces with limited sources of information. The nature of these spaces encourages the circulation and amplification of disinformation, making us increasingly vulnerable, and this affects not only our ability to make informed decisions for our day-to-day lives, but it also affects the state of democracy in our countries.

InMedia

A strategic partnership for youth, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme
2020–3–RO01–KA205–095147

A chance at media literacy for youth from disadvantaged environments

INCLUSIVE MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULA FOR YOUTH

Module 3
Disinformation in Traditional and New Media

InMedia

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The Civic Resource Center (RO)

Contents

Aim of the module

Disinformation in traditional and new media

by The Association of Independent Press (MD)

This module explains what disinformation and misinformation is, clarifies much needed nuances about manipulation and offers tools to detect messages that are disseminated with intent to mislead.

Competence domains addressed:

A — ACCESS, SEARCH AND STORAGE OF MEDIA CONTENT

A.1. Access
A.2. Search
A.3. Storage and organizing content
A.4. Developing one's own needs for information, socialization, recreation through the mass media

B — UNDERSTANDING MEDIA AND CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION AND CONTENT

B.1. Understanding the specifics of the media
B.2. Critical analysis

C — CREATION AND COMMUNICATION OF MEDIA CONTENTS

C.1. Creation
C.2. Communication, interaction with the media

D — CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY, ETHICAL USE OF INFORMATION AND MEDIA, BALANCED CONSUMPTION

D.1. Social responsibility, promoting equity
D.2. Balanced consumption
D.3. Ethical use

1. CONTEXT: Dissemination of false and biased information.

1.1. General considerations

Risks and threats to national security (potential military aggression in the region, the presence of foreign troops in the country, an unresolved conflict, the presence of hybrid war elements, including misinformation and propaganda) are amplified by regional economic crises and internal vulnerabilities (poorly developed economy, corruption, lack of professional staff, etc.).

At the same time, there is a lack of a strategic approach to the field of national security in general and to information and cyber security in particular. Much of the false information both published in the media and posted on social media misleads the public through manipulation.

1.2. Definitions and concepts. Theoretical and practical aspects regarding the phenomenon of false news

Manipulation is defined by the sociologist Ștefan Buzunărescu as an "action to determine a social actor (person, group, community) to think and act in a way compatible not with his interests but with the interests of the initiator by using persuasion techniques which intentionally distorts the truth, leaving the impression of freedom of thought and decision." In other words, manipulation is nothing more than the act of controlling someone or something to one's own advantage, resorting to incorrect methods, so that the public is misled by false arguments. Usually, the real intentions of the manipulator are not perceived at first sight by the receiving public.

Due to the lack of media education, usually the public at large cannot easily grasp the manipulation techniques. As a rule, the most used manipulation techniques by the media are:

- **selective or unilateral presentation of facts;**
- **presentation of news from a single source** or from anonymous sources without verification from independent sources;
- **exacerbation/exaggeration** – unjustified accentuation, artificial intensification of the magnitude of facts and exaggeration of feelings in order to discredit people/groups;
- **generalization;**
- **interpretation/comment of facts** – violation of deontological norms, by which the journalist imposes his own opinion in informative materials;
- **inaccurate citation and interpretation** of the source message – a technique by which source messages are selectively quoted and nuanced by the journalist's wording, so that the overall message conveyed corresponds to the interests of the conveyer;

- **quoting unknown experts and repeating a false idea** to give it credibility or distract from other events or facts;
- **labeling** - the application of nicknames or pejorative or other qualifications in order to weaken the person's authority or to discredit them;
- **selecting titles/images, video and audio effects** to present certain subjects or groups in a negative light or using images that are only tangentially related to the topic of the article/report but which help emphasize the idea promoted in the text and thus amplifies the negative message they wanted to convey to the public;
- **emotional manipulation** through the use of music and lyrics in informative editions.

Disinformation. The phenomenon of false information published and promoted in the media is not new. Most of the time they are intentionally covered, for certain purposes, in order to mislead the public, other times, unintentionally, due to technical or human errors. False news intentionally misinforms and one must make a distinction between false news and **satire** or **parody**. The latter two are in fact two literary species characterized by irony but which have the role of entertaining the public but not to mislead them as in the case of false news. In fact, **parodies** are any humorous, **satirical,** or burlesque imitation, as of a person, event, etc. Satires use ironies, sarcasm, ridicule, or humor in the spread of information.

In the Council of Europe's Report on Information Disorder[1], published in 2017, the authors described misinformation as a type of "information disorder". According to them, the expression "false news" can be explained by three concepts recognized at European level: **mis-information**, **dis-information** and **mal-information**.

Most often, the terms 'mis-information' and 'dis-information' are translated to and used in Romanian with the same meaning – of disinformation. However, they have different connotations and it is important to make a clear distinction between them.

Mis-information	Dis-information	Mal-information
is the sharing of **inaccurate** and **misleading** information in an **unintentional** way	is the deliberate dissemination of **false or inaccurate** information **with intent** to discredit a person or organization	information that is **based on reality** used **to inflict harm** on a person, organization or country (e.g. someone using a picture of a dead child refugee (with no context) in an effort to ignite hatred of a particular ethnic group they are against.

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[1] https://edoc.coe.int/en/media/7495-information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-framework-for-research-and-policy-making.html
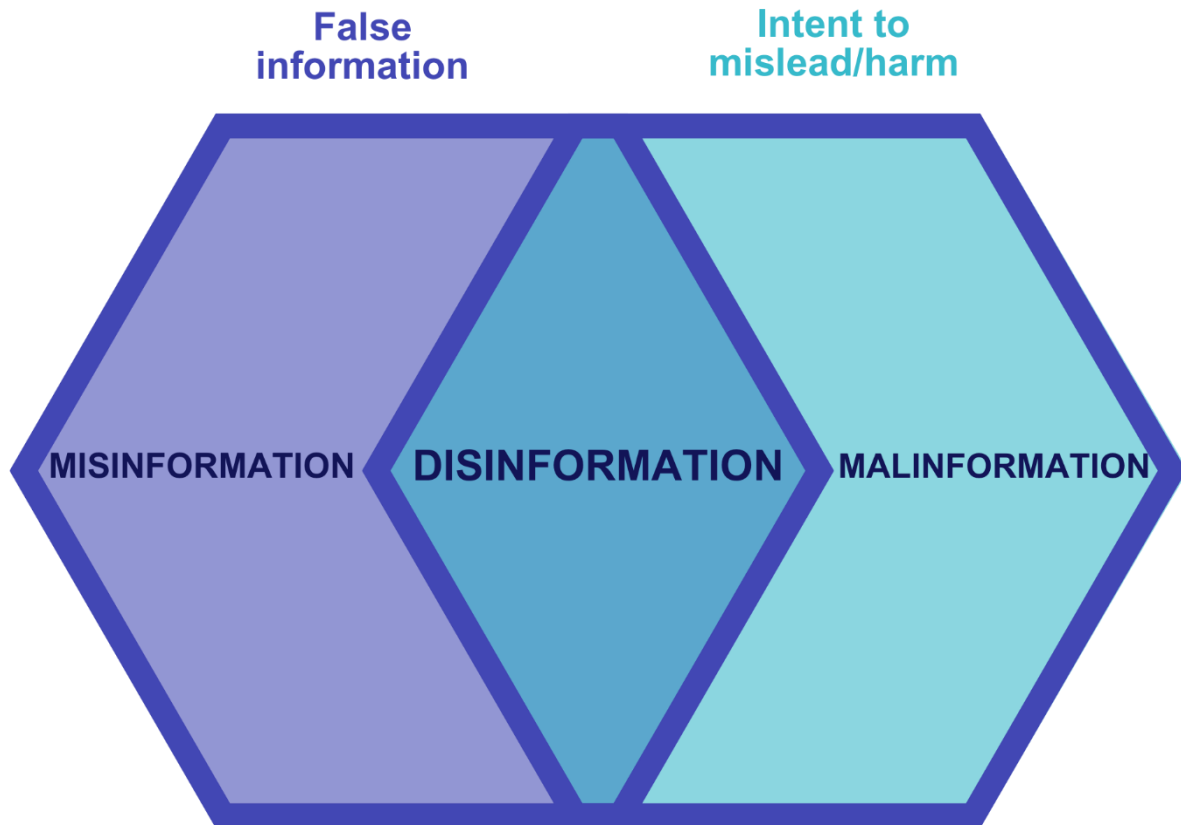
Interaction of mis-/dis-/and malinformation based on the falseness of information and the intent to mislead or harm

Disinformation, regardless of the type, intoxicates the information space and lately the tendency to manipulate has continued to persist and disrupt our lives as well as the democratic processes. In general, disinformation is not a new phenomenon, it existed centuries ago, but now the intensification of social networks has made this problem more pressing.

In the world, over time, disinformation has influenced political processes. There are special cases in countries with low levels of media literacy and in less democratic countries where misinformation is most often used as a weapon to discredit opponents or civil society.

Deepfakes. In the context of the advancement of information technologies, the communication of messages through video images acquires new valences. By using artificial intelligence, **fake videos** are being rigged and distributed more and more often. Experts call this phenomenon Deepfake. In an exact English translation, in Romanian **"deepfake"** would mean "deep false". The phenomenon appeared in 2017, and security experts talk about deepfake as a combination of the terms "deep learning", a feature of artificial intelligence and "fake", and the technology is based on the concept called Generative Adversarial Network, used to reproduce video images and artificial sound that appear to be authentic.

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This technology was used in the Republic of Moldova after the parliamentary elections in 2021, when fake images appeared in which President Maia Sandu appears together with the fugitive deputy Ilan Șor. According to journalists, the images were created at the order of another former politician who fled the

FILMUL FAKE DESPRE MAREA ÎNSCENAREA

Persoanele vizate în emisiune pot solicita dreptul la replică la numărul de telefon: O22-1O1-121; sau la adresa: contact@jurnaltv.md

country on charges of corruption, Veaceslav Platon. The rigged video was to be released in the public space before the early parliamentary elections, in order to tarnish the image of the head of state.

The head of state of the Republic of Moldova says that she never had any meeting or discussion with Șor, and the stake of the rigged video would be her discreditation. Sandu says that the rapid developments in the field of information technology require the tightening of legislation in the field of misinformation.

Propaganda. It inspires and convinces in the correctness of a certain point of view on reality. Unlike manipulation which is characterized by a covert action (aimed at realizing the will of the manipulator), **propaganda** occurs openly (open dissemination of opinions, facts, arguments and other information to form public opinion). **Educational video on propaganda.**

Propaganda recipe:
- Continuous (no wake-up breaks)
- Symphonic (transmitted on all communication channels)
- In the long run
- Partisan (presents only one point of view, never two competing or disputed opinions)
- Affirmative, not documented (the propagandist clearly states something, but never indicates the source from which he knows that "something")

So far, the Republic of Moldova is the target of propaganda from the Kremlin. Media institutions relaying content produced in the Russian Federation have found a way to disseminate propaganda content without being subject to the fines of the new legal provisions.

The main propaganda messages used by Russia in the Republic of Moldova are directed against NATO, the EU, the USA, etc., with the aim of distorting the truth. Any propaganda message distorts the truth on the part of the one who produces it. In this case, we are talking about Russia's interest in distorting the truth. The purpose is

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broader. It is part of the hybrid warfare techniques carried out by Russia for many years over the West and the surrounding areas, the former Soviet republics.

Clickbait. More recently, with the evolution of social networks, another type of misinformation has emerged – Clickbait –, which is a form of false advertisement whose main purpose is to encourage users to follow a link to a web page. Clickbait often provides links that misrepresent themselves and take users to links that generate advertising revenue for the number of clicks received.

2. Who spreads the misinformation?

Trolls - are those people who, for money or simply for fun, always sprinkle with venom. They are always put on the map, spreading hatred, in order to divert attention to a certain topic. A troll would be "a person, usually anonymous, but often hidden behind nicknames, who makes a habit of posting and commenting in the virtual space, a particular activity to sow discord on the Internet and to stir up quarrels, or irritation". It also says that trolls usually post attacks on the person, offensive comments, usually unrelated to the subject, bad taste jokes meant to distract or provoke readers to emotional responses. The troll spends a lot of time on the Internet, making trolling a "job."

In the Republic of Moldova, around the 2019 parliamentary elections, Facebook issued an official statement revealing a network of trolls, whose accounts were blocked, who acted in concert and had links with government employees. Expenses for promoting fake news and misinformation were estimated at $ 20,000 by Facebook.

The comments on the false accounts were derogatory to the electoral bloc NOW YES PAS and praised the Democratic Party, then led by Vlad Plahotniuc. Facebook deleted almost 200 fake accounts and pages addressed to the Moldovan public, and according to the company, some of those who managed the fake accounts were even employees of the Moldovan Executive.

Bots. A more sophisticated technique for spreading misinformation is through a computer bot, which is an automated or semi-automated software agent that interacts with servers. In general, these bots run simple and repetitive tasks at a much faster rate than a human being could. These bots are designed to quickly answer users' questions and extract relevant information from a huge amount of data. Built on the principle of neural networks, these bots are endowed with a certain degree of artificial intelligence and become more and more efficient in response.

3. How to spot dis-/misinformation?

In the era of informational warfare, we are practically bombarded by articles, by pictures, links and videos trying to tell their story. A good part of the viral information on the Internet, as well as in social networks, is not real. Authors of misleading information want you to click on another story or advertisement at their own site, other times they want to upset people for political reasons. And they make the lie "easily digestible", so that as many people as possible swallow it.

- **Develop a Critical Mindset.** One of the main reasons fake news is such a big issue is that it is often believable, so it's easy to get caught out.
- **Check the Source.** Look at the website where the story comes from. Does it look real? Is the text well written? Are there a variety of other stories or is it just one story? Fake news websites often use addresses that sound like real newspapers, but don't have many real stories about other topics. If you aren't sure, click on the 'About' page and look for a clear description of the organization.
- **See Who Else Is Reporting the Story.** Look to see if the story you are reading is on other news sites that you know and trust. If you do find it on many other sites, then it probably isn't fake (although there are some exceptions), as many big news organizations try to check their sources before they publish a story.
- **Examine the Evidence.** Think about how the story makes you feel. If the news story makes you angry, it's probably designed to make you angry.
- **Don't Take Images at Face Value.** Many fake news stories use images that are Photoshopped or taken from an unrelated site. Sometimes, if you just look closely at an image, you can see if it has been changed. Or use a tool like Google Reverse Image search. It will show you if the same image has been used in other contexts.
- **Check That it "Sounds Right".**

4. Case studies and activities

The following case studies reflect the differences between misinformation and disinformation and bring light on the dangers of information disorder on vulnerable groups. There are 9 case studies, 3 from each country involved in InMedia: The Republic of Moldova, Hungary and Romania. In this module, we touch on the main points – deconstruction of the narratives and generation of discussion points for facilitators to use in activities with youth. Extended in-depth versions of some of the case studies are available on medialiteracy.ro, as part of the toolkit in IO2. The toolkit also contains ready-to-use worksheets for some of the case studies presented below.

These case studies serve as support for various activities – information verification and message deconstruction, facilitated discussions and more.

Conclusions at the end of the activities:

What can be done to avoid falling for messages that mislead?

- **Question your emotions before sharing content online.**

Why have you had a strong emotional response to the content? Does it present information that you agree with? Do you interpret it in a certain way because you have some preconceptions about its author? Try to be aware of the elements of the message that make you want to react to it and ask yourself why that is.

- **Check the information/the source.**

All information must be verified, first of all, to identify the source.

The author - Are they identifiable? Check if the author or person who shared the images is credible. If he is a user of social networks, check what information he/she has shared with on his/her profile.

Are they anonymous? What other types of content have they published before? If we cannot really find information about the author, it is a red flag.

The content - Is it trying to imply certain values, points of view, opinions? Is it presenting information in a biased way, using multiple stereotypes? Is it making an emotional appeal? What is the general tone of the content, is it trying to alarm us, to scare us, to anger us, to make us sensitive to a certain subject? If so, then we must question the author's intentions.

The reactions - Are people reacting strongly to it? Does it seem like there are sides forming, where one side is against the other? Are they using dangerous language or even hate speech? If the content seems to rile up people's emotions and to pit them against each other, we yet again have to question the intention behind the message.

- **Look up information about the content on fact-checking platforms.**

While fact-checkers are working to stay up to date with the major subjects of disinformation, they may not always address something as seemingly innocent as the obviously fake images or other messages. However, in looking up more information about the content you want to share, you may come across deconstructions made by fact-checkers or news sites that inform about the falseness of the content.

- **If the content has been proven to be fake, do not reshare it.**
- **If the content has been proven to be fake and you see other people sharing it, kindly point out to them, with proof, that they are spreading falsified content and ask them to remove it.**

Explain to them that false content has the potential to do harm. If you can identify the source of the disinformation, report it. Do not engage with trolls, as this only boosts up the content even more.

- **Teach others how to verify information!**

The more people who know how to check if the content they want to share is real, the less chances for disinformation to spread.

4.1. Case study: Invasion of Ukrainian refugees on the border with the Republic of Moldova (MD)

The Association of Independent Press (MD)

Findings

Right from the first day of the Russian invasion, on February 24, 2022, a **video** went viral on social networks in which thousands of people appeared walking in an open field. The video was accompanied by the message: *"Fifty Minutes Ago on the Border with Ukraine".*

The Moldovan fact-checking portal Stopfals.md *refuted* the false information, finding that in the pictures appeared people with faces specific to the Asian race, with specific physical features (with slanting eyes, black hair and prominent cheekbones) and dressed in jackets that looked like employees in an industrial factory. They spoke neither Ukrainian nor Russian.

> ### Synopsis
> This case study aims to bring context to the mal-information through a video image. Thus, it looks like visual misinformation, through counterfeit images, which have actually been created using some editing algorithms.

In addition to the deliberate malinformation through this image, there was panic among Moldovan citizens, but also interethnic hatred against Ukrainian refugees. On the first day of the war, a large number of refugees were not registered at the border of the Republic of Moldova with Ukraine to justify the images.

If we watch the video, it is real, but it does not correspond to the period when it was filmed and not to the location. The internet users were mislead that a large number of people were on the border of the Republic of Moldova with Ukraine. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova denied the information. "This information is false, because the video was shared on a social network a long time ago, and the events do NOT take place on the Moldovan-Ukrainian border. Please inform yourself only from reliable sources ", is the MAI message posted on the Facebook page of the institution.

Some netizens realized that these people do not look like Ukrainian citizens and said that they have previously seen the video on social media. The second category: people aware of the fakeness of the image shared it often without disclosing it was fake to amuse themselves or simply because they agreed with the message of the image. This form of misinformation through images but also false messages it is particularly dangerous because images are a powerful tool for swaying popular opinion and promoting false beliefs. People who shared the video with the message misinformed.

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Discussion

- **Was the spread of this message fueled by interethnic hate?**
- **What should people do when they encounter misleading information?**

Conclusion

In crisis situations, and this example is from the first day of the war, people react emotionally and distribute information without checking it. Moreover, When confronted with the reality of the fake image, some people refuse to accept they've been deceived as they think it would make them seem naive, so they end up defending the spread of disinformation.

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Stopfals.md. (2022, February 24). FALS: Invazie de refugiați la frontiera ucraineană: https://stopfals.md/ro/article/fals-invazie-de-refu giati-la-frontiera-ucraineana-180600

Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova. (2022, February, 24), INFORMAȚIE FALSĂ

4.2. Case study: Ukrainian refugees commit robberies in Moldova (MD)
The Association of Independent Press (MD)

Findings

A message was spreading that Ukrainian refugees arriving in Moldova behaved aggressively towards the local population. "*The Ukrainians threatened the people at a gas station with a gun and demanded that they be given food and fuel*," Viorel Grigoraș commented on this message in the video published on TikTok on the "Greeg Veerj" profile.

In the first weeks after the start of the war, a video was shared on social media in which a man claimed that in Cimișlia district, a region located in the south of the country, Ukrainian refugees had entered a gas station, threatening people there with a gun and asked for food and fuel. The mayor of Cimișlia refuted for Stopfals.md the occurrence of such an incident.

Synopsis

This case study focuses on social media misinformation in the context of the war in Ukraine. In the first weeks after the start of the war, a video was shared on social media in which a man claimed that in Cimișlia district, a region located in the south of the country, Ukrainian refugees had entered a gas station, threatening people there with a gun and asked for food and fuel. Some netizens realized that the statement was not true; however, many people who commented believed the fake and wrote derogatory comments about the Ukrainian refugees.

Sergiu Andronachi, the mayor, confirmed that the man in the video commenting on the "incident" is not a resident of Cimișlia. After analyzing the profile of this user in TikTok, Odnoklasniki and on Facebook, it is discovered that under the name "Greeg Veerj" is registered Viorel Grigoraș, moderator and performer at weddings, originally from Grătiești commune, Chisinau municipality.

At the request of the reporter of the Stopfals.md portal to give more details about the alleged incident that he commented on in the video, V. Grigoraș admitted that he did not witness the "incident".

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It should be noted that on the TikTok page of Viorel Grigoraș are published several videos with false and offensive information about Ukrainians. In one video he addresses them with the term "haholi" (a Russian nickname for Ruthenians, considered offensive), and in another, he falsely promotes that Moldovans risk years in prison if they humiliate a citizen of Ukraine.

Asked on what facts the statements in his videos are based, Grigoraș replied that he tells what he hears from other people or sees on the Internet. He also said that, after discussions with friends, he deleted the video about the "Cimislia incident", as well as other recordings.

Even if they were deleted, the images with false statements continue to be republished on Facebook, with over 14,000 shares and about 300 comments. Some netizens realize that the claim is unproven and demand proof, recalling that all gas stations have video cameras.

> **Gaidaenco Valek**
> Da in benzinaria ceia ce nu-s camere de filmat ?,sa vedem şi noi realitatea mi se pare că au toate acuma.sau eara e un fake mare de tot care zboară
> Îmi place   Răspunde   1z   Editat   ● 4

> **Oleg David**
> Video de la staţie că sunt cămeri , în res   capul !!!
> Îmi place   Răspunde   1z   ● 2

Discussion

- **What do you think about this case? How does the spread of false information impact the Ukrainian refugees?**
- **What do you think about the fact that even though the video was deleted, the information still continued to spread? What can be done is situations like this?**

Conclusion

In this context, misleading social media posts, fake pictures or videos and propagandized headlines have been disseminated on social media from TikTok to Facebook, since Russia's assault on Ukraine began in February. Thus, everyday social media users have fallen victim to the falsehoods, accidentally sharing or liking posts and images that turned out to be inaccurate.

Misinformation on social media has intensified since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Unfortunately, netizens and victims of pro-Kremlin propaganda are spreading false images on social networks denigrating Ukrainian refugees

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4.3. Case study: Children of Ukrainian refugees are aggressive with Moldovan pupils and teachers

The Association of Independent Press (MD)

Findings

This fake spread against Ukrainian refugees was perpetrated by the Member of the Parliament from the Communists and Socialists Bloc (BECS) Vladimir Odnostalco. In **"Soloviov LIVE",** a program of Vladimir Soloviov, also known as "Putin's No. 1 Propagandist" or "Kremlin's propagandist," Odnostalco said, *"Ukrainian refugee children are aggressive and teachers have begun to complain about them."*

Synopsis

This case study focuses on misinformation promoted by politicians, disinformation that started with a gram of truth. Two months after the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army, a Moldovan MP pointed to fakes promoted especially by the pro-Kremlin editorial policy.

Stopfals.md documented this statement and found it to be false. According to the Ministry of Education and Research (MER), on April 19, 2022, 1856 Ukrainian children were enrolled in education facilities, including **648 pupils** enrolled in primary school.

They studied mainly in Russian because there are no education institutions studying in Ukrainian. Odnostalco's statements about teachers' complaints on the "aggression of Ukrainian refugee children" were also false. Sources from MER reported for Stopfals.md that no complaints had been registered, either from parents or from pedagogues.

Moldovan President Maia Sandu, during a press briefing, urged the population not to disseminate videos and posts that divided, incited hatred and contributed to the tension in the country, stating that it was unacceptable and irresponsible for incidents involving refugees to be speculated on by people holding public offices, dignitaries, or officers elected for political purposes.

Emil Gaitur, the spokesman for the Prosecutor's Office for Combating Organized Crime and Special Cases (PCCOCS), told the Stopfals.md portal that prosecutors have notified themselves ex officio and will investigate all deliberate actions aimed at inciting enmity, differentiation or division - illegalities provided for in Article 346 of the Criminal Code.

When we speak about **disinformation**, we know that is the deliberate generation and dissemination of false information to manipulate public opinion and perceptions. In this case, disinformation was directed against Ukrainian refugees, inciting interethnic hatred. The disinformation was disseminated by a deputy, in order to gain political capital from the pro-Russian electorate in the Republic of Moldova.

Discussion
- **What elements in this case show that there was intent to harm with the spread information? What type of information disorder does it represent?**
- **How do you position yourself regarding the information spread by public people? Should they be trusted?**
- **What dangers can arise if the population blindly trusts what public persons share?**

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Conclusion

In this case, disinformation — the use of half-truths by a politician and non-rational arguments to manipulate the public opinion in pursuit of political objectives. The purpose of the politician's disinformation was to amplify social division, resentment, and fear. In the context of this war in Ukraine, disinformation is used to alter the broader information space in which people discuss issues, and form beliefs. Through this disinformation, a larger narrative was promoted over time or degraded civic discourse by promoting division or cynicism. This political actor has used disinformation for his benefit against Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees.

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4.4. Case study: Occupation of Western-Ukraine by Poland; March 2022 (HU)
Artemisszió Foundation (HU)

Findings

An article was published on the Facebook page of Hídfő.net on the 20th of March 2022 with the title: "The Polish Army would divide Ukraine". There were 3 photos attached to this publication: a map with the division plan of Ukraine, and 2 other pictures, where people in military uniform appear in front of the map. One of the pictures has been removed after the Lithuanian fact-checking Delfi reported the case and found that the photo was manipulated.

The content of the article fits well into the narrative of the pro-Russian propaganda; the central element of which is that the war was forced out by the West and NATO. The article aims to undermine the doctrine of the status quo and relativizes the Russian invasion. The authors take the advantage of the fast flow of information and the fact that Facebook users generally do not have the skills or resources to check the validity of an information or visual content. The photo might resonate with and amplify nationalist sentiments - with special attention to the situation of the

Synopsis

This case study aims to bring context to fake news (disinformation) through manipulated images and documents. During the case, we wish to point out how propaganda uses fragments of truth for manipulation.

With the Russian invasion in Ukraine, pro-Russian news sites flooded fake news on Hungarian traditional and online media. The "news" according to which Poland is preparing for the division of Ukraine went viral on social networks. Referring to three photos, Hídfő.net treats it as a proven fact that the Polish armed forces are planning to occupy the country, with the aim of dividing Ukraine between Poland, Hungary, Romania and Russia.

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minorities in Ukraine - and might reinforce the idea of common interest between Russia and Hungary, Romania or Poland.

The Hungarian fact-checking portal, Lakmusz revealed that the map depicting a divided Ukraine date back to 2014, when the Polish press dealt with a scandalous proposal by far-right Russian politician Vladimir Zhirinovsky to divide the territory of Ukraine between Hungary, Romania, Poland and Russia. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs then officially rejected the offer and called it ridiculous. If you look on the map, it is real, but it does not correspond to the purpose, circumstances and location that was mentioned in the article. The other image used for the article, which was allegedly taken in "various military units" of the Polish army, was demonstrably falsified. Knowing the official Polish position on the Russian invasion, which the reader could easily find out about a month after February 24, the reader should be minimum skeptical towards a completely controversial information. According to the article, "the map has become an element of visual propaganda for the Polish armed forces". The original photo, published on September 28, 2021, does not show on the wall the map detail that appears in the photo in the post of Hídfő.net. Moreover, according to the description of the original post, the soldiers of the Polish armed forces are not shown in the photo, but firefighters.

Discussion

- **Is it possible to check all the information we face on a daily basis?**
- **Are there independent sources of information?**
- **Do we trust online platforms?**
- **How can we check the credibility of a Social Media Platform?**
- **How could we improve the critical thinking of the consumers of news?**

Conclusion

One of the tools of Russian disinformation activity is the maintenance of websites and social media platforms for propaganda purposes operated abroad. The purpose of disinformation is to manipulate public opinion. In the event of an escalating military conflict, propaganda is both a means of maintaining morale and weakening the other side. In the presence of increasingly loud Russian propaganda, the EU's response was to ban certain platforms. Russia has also banned Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube in response.

As a consequence, we need to pay even more critical attention to the authenticity of the information. When judging a piece of information, it is worth looking at several sources and checking the authenticity of the sources.

People tend to believe the information that underpins their already established worldview, so war propaganda can widen the gap between the parties and positions can be further radicalized. Moral warfare is part of the toolbox of war, so it is worth examining the news critically, given the sources and the intent of the communicator.

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4.5. Case study: Continuous anti-migrant rhetoric in the governmental communication in Hungary (2019) (HU)

Artemisszió Foundation (HU)

Findings

"You also have the right to know what Brussels is preparing for" says the headline. At the bottom of the posters there is a series of statements that reveal details of Brussels' alleged plan: "They want to introduce the mandatory quota" / "They want to weaken the border protection rights of the Member States." / "They would introduce a migrant visa that would facilitate (make easier) immigration." (We will return to these statements later.)

Synopsis

Not long after the "Stop Brussels" campaign, Viktor Orbán's government launched a poster campaign putting personally Jean-Claude Juncker and the Hungarian American George Soros in the center.

As parts of the "information campaign" the government aimed to talk about the plan of Brussels in connection with migration a few Months before the European elections in February 2019.

Juncker's chief spokesman, Margaritis Schinas, said the commission had made a commitment "to fight disinformation and fake news" and this case was no exception. The European Commission replied to the campaign on its official Facebook page. The committee denies the allegations of the Hungarian government poster point by point:

- The EU supports, not undermines, the protection of national borders;
- there are no plans to introduce "humanitarian visas";
- it is up to the Member States to decide whether they want to take in immigrants - read on the counter poster.

In the text attached to the picture, the Commission expressed their shock, that "conspiracy theories" on Hungarian posters may be mainstreamed.

Here is a breakdown of the factual errors:
- **"They want to introduce a mandatory quota on immigration".**

After the failure of the Dublin-system, the European Commission suggested to share responsibilities – based on a country specific quota - at the processing of the asylums. Although the quota-plan was adopted by the European Parliament after a long debate without the consent of the Member States, the provisions cannot enter into force.
- **"They want to weaken the border protection rights of the Member States."**

On 12 September 2018, the European Commission proposed a reform of EU border protection system. It strikes for a significant increase in the size and budget of the EU's border control body, Frontex, to

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protect borders, curb illegal immigration and combat smugglers. Frontex personnel are placed under the control of the Member State authorities, are not independent from it, and cannot do anything that is not authorized by the Member State. This is because border control is a Member State competence, it is included in the EU's founding documents, and for that to change, these documents would have to be amended.

- **"They would introduce a migrant visa that would facilitate (make easier) immigration."**

What Fidesz refers to is the official name of a humanitarian visa. It is not an initiative of the European Parliament, but it is also not a question of giving 'Brussels' a mandate to allow migrants to enter. It is strictly a matter for the Member States to accept an asylum application at a country's external mission outside the EU. The proposal states that it must be examined in advance whether there is a basis for the asylum application and whether the applicant poses a threat.

The allegations give the impression that decisions are being made without the involvement of Hungary in Brussels, in fact this communication fits well into the "continuous war" narrative where we must constantly fight the oppressive, bureaucratic "West" for our basic interests. The truth, however is, that Hungary is part of the EU, and takes part in the decision making as an equal partner – as the counter poster points out.

We can see two laughing figures in the middle of the posters with a contrasting message in the front: "You have the right to know". The text suggests that there is something hidden, and whatever it is must be against "you" / "us" since someone is laughing at us. The man on the picture are symbolic figures of the world of Brussels / the EU bureaucracy and the international capital. The wording evoking conspiracy theories is further supported by the color scheme of the poster. The author's intention is clearly to undermine trust and arouse fear.

George Soros became an enemy with face. The demonization began after Hungary became a front-line state in Europe's 2015 migrant crisis, with more than 386,000 migrants passing through the country before the government closed the borders in October. But in Soros, who funds various philanthropic efforts geared toward supporting refugees in Europe, Orban found an even more effective opponent to rail against — "an enemy with a face," in the words of political scientist Peter Kreko, director of Budapest-based think tank Political Capital Institute. "Soros played this role of the personalized 'umbrella enemy' that you can put all your enemies under and say that he is the ultimate puppet master of every bad thing."

How can we find the elements of a propaganda in the example above?
- **An agenda:** The campaign fits to the agenda of the Fidesz government that is in a continuous fight against Brussels. According to this, Brussels is supporting (illegal) migration and works in order to demolish national sovereignty along interests that are contrary to Hungary.
- **A targeted audience:** The campaign targets a quite wide audience. The different platforms communicate with people from diverse demographic or social background. From influencer marketing through referendum, broadcast and press advertisements till the official communication of the government is united - operates with the same, carefully selected expressions - and this unity is very convincing.
- **Delivery of the messages:** Paid advertisements, paid people, an entire office dedicated to the governmental communication: the message is delivered through credible / trusted sources.
- **Massaged message:** The creators of the "information-campaign" know well, that the general public reacts to short, easy to digest and emotional messages. Tailored to this, the governmental communication operates with short, fearful messages "Stop!" – often without any truth – that are repeated in various channels combining techniques from an influencer campaign to referendums.

Toolbox of the propaganda:
- **Simplification**

A one-word message in the political communication. The message could not be more clear: The picture has been taken in Slovenia in 2015 during an organized march of refugees. The same picture appears duing the BREXIT campaign of UKIP in 2016.

- **Exaggeration**

An exaggeration (or hyperbole) occurs when the most fundamental aspects of a statement are true, but only to a certain degree. It is also seen as "stretching the truth" or making something appear more powerful, meaningful, or real than it actually is.

If we take the example above:

Yes, we can see migrant people in Europe (the photo was taken in Slovenia) BUT! this photo was taken when the police lined up the crowd. And that shows the mass to be bigger and more threatening than it is.

- **Exploitation**

Propaganda uses (exploits) the already existing prejudges, preconception and fear of the public. Resonates with issues that are related to the emotions of the public.

- **Division**

A very common means of propaganda is to contrast "ours". The world of propaganda is a constant struggle, and the enemy threatens the survival of our security, our identity, our prosperity, our worldview.

Discussion
- **What is notoriously repeated, might be true?**
- **What effects can such a campaign have on migrants?**
- **What are the reasons politicians (political communication) operate with such simple messages? What could be the role of independent media in a similar situation?**

Conclusion

Propaganda is everywhere around us. The better equipped we are to recognize it, the more we will be able to avoid it. You can improve your chances of spotting propaganda in any form if you break out of your content bubble and make sure you're engaging with diverse ideas. To break out of your media rut, try this: Create a list of five news sources to consult on a regular basis (not necessarily every day, but every week or so).

Your list should include:
- Two general news sources you already look at on a regular basis and usually agree with.
- Two general news sources you don't usually agree with.
- One source that covers news from a specific perspective, such as the views of a particular demographic, religious group or profession.

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4.6. Case study: Holocaust Denial – Crime (HU)[2]
Artemisszió Foundation (HU)

Findings

On 16 April 2015, in a final judgment of the Szeged District Court, V. Z. was found guilty of publicly denying the sins of the National Socialism. The defendant made the following comment under an online report on Rainer Höss (Höss is a well-known activist against European neo-Nazism, his grandfather was the commander of the Auschwitz death camp) on the Origo news portal on 21 November 2014:

"Let's leave this holokamu (holo-fake – fake, invented holocaust), and even if it is true, what this man has to do with the actions of his grandfather???"

The defendant later regretted his deed and apologized in a letter to Tett és Védelem Alapítvány (Action and Protection Foundation, that organized the Holocaust memorial event in connection with which the article in question was born).

At the trial, the accused pleaded guilty and reiterated his regret and remorse. The court found the accused guilty, but in view of the mitigating circumstances, in particular his confession and remorse, did not impose a sentence, sentenced him to a six-month probation measure and, as a special rule of conduct, a visit to the Páva Street Holocaust Memorial Center.

Synopsis

The case study focuses on the topic of Holocaust denial (disinformation and malinformation). In a broader sense it addresses the question of limitations of freedom of expression and tackles the question: How freedom of speech relates to disinformation?

Rainer Höss; his grandfather, Rudolf Höss, was the commander of the Auschwitz death camp, killing more than a million people, including 430,000 Hungarian Jews. As a human rights activist, Rainer Höss is trying to draw the attention of as many young people as possible to the fact that what should not have happened decades ago cannot happen again.

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[2] This case study is also recommended in Module 4, when addressing incitement to violence.

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Main issues:

- The right to freedom of expression vs. the regulation of incitement
- Holocaust denial is explicitly or implicitly illegal in many European countries, as part of laws banning the revival of Nazi organizations and Nazi propaganda, or by laws banning the denial of genocide in general.
- Drawing the right line between incitement, incitement to hatred and freedom of expression is also a source of significant international debate.
- In Hungary, "Whoever denies, doubts or insignificantly publicizes the genocide and other acts against humanity committed by the national socialist and communist regimes shall be punished by imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years" since 2010.
- In Hungary, before April 10, 2010, Holocaust denial was not punishable if it remained within the framework of expression and did not couple with incitement to hatred.
- This case is among the first final judgements in Hungary.

The analysis of this case takes focuses on the following theoretical concepts:

- **Freedom of expression**

Freedom of Expression is protected by Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It means that You have the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of your choice without interference and regardless of frontiers. This means: You have the freedom to express yourself online and to access information and the opinions and expressions of others.

Freedom of expression is not an absolute right. What does it mean?
It means that freedom of expression can be limited if the restriction:

- Is provided by the law
- Pursues a legitimate aim
- Is necessary for a legitimate purpose[3]

- **Legal regulation of Holocaust denial / One of the restrictive forms of freedom of expression**

According to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, "Holocaust denial seeks to erase (or change) the history of the Holocaust. In doing so, it seeks to legitimize Nazism and antisemitism."

The European Court of Human Rights case law has relatively broadly approved restrictions regarding Holocaust denial. In these cases, the Strasbourg court generally rejected claims alleging violations of freedom of expression without a trial, accepting that **statements denying the Holocaust do not enjoy protection of freedom of expression.** Thus, a category of false statements of fact has been created, which is clearly outside the scope of protected speeches. According to the Constitutional Court of Hungary, "The rules on protected expression of opinion do not cover false statements of fact", however The Court emphasized on several occasions that, although false statements of fact, as opposed to value judgments and criticisms, are not in themselves constitutionally protected, consideration of all the circumstances of a given case may lead to the conclusion that a false statement is not constitutional prosecution. It is important to differentiate between facts and opinions.

- The Holocaust is one of the most thoroughly documented historical events.
- The "Holocaust denial" seeks to refute and invalidate the well-founded facts of the Nazi genocide affecting European Jews.

- Spreads misleading information and based on the denial of historical facts.
- Among the often-denied facts is that the killing of six million Jews did not take place at all during World War II; that the Nazis had no official policy or intention to exterminate the Jews; and that there were never gas chambers in the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp.[4]

Main points to consider:
- The freedom of expression is not an absolute right. Can be restricted by the law, by a legitimate aim or purpose.
- Holocaust denial is prohibited by the law – since the freedom of expression does not cover speech that can incite to discrimination and violence.
- We must differentiate between opinions and facts because people might have the right to their opinion, but spreading information like denying the Holocaust is regulated and prohibited by the law.

Discussion

The major problems identified upon analyzing the case are as follows:
- **Have you ever been restricted in expressing an opinion? (You can think of a situation when you had to wear a uniform, when you did not agree with others?)**
- **Give examples of cases where freedom of expression is limited!**
- **What do you think? Was the verdict fair in the case described above?**

Conclusion

Before sharing a news or information, check its authenticity! If you are unsure of the source, do not pass on the news! If you have an opinion, use "Form I"! Always add "in my opinion" to what you have to say. "Remember, your online activity, even if anonymous, will remain." Leave a comment only if you would also make it in person! Support your opinion with arguments and references. Explain why you came to this position.

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4.7. Case Study: Charlie Hebbo counterfeit cover sparks xenophobia and incitement to violence on social media (RO)

The Center for Independent Journalism (RO)

Findings

October 2021, Romania was going through a severe fourth wave of SARS-COV 2 infections, which brought down people's morale, heightened the tensions in Romanian society and intensified the emotional reactions to the media content consumed.

Around this time, on the 20th of October 2021, an image believed to be a cover by the French satirical publication Charlie Hebdo started going viral on the Romanian Facebook.

Synopsis

This case study aims to bring context to the definitions and differences between misinformation and disinformation, while also pointing out how the two types of information disorder affect and polarize society. Disinformation spirals easily into misinformation, with regular social media users becoming vectors of spread for falsified information.

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[4] Koltay András: Az Emberi Jogok Európai Bírósága és a blaszfémia mint a szólásszabadság korlátja. Iustum Aequum Salutare, 2017/1. 189

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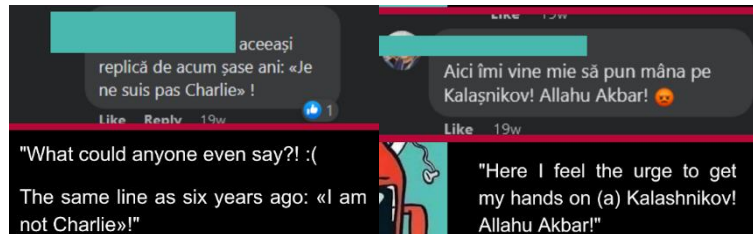IO1: Inclusive Media and Information Literacy program

The image portrays multiple medical staff and patients celebrating while intubated or wearing a coffin, on an open-roof bus. There is also a flag colored in the Romanian flag colors - blue, yellow, red. The bus is branded „Romania" and the text above the bus reads „Coronavirus. On est les champions!" (Coronavirus. We are the champions!). The image is signed Charlie Hebdo, like all the other covers that the publication issues.
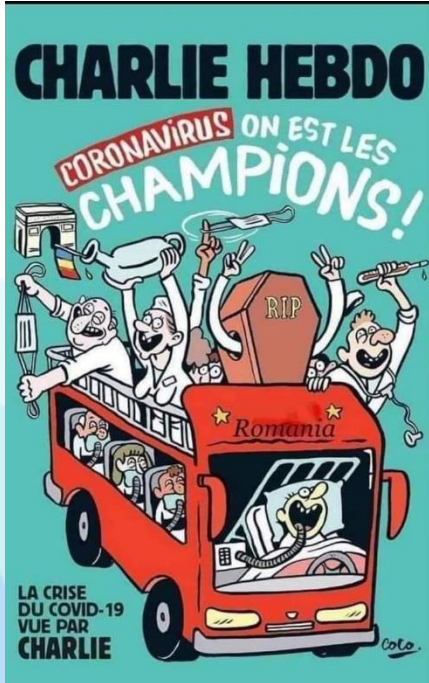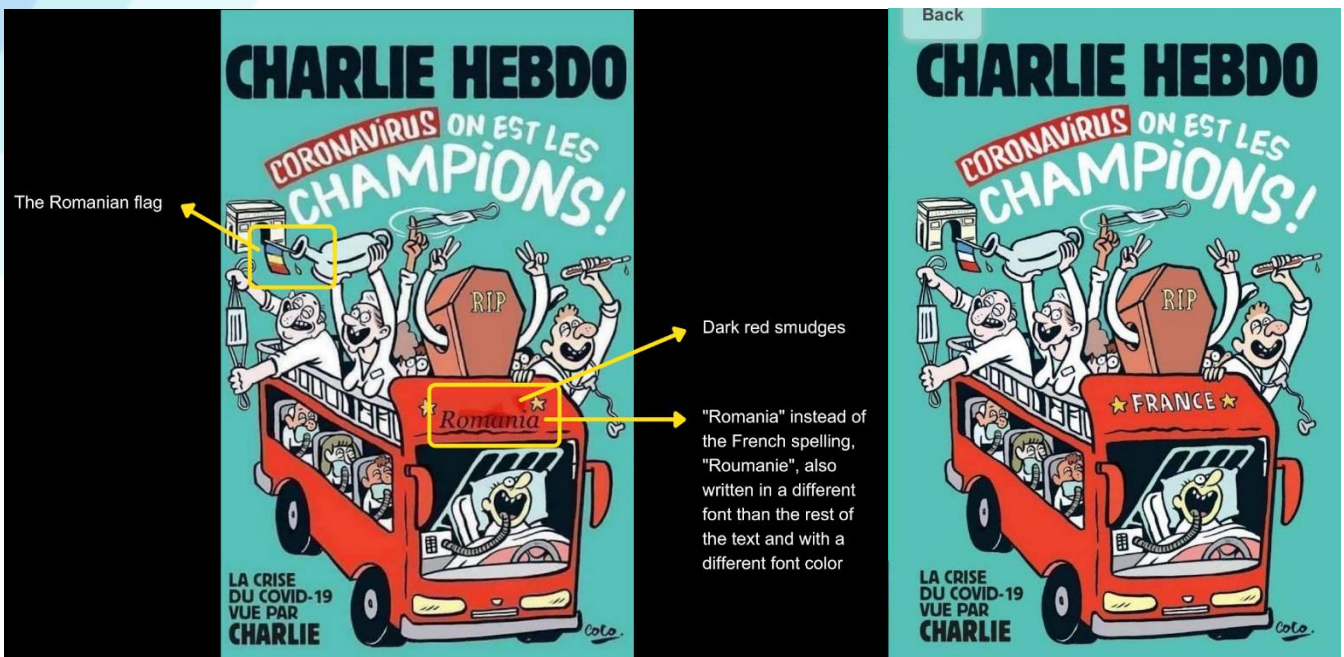

The image (without its original disclaimer that states what the original cover looks like) is shared by people on the Romanian Facebook, Instagram and Reddit alongside messages that either question the legitimacy of such claims, or agree that the French critique is legitimate due to the perceived improper management of the pandemic by the Romanian authorities.

As the image reaches more and more people, the public speech turns xenophobic, criticizing the French for their own shortcomings during the pandemic, cursing them out, denying support for Charlie Hebdo and even inciting to violence against the publication with reference to the incidents from 2015.

aceeași replică de acum șase ani: «Je ne suis pas Charlie» !

"What could anyone even say?! :(
The same line as six years ago: «I am not Charlie»!"

Aici îmi vine mie să pun mâna pe Kalașnikov! Allahu Akbar! 😡

"Here I feel the urge to get my hands on (a) Kalashnikov! Allahu Akbar!"

Soon enough, people started verifying the image and signaling that it is fake. The dark red smudges on the bus, the written text – "Romania" instead of "Roumanie" (French for Romania) and the fact that the cover was nowhere to be found in the October collection of Charlie Hebdo issues led people to the conclusion that Charlie Hebdo did not in fact create the circulated cover. Some people considered that the message of the fake image is valid, implying its falseness should not be an issue.

The Romanian flag

Dark red smudges

"Romania" instead of the French spelling, "Roumanie", also written in a different font than the rest of the text and with a different font color

Even the press shared the news of the falsified cover. (For example, G4Media.ro) The original image was the cover for the 9th of July 2020 issue of the publication, when France itself was going through the heights of the coronavirus crisis. Other people, however, continued sharing it even though they knew it was counterfeit, claiming it was still satire.

If we look at the manipulated image, we can conclude it falls under the category of **manipulated content**, where parts of it were modified to say/show something else, different than the original. It is not satire. While the original image was created as satire and the public was aware that it was satire by the fact that it was signed by Charlie Hebdo, the manipulated image, even though it kept the signature and was also shared to pass as satire, cannot be considered satire, just because it retains original elements (like the signature, or the caricature). The characteristic of „satirical" is not passed on from the original to the manipulated image. The simple fact that parts of the original satirical image were modified is by default deceiving and while we cannot prove the intent to harm, we can certainly see that it was meant **to rile up people's emotions.**

The pandemic had pushed people's emotions to new depths as they started spending more time online on social media platforms, the social interaction face-to-face was greatly reduced by anti-coronavirus measures and a very big part of the public conversation was, in consequence, moved onto the social media platforms, even more than before the pandemic. This meant a lot of emotionally tense people discussing sensitive, inflammatory or polarizing subjects from the apparent safety of their screens, which enabled them to act out more aggressively than they would in a face-to-face discussion.

The spread of the fake image firstly nurtured **negative sentiments towards the French people**. It sparked critique on how France managed the pandemic and it also encouraged **xenophobic remarks towards the French.** Moreover, it also served as a **gateway to weaponize stereotypes regarding Muslims and use the incidents of 2015 as a cover for hate speech.**

Secondly, it reignited an aggressive attitude towards the French publication Charlie Hebdo, with comments that claimed to not support the publication anymore, nor show empathy for the tragic events that took place in 2015, to comments of **outright incitement to violence and death threats directed at the publication.**

Thirdly, people with good intentions became vectors of spread, increasing the already overwhelming amount of disinformation flooding the online feeds on a daily basis.

Discussion

- **What do you think of this situation? Is satire a type of content that can be used to mislead people? When, when not?**
- **Would you have shared the cover because it was funny?**
- **Can you identify the hate speech?**
- **How can fake content like this affect people? Can it affect certain categories of people more than others?**

Conclusion

Access to correct and accurate information during times of crisis is essential for the society to function properly, and even a seemingly "innocent" image like this one has the potential to distract, divert the attention from or completely overtake more important subjects and leave the people disoriented within the information disorder. The main consequence of this fact is that people can no longer participate in informed conversations and this affects their ability to make decisions or to critically filter what lies in their near reality.

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4.8. Case study: The European „Blackout" (RO)
The Center for Independent Journalism (RO)

Findings

Early October 2021, the Ministry of Defense in Austria launched an awareness campaign about a possible power outage in Europe, as the Minister had planned since their investment in 2020. The main reasons for this campaign lie with recent events of blackout in the past years worldwide, due to faulty or old infrastructure or targeted cyberattacks. The awareness campaign contains information about the chances that a blackout would happen, how the public and private services would be affected and advice on how to prepare in the likelihood of a power outage that could last a couple days.

Synopsis

This case study focuses on the difference between disinformation and misinformation, on the role of the press in the information disorder and it will present the reasons why it is relevant to make a clear distinction between the two concepts in the light of the consequences that affect the press.

The information about the blackout - first and foremost, and about the campaign, reaches Romania at the beginning of November 2021, but it is presented under the guise of certainty, rather than as a possibility. At that time, Romania had already been going through some unrest regarding the energy prices that were at their heights and people were already worrying about getting through the winter.

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Thus, the context in which the news of a blackout appears, the people start panicking. It didn't help that the press, in the pursuit of clicks used alarming, fear inducing titles or images.

Here is a selection of titles, as they appeared in November 2021 in the Romanian mainstream press:
- Capital: "«Blackout» in Europe! Huge power outage! The army has already intervened. Brace yourselves!"
- Evenimentul Zilei: "The announcement that terrifies Europe! An upcoming power outage will wreak havoc on the «Old Continent». The disaster is inevitable."
- ProTV: "The power outage that will affect Europe. The danger is underestimated by all" (original title, still visible in the URL); "The power outage that will affect Europe. The question is when" (modified title, 2 days after the initial news)

Most of the publications wrote that the Austrian Minister of Defense had issued a warning of an imminent blackout across Europe and that time has come to get prepared for it and its devastating consequences. Some had very alarmist approaches throughout the article, alongside the clickbait in the titles. Here are a few examples:
- "Europe could end up without electric energy, Austria warns. Terrible news comes from Austria for the entire continent, after the Minister of Defense, Klaudia Tanner, warned the population that the European electrical system, which is interconnected between the countries of the European Union, will be gravely affected in a very short time."
- "An extremely grim warning by the Austrian Government. They warn that Europe could deal with a power outage that could last even up to a week. The effects of such a cataclysm are multiple and difficult to quantify. The Austrians warn that Europe has the hatchet over its head."
- "Frightening news come from Austria. The Minister of Defense, Klaudia Tanner, warns that, in a short while, the European energetical system, which is interconnected, will sustain heavy damage."

The news goes viral on social media, especially on Facebook. Oana Despa, a journalist, monitored the numbers of the most viral articles online in terms of reach through the CrowdTangle app and the cumulated numbers point towards 18 million people reached. For reference, Romania's population counts in 2020 around 19 million people.

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Soon after the news goes viral, fact-checkers start pointing out the fact that the alarmist information is in fact misleading, as the Austrian Minister of Defense never claimed that Europe has to brace itself for the imminent danger of a general blackout, but that Austria, in its initiative to prepare the population for a possible power outage, will launch an awareness campaign. Veridica points out that awareness campaigns addressing potential crisis situations are regular activities that the governments carry out in order to train the population. Multiple publications also signal the circulation of misleading information, while others update their articles to reflect a more accurate representation of the facts. Some others still keep the clickbait and alarming content.

When we speak of misinformation, alongside the situations when people share false information because they are not aware that it is fake, we also consider the situations where journalists make mistakes in their reporting. As Claire Wardle points out, these mistakes can be an inaccurate representation of dates, statistics, photo contexts, translations, etc. They are usually the result of poor journalistic practices that happen for various reasons, such as: lack of human resource to cover subjects, so the journalists rush their reporting; lack of time to properly verify the information, especially when they want to publish it first. The clickbait borders on the line between misinformation and disinformation, as multiple publications resort to this practice in order to ensure that their revenue covers the salary expenses. The intent behind the clickbait titles (at least, when we look at established news outlets) is not necessarily to harm or to mislead, but they heavily contribute to the information disorder and should not be treated lightly, especially since the use of clickbait strays away from the mission of the press, that is - to act in and for the public interest.

So, we make the distinction between harmful intent in disinformation and the journalistic error/mistake in misinformation.

Discussion
- **What are the effects of clickbaits like those shown in this case?**
- **Are journalists the main source of disinformation?**
- **What should you do if various publications post alarming articles on a subject? What tools do you have to verify the information?**
- **How is the image of the press affected by the use of clickbaits?**

Conclusion

Due to shifts in the online advertising field, the news outlets need to ensure that their articles get as many clicks as possible, which makes them sacrifice various deontological requirements in their reporting, in order to make a profit.
As a result, the press does not thoroughly verify information and uses clickbait.
Knowingly sharing misleading information by the press lowers the public's trust in the media. This affects the state of democracy. Without properly informed citizens by the press and properly supported press independence by the public, the ability of the society to take beneficial decisions is affected.
The public relies too much on the information they get from their preferred sources and do not verify information from multiple sources - like the quoted or the original ones.

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4.9. Case study: The European „Blackout" (RO)
The Center for Independent Journalism (RO)

Findings

March 9th 2022, at 2 PM, reports of raised prices at a franchised Mol gas station (Hungarian company) in Beiuș, Romania, started appearing online. People posted pictures of the gas station price display with the record-breaking 11 lei price. Others even posted comparisons between the earlier price and the 2 PM one. The information about the gas price at the Mol station in Beiuș started spreading fast on social media.
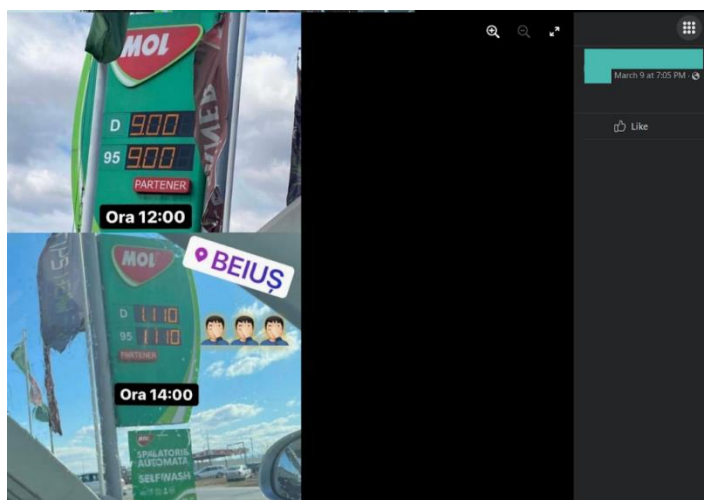
Synopsis

This case study focuses on the difference between disinformation and misinformation and on the role of the press in the information disorder.

March 9th 2022, panic ensues in Romanian drivers, when news of record-breaking raises in gas prices reach them on TV, radio and online. The news became viral on social media too. As a result, people formed queues at the gas stations in several cities to get their fill before the prices would go even higher (which was implied by multiple televisions), some even brought additional containers to store extra fuel. What had actually happened was that a franchised gas station under the Mol brand had raised its prices to 11 RON for gasoline (from 9 RON) in Beiuș, a Romanian town, due to the fact that it had to pay higher rates for the imported fuel from Hungary. The instability of the petrol market and the war caused by the Russian invasion in Ukraine contributed to the general panic (Romania shares its border with Ukraine).

Soon after, the information gets picked up by local news outlets, and the panic starts to build up. Some local publications reported the rise in prices as if it was happening in their counties too, even though there was only one gas station that had raised the price - the one from Beiuș, Bihor county. For example, one publication even wrote that the gas station that had raised the price was from Cluj County. From witness accounts, it seems that the news also reached them on radio and TV, under the same warped representation that it was a nation-wide phenomenon.

"People living in Cluj panicked after the price per liter of gas became 11 RON! They took by storm the MOL gas station on Teodor Mihali"

On the TV news, the same idea that the gas prices had hit 11 RON across the country was induced. The titles were not mentioning the location of the gas station with increased prices, and some even used alarming language. At Antena3, even though they mentioned it was happening only at the gas station in Beiuș, the lower thirds induced panic implying there was a national alert. At Digi24, the information that the prices were raised came as breaking news, interrupting the ongoing news journal and the journalist presented the fact as if it was just one example of many. Then, in the lower thirds it was also implied that it was not a singular case. However, the field reporter did inform that the 11 RON price was only seen at the Beiuș gas station. There were no officials asked to comment.

"Breaking news
National alert! Gas prices are exploding: 11RON/liter, in Beiuș"

"Breaking news
Gas prices over 11 RON/liter"

By 7 PM, multiple cities had people waiting in queues at gas stations to fuel up, because they thought that prices would continue to rise. Images of people queuing up start flooding the internet. Amongst these, we also find images that claim people were collecting gas in bags, which turns out is actually not a picture taken in Romania, but in Mexico, when two men were caught stealing fuel in bags. However, some publications do not verify the image before sharing it.

"Total hysteria at the gas stations in Romania"

Meanwhile, a local news outlet from Bihor county, who first reported on the franchised MOL gas station from Beiuș, informs us about the reason why the prices skyrocketed. It seems that the base price the owner was asked to pay was higher than usual, so for the specific lot that he bought on the 9th of March, he had to raise the prices at the pumps in order to cover his losses.

The Minister of Energy issues a press release calling for calm and informing that the gas prices will not increase unjustifiably. He calls what happened an attempt at destabilizing Romania, considering the

security context and the hybrid war that goes on at that moment and assures that the authorities will investigate what happened and will not allow anyone to speculate.

At the end of the day, the host of the evening show at Digi24 says that this was not about the press and that the panic started with the images shared online and that some "entities" then contributed with "so-called" news to the nationwide unrest. The Romanian President Klaus Iohannis claims the next day that the way the information was "artificially amplified" is part of a war that will continuously try to destabilize European economies through fake news and he called upon "serious journalists and news outlets to carefully mind that information that they take over and further disseminate".

So, what was false information and what was not? Was there intention to harm? What about the fake news?

If we look at the case, we clearly can distinguish between multiple approaches:

- **proper reporting** - mentioning the isolated case from Beiuș, taking into account the regional context (Russian invasion in Ukraine), bringing background information on recent or estimated market changes with supporting data and having an overall balanced approach, that does not induce panic
- **spreading misinformation as a result of poor journalistic practices** - using clickbait, alarming terms, mentioning the isolated case of the Beiuș gas station while also implying that the price increases would spread across the country. The question lies in the intent to harm, which may not necessarily have been the case, but the irresponsibility of the press went against the public interest and it borders on disinformation.
- **information laundering** - a practice within disinformation, where false information from questionable sources is slowly shoved into mainstream news through various techniques. In our case, we see this happening with the image of the bags with fuel stuffed in the back of a car, which ends up being shared by mainstream news outlets, even though it had nothing to do with the current situation. This is also an example of how a false context is built in order to spread disinformation.
- **fake news, hybrid war and the attempts to destabilize Romania** - while a public conversation to bring awareness about the ways that disinformation is amplified through hybrid warfare tactics is of great importance, especially in the current context, the officials who spoke up against it did so in a manner that more or less placed the press and other (unknown yet) disinformation sources together. This was especially present it the president's speech, that even told the journalists and the news outlet that they need to pick their information more carefully, implying that only the "serious" ones would do so, while the others would eventually have to be dealt with, alongside other agents of disinformation, by the government, that is supposedly prepared to handle "fake news campaigns". This rhetoric harms the press by lumping it in with disinformation agents so freely and decontextualized and the consequences are that the level of trust in the press lowers. We see yet again the way that the term "fake news" was weaponized against the press. Have there been instances where the press reported poorly or intentionally false information? Yes. But this does not define the press as a whole. Using any opportunity to bring justification to information control, which is what the president's statement implies, brings us closer and closer to censorship, which is a direct threat to the freedom of the press, the freedom of expression and to democracy itself.

Discussion

- **What are the effects of clickbaits like those shown in this case?**
- **Are journalists the main source of disinformation?**
- **What should you do if various publications post alarming articles on a subject? What tools do you have to verify the information?**
- **How is the image of the press affected by the use of clickbaits?**
- **Should the president dictate how the journalists choose their sources?**

Conclusion

The Romanian people land in panic over gas prices after irresponsible or even intentionally misleading information shared by the press and on social media platforms. While the trust of the people in the press is constantly negotiated with precedents such as this, to which we add the portrayal of the press by the authorities as producers of fake news or advancers of agendas (see, destabilization of Romania), the press is still the first place that people look for information to make sense of their reality. This is why it is more crucial than ever, for both the press and the people, to cultivate a healthy understanding of each other's roles and of the importance of the independence of the press, to promote ethical practices in journalism, especially when confronted with the context of a hybrid war that surrounds us.

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5. Extensive case study: False news in the Republic of Moldova and the actions of the authorities in protecting the information space. What has been done in the last 5 years in this field.

Disinformation and public opinion manipulation campaigns are carried out regularly and have become a common tool for exercising the influence of Russia in the Republic of Moldova. These campaigns take place through a variety of methods and means, including media platforms with pro-Kremlin editorial policy or controlled, directly or through intermediaries, from Russia; through pro-Russian political parties and groups; representatives of the Orthodox Church, canonically subordinated to the Russian Patriarchate. Therefore, all the crises in the Moldovan–Russian relations have been accompanied by massive and intense misinformation and information manipulation campaigns on Russian television stations and other media channels, relayed/republished in the Republic of Moldova.

This began in 1992, during the war in the Transnistrian region, and continued in the following years. The most eloquent examples in recent years have been Russia's ban on Moldovan wine imports as a political response to Moldova's intention to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union, which was accompanied by a widespread campaign to discredit Moldovan products and misinformation in the Russian media. The actual signing of the Association Agreement and of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU was reproved by the pro-Kremlin propaganda machine by spreading fakes on all channels (TV, radio, print media, online, social networks) about the provisions and impact of those documents on the future of Moldova.

Likewise, the situation in the Transnistrian region has been a subject of misinformation and manipulation from abroad, and the pro-Kremlin editorial media regularly broadcast speculation, unverified and untrue information to maintain the climate of insecurity in this region and for political pressure on the Moldovan authorities. The illegal annexation of Crimea, the military confrontations in the eastern regions of Ukraine, the regional conflicts involving Russia, this country's confrontations with the EU, the USA and NATO are also propagandistically presented by Russian media sources which are broadcast in the Republic of Moldova, the Moldovan citizens being directly exposed to these information aggressions.

Moldova's information space abounds with elements of anti-Western propaganda and manipulation (especially the EU and NATO), which favor local political parties with pro-Eastern views, and the narratives circulating in the regional information space are strongly influenced by geopolitics[5]. Between 2016 and 2020, the position of President of the Republic of Moldova was held by Igor Dodon, the leader of the Party of Socialists of pro-Russian ideological orientation, and between November 2019 and July 2021,

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[5] http://api.md/upload/files/API_Ghid_jurnalisti_securitate3.pdf

this party was in power. These political forces have promoted Moldova's rapprochement with Russia and have virtually blocked the consolidation of the national security strategy, contributing to a greater exposure of the country and its citizens to misinformation. Moreover, the former president himself and the Socialist Party have disseminated false and manipulative information for ideological purposes.

The actions of these agents of Russian influence in Moldova represent a potential danger to national security.

In the context of the information war launched by the Russian Federation after the illegal annexation of Crimea, misinformation has penetrated the national information space through various platforms, especially Russian television stations, broadcast in Moldova, on the one hand. On the other hand, the intensification of the internal political struggle in the Republic of Moldova and the expansion of political control over many domestic media outlets have led to an increasing use of media outlets as a tool to settle accounts among politicians, discredit political opponents and make direct and indirect electoral agitation, on the other hand. Moldovan media consumers have become hostages to the phenomenon of both external and internal propaganda. Since some influential politicians who were in power until 2021 controlled the major media outlets, virtually no countermeasures were taken against the fake news promoted by some local TV stations and portals, often in view of manipulating public opinion and/or discrediting political opponents. Likewise, no effective actions have been taken to protect the Moldovan information space from foreign interference and propaganda.

The National Defense Strategy[6], adopted in 2016, states, "foreign propaganda is one of the most serious threats to national values and interests, diminishing society's confidence in the institutions of the national defense system and their ability to protect the country's territory and population. Propaganda, especially the one manifested through various sources of information (media, social networks, etc.), favors the emergence of radicalism and extremist-terrorist actions. The strategy acknowledges that the outcome of misinformation and propaganda has a negative impact on national and human security.

The military strategy[7], adopted by the Moldovan Government in October 2018, identified a number of military threats and risks, including information attacks (operations) and cyber-attacks. These types of attacks can be part of a larger ('hybrid') offensive action/operation. The risks associated with these threats relate primarily to deliberate distortion of information.

Security experts strongly recommend[8] developing the country's resilience capabilities to deal with risks of any kind (conventional, cybernetic, economic-financial, hybrid or

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[6] sna.pdf (army.md)

[7] https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=109141&lang=ro

[8] API_Ghid_jurnalisti_securitate3.pdf

pandemic-related, etc.). However, the falsehoods that proliferate the information space can, at a minimal cost, generate a rapid change of perceptions and reinforcement of prejudices and wrong visions about things. Information resilience, in general, would mean that the state takes care of its information space and the data that goes to the public.

The governments of the Republic of Moldova so far have not been seriously concerned with protecting the domestic information space or increasing the resilience of the state and its citizens, while the findings of strategy papers have not been followed by vigorous actions to protect against risks. As a result, the country's vulnerability to risks has increased.

The Broadcast Media Services Code[9] of the Republic of Moldova stipulates the obligation of television and radio stations to provide accurate information. However, the national regulatory authority – the Broadcast Council – has not yet taken effective measures to protect media consumers from misinformation and propaganda. The Council has not taken a strategic approach in recent years to protect the national media and to strengthen the country's information security, although the law requires the Council to develop and oversee the implementation of regulations on the protection of national broadcast space.

On the contrary, this structure has helped to strengthen the position of the Russian media in the domestic media market, including media sources known as propaganda sources. This has been done by issuing licenses to local media companies which relay audiovisual programs from Russia and relay authorizations to media service providers with program schedules composed almost exclusively of Russian or Russian-language stations, as well as through practices of protection of some television and radio stations, owned by some politicians and their affiliates. If in 2014, there were seven TV stations in the Republic of Moldova that broadcast content from Russian, by February 2020, their number increased to 10 (excluding service distributors) [10].

In recent years, the volume of Russian broadcast production relayed through Moldovan broadcast media service providers has increased due to the granting of new broadcast licenses, modification of the structure of program services, and the change of names of some stations, with a subsequent modification of the structure of their program services. Neither have measures been taken to verify the legality of airing of the radio station Sputnik Moldova which airs without a legal license. Sputnik introduces itself as an 'international news agency', part of the Russian state-owned holding company Rossia Segodnia, created in November 2014 to 'present an alternative view of international events'. In the Republic of Moldova, this agency has been operating since 2015. Sputnik is known as one of the mouthpieces for pro-Kremlin propaganda,

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[9] https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=33713&lang=ro

[10] http://api.md/upload/files/STUDIU-Fenomenul_stirilor_false_si_(in)actiunile_CA_final.pdf

a fact also mentioned in the European Parliament's October 2016 report[11]. In the Republic of Moldova, Sputnik declares itself not only as a news agency, but also as a radio station – Radio Sputnik Moldova – although it does not hold a broadcast license, which is mandatory for any radio station. On its website Sputnik.md it indicates that Radio Sputnik Moldova can be received on several radio frequencies. In reality, these frequencies belong to other radio stations, previously granted by based on the Broadcast Council's decisions.

In November 2021, the entire make-up of the Broadcast Council was dismissed after the Parliament did not approve its annual activity report. The members of the Parliament accused the Council's members, among other things, of not fighting misinformation. At the beginning of December 2021, a new make-up of the Broadcast Council was appointed, and the number of members of the Council was reduced from none to seven.

The information security strategy[12] of the Republic of Moldova for 2019–2024 does not meet the current requirements and challenges and needs to be improved and supplemented. Former President of the Republic of Moldova (Igor Dodon served as President from 2016 to 2020) and the ruling Socialist Party (2019-2021) blocked initiatives to strengthen the country's information security and, in 2020, repealed the so-called 'anti-terrorism law' which banned TV and radio stations to relay news, news–analytical, military and political content produced in countries that have not ratified the European Convention on Transfrontier Television, including Russia.

In June 2022, the Law on Information Security, which provides for the banning of news and analytical broadcasts from countries that have not ratified the Convention on Transfrontier Television, was enacted by President Maia Sandu. Thus, in Moldova, misinformation and propaganda will be punished much more severely. Thus, misinforming media institutions will be gradually sanctioned, from the imposition of fines to the withdrawal of the right to broadcast advertising.

Currently, political or military news and broadcasts from countries that have not ratified the Convention on Transfrontier Television, including Russia, are banned by the decision of the Emergency Situations Commission.

With the entry into force of the information security law, these media products will no longer be found in the broadcast grids, even after the expiration of the state of emergency. According to the law on information security, 50% of the foreign content broadcast by TV stations will go to the EU countries, the USA and the states that have ratified the Convention on Transfrontier Television. The parliamentary opposition describes the new provisions as an "institution of censorship".

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[11] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2016-0290_RO.html
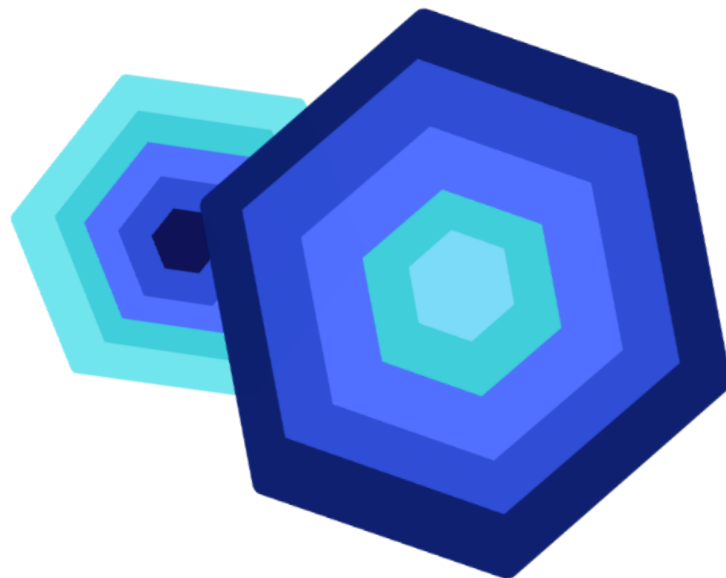[12] https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=111979&lang=ro

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Due to this law, news bulletins from the Russian Federation are no longer broadcast in Moldova, but unfortunately, Moldovan television stations with a pro-Kremlin editorial policy mask the content from Moscow through the so-called domestic product. For this, however, they are gradually sanctioned by the Audiovisual Council of the Republic of Moldova.

The slowdown in the democratic development of the Republic of Moldova has been determined by the destructive influence of the Russian Federation which claims the role of heir to the former Soviet Union and wants to keep Moldova in its space of geopolitical interests. Depending on the political situation, Russia applies in relation to Moldova economic blackmail mechanisms (supply of natural gas; access of Moldovan agricultural products to the Russian market; the situation of Moldovan migrants working in Russia), military blackmail (through the Russian military group in Transnistrian separatist region; the permanent danger of spread of war sustained by pro-Russian forces to the neighboring Ukraine) as well as media blackmail (fakes, speculation and discrediting campaigns through Russian television and other sources of Russian and Moldovan propaganda media).

So, with the help of pro-Russian influencers in the political and non-political segments, attempts are made to falsify history, discredit the values of Western and European democracies, national division and support separatist currents within the country, promote Russia's greatness and its crucial role in the world order, as well as promote Moldova's 'natural' belonging to what is called 'russkiy mir' *(the Russian world)* – a Russian quasi-ideological expansionist concept.

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A chance at media literacy for youth from disadvantaged environments

INCLUSIVE MEDIA LITERACY CURRICULA FOR YOUTH

Module 4
Inclusive Media: A Guide to Teaching Tolerance through Media Literacy

InMedia

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Contents

Aim of the module

Teaching tolerance through Media Literacy
by Artemisszió Foundation (HU)

This chapter aims to strengthen learners' critical attitudes towards media content. While we talk about critical thinking, we aim to develop the ability to be reflective and analytical.

A critical thinker is able to question systematically the examined topic, consider the results of the observations, and formulate a valid position based on observation and analysis.

At the end of this course module, participants will be able to recognize stereotypes - when analyzing verbal and visual content -, filter hate speech, and be able to see critically media content related to the representation of minority groups or sensitive social issues.

Competence domains addressed:

B UNDERSTANDING MEDIA AND CRITICAL-REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION AND CONTENT

B.1. Understanding the specifics of the media
B.2. Critical analysis

D CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY, ETHICAL USE OF INFORMATION AND MEDIA, BALANCED CONSUMPTION

D.1. Social responsibility, promoting equity
D.2. Balanced consumption
D.3. Ethical use

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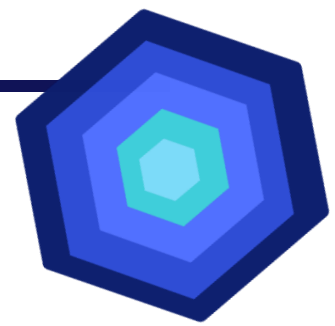## What do we mean by inclusive media education?

Primarily, our Inclusive Media Literacy Curricula for Youth (InMedia) project is inclusive from the point of view of the target group. The activities of the curriculum are developed for young people who start from a disadvantaged position, and their media literacy training requires different methods, a different pace, and a different facilitator attitude. The exercises in this chapter are suitable for working with youth on topics in which they are affected (topics related to stereotypes, hate speech, and equal representation). Reflection on their own identity can not only enrich the training program with an extra layer but it is a great tool of empowerment. Therefore, we encourage professionals using the curriculum to adapt the exercises to the individual needs of the group during the courses!

How can social inclusion be improved by strengthening media literacy?

At the same time, our project is inclusive from the point of view of its subject, since in the 21st century, an important tool for the fight against social exclusion is to reflect on the media's content aimed at stigmatizing and excluding certain social groups, especially the affected minority groups, enabling them to overcome the negative representation and recognize the stereotype and be able to act effectively against it. Through the thematization of exclusion and inclusion and the analysis of media content from a social point of view, we can achieve a double goal. On the one hand, we can develop a range of skills that support critical thinking. On the other hand, we also teach tolerance and a better understanding of the situation of social minorities.

That is why we consider the analysis of the social effects of the media as part of media literacy education to be of utmost importance. So the chapter focuses on this.

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1. Stereotypes

1.1. General considerations

The module examines the presence and effects of stereotypes in the media. Differentiating the "Other" from ourselves leads to the exclusion of certain social groups due to the hardening of stereotypes into prejudices: discrimination or racism. In addition to dental clarification, the module supports group work with highly adaptable exercises.

Educational video on stereotypes

1.2. Definitions and concepts

Stereotypes are oversimplified generalizations about groups of people. Stereotypes can be based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation—almost any characteristic. They may be positive (usually about one's own group, such as when women suggest they are less likely to complain about physical pain) but are often negative (usually toward other groups, such as when members of a dominant racial group suggest that a subordinate racial group is stupid or lazy). In either case, the stereotype is a generalization that doesn't take individual differences into account.

Prejudice. A preliminary judgment - belief, thought, feeling, knowledge, attitude - that precedes specific impressions of reality, so it also has a role of replacing knowledge, helps to orient oneself in the as yet unknown human and social relations. A prejudice is not based on experience; instead, it is a prejudgment, originating outside actual experience. *"Prejudices become prejudices when newly discovered knowledge is incapable of changing them."* (Allport, 1977)

Racism. While prejudice is not necessarily specific to race, racism is a stronger form of prejudice used to justify the belief that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others; it is also a set of practices used by a racial majority to disadvantage a racial minority.

Discrimination. A discriminatory treatment (act, activity, statement, omission, behavior) that affects the equal opportunities of an individual (person) or a group. Its method can be open or covert/indirect. Can be positive or negative in terms of results. Covert or indirect discrimination occurs when a seemingly neutral regulation, criterion or practice puts someone in a better or

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worse position. We speak of structural or institutional discrimination when the organization of a society or the rules of an institution exclude a group or put its members at a disadvantage.

Stigmatization. The marking, labeling or spoiling of an identity, which leads to ostracism, marginalization, discrimination, and abuse. When someone with a mental illness is called 'dangerous', 'crazy' or 'incompetent' rather than unwell, it is an example of a stigma. It's also a stigma when a person with mental illness is mocked or called weak for seeking help. Stigma often involves inaccurate stereotypes.

1.3. Activities

Name of the activity: Cultionary

Type of activity: Introductory exercise

Age group (youth from 12 to 18 years old):

Duration of the activity: 45-60 minutes

Objectives/Expected results: Participants will get familiar with the concepts of biases of perception, categorisation, stereotypes

Preparation of activity:

- ▪ **Necessary materials:**
  - ▪ A list of words to illustrate (See in the Annex)
  - ▪ Flipchart paper and marker to record scores
  - ▪ Sheets of paper (A4 size) and pens for the drawings group drawings

Facilitation of activity (flow):

1. Introduce the activity as a special version of "pictionary" - a game that many participants are familiar with.
2. Make groups of 4-5 people / Prepare enough paper and some pen for each group.

Instructions:

- ▪ It will be a competition, and the team members have to guess what their team members are drawing.
- ▪ Everyone has to draw, they have to take turns.

Rules:

- ▪ Players cannot speak, write or draw symbols (flags for instance) or numbers.
- ▪ Call one member of each team and give them the word that they will need to draw. Ask them to join their groups and draw, while the other team members try to guess what it is.

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- If the answer has been found, the team should announce it, without saying the word (the other teams may still be drawing).
- The teams that find out the word get a score, those who do not score zero points. Write the score on the board. Repeat the same sequence with new words and drawers. Make sure that everyone gets to draw at least once.
- At the end, ask the groups to display their drawings, so that they can compare and discuss the different interpretations and images associated with the words.

Debriefing questions:

- Ask participants if they found the activity useful, difficult and why.
- Then ask participants to look at the drawings on the display and compare the different pictures associated with the words, and the diversity of interpretation. Ask them if these images correspond to reality and ask the designers about the images they chose to illustrate the words.
- Continue by discussing where our images come from: are they positive or negative, and what effect they have on our relationships with the people concerned? With the people involved? Check which words were more difficult to draw and explore why.

Tips for the facilitator:

Remember that people who consider themselves to be poor drawers may be afraid to draw, may be worried that this game is difficult. Reassure them that you are not interested in masterpieces and encourage them to try. This activity is likely to bring out the most immediate and common stereotypes about others, especially foreigners and minorities.

Annex:

Example of words to draw: Racism - Difference - Education - Discrimination - Anti-Semitism Refugee - European - National (of the country in which the activity takes place) Poverty - Muslim - Homosexual - Equality - HIV positive - Homosexual - Equality - HIV positive - Roma (or traveler) - Japanese - Russian - African - Human rights - Media - Tourist Foreign - Solidarity - Refugee - Refugee - Love - Arab - Moldovan.[1]

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[1] This activity has been developed during an Erasmus+strategic partnership project with the participation of Artemisszió Foundation, and can be found in the Methodological Toolkit of the project here: https://www.training4interculturality.eu/resources/

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Name of the activity: DESCRIPTION, INTERPRETATION, EVALUATION

Type of activity: Introductory exercise

Age group: 12 +

Duration of the activity: 30-45 minutes

Task: Participants will describe what they see in pictures.

Objectives/Expected results: To be more aware, that we do interpret and evaluate often, even in situations when we are asked to describe something. To understand the difference between factual information and processed information (judgment).

Necessary materials: Printed pictures, post it papers and a flipchart / whiteboard or anything equivalent. A/4 papers, pens or markers for everyone.

Preparation of activity: Room, chairs around, pictures on the wall or placed on the floor.

Facilitation of activity (flow):

1. Divide the group into smaller groups. If you have 3 printed images (you can use pictures similar to the ones below), create 3 groups, if you have 4 or 5 images, then best to work with 4-5 groups. The ideal number of the groups is 3-5 people. It is not a problem at this activity if you only have 3 different pictures and you print each of them twice.

2. Share the A/4 papers and pens among the participants. Ask them to describe what do they see on the pictures. This is an individual work of 5-8 minutes.

3. Group discussion: give the groups a couple of minutes to share with each other their observations and ask volunteers to show their picture and read one description/ group.

4. Introduce the categories of: description / interpretation / evaluation. Use the guidelines that you can find below at section: „Addition for facilitators". Write down these categories next to each other on a flipchart paper or whiteboard. Share the post it papers with the groups and ask them to write words and expressions from their previous description on the post it papers and put the papers under the category where they belong.

Tips for the facilitator:

DESCRIPTION – What do I see?	INTERPRETATION – What do I think?	EVALUATION – What do I feel?
▪ Objective, there is no emotion involved.	▪ We give a meaning to a picture. (According to me…)	▪ Subjective (I think) ▪ Related with feelings

- Answers to the simple question: „What do I see?"
- Not contextualized
- Elementary
- The primary meaning of the objects on the image.
- We are not looking for its function, does not answer to the questions: „Why?" or „For what?"

- What does it mean?
- What is happening in the picture?
- What do you think about it?
- We tend to explain why they do it, why they are there?
- We add context.
- What are my cultural / educational references to decode the meaning in a certain way?
- Meaning based on what I learnt.
- Meaning based on an agreement / common sense.
- Members of the same culture are likely to interpret an object in the same way.

- According to someone's own values
- How is it? Do I like it?
- Moral – ethical judgment: good / bad?

Example pictures

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Name of the activity: Out of the box

Type of activity: A group activity around the topic of "The Other"

Age group: 12+

Duration of the activity: 50-55 minutes

Objectives/Expected results: To help learners to understand the concept of „The Other".
To direct the participant's focus on features that connect and not what separates.

Necessary materials: The activity is based on a commercial "All That We Share". The clip was created for Denmark's most watched family channel, TV2. The video can be shown as part of the activity and can be reached on the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jD8tjhVO1Tc

Preparation of activity: Organize the chairs in a circle, leave enough space to move in the middle.

Facilitation of activity (flow):

Introduction:

Start the session with a short introduction, and initiate a plenary discussion or alternatively an individual reflection around the topic of the "Other".

Write on the whiteboard the word: The Other, then:

- Ask participants to share their associations related to the notion. OR
- Ask participants to write down their associations related to the notion. OR
- Ask participants to draw their associations/feelings related to the notion.

Group identities:

Participants stand freely, approximately in equal distance from each other
in the room. The facilitator's instructions:

„I will read 5 statements. First, I would like you to listen to all of them and think silently. What fits you the most. Then, I will read the statement again and you have to choose which group you feel you belong to."

The statements:

- I like sports the most
- I prefer spending my time online / to play with video games
- I am more interested in arts, literature, history
- I am more interested in science, mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry
- None of these statements are relevant to me or I can't choose between more options

Once the groups are done, ask the groups to choose a specific space in the room. Participants will work towards the creation of a group identity by the following steps:

- Give a name to your group!
- Write a poem that represents your group! / Why do you think that this group is better / cooler than the others?
- Draw the mascot of your group!

Then each group does a short presentation.

After the presentations the facilitator's instructions are the followings:

„I will read a list of statements, and I would like to ask those who find a statement true for them and feel comfortable admitting it, come to the middle of the circle, look at their new group in the middle and then go back to their previous group."

The statements:

- I have green eyes.
- I have siblings.
- I am from the countryside.
- I am a nerd/geek.
- I am liberal.
- Our environment is important for me.
- I am a believer.
- I am introverted.

Final discussion:

We sit in a big circle for the final discussion.

Questions for the reflection:

- Who felt that he/she belonged to a certain group during the workshop? Why? How does a group identity develop? Are we influenced by what we see in the media?
- Did you form a new group in the middle of the circle with the others? Why/why not?

Tips for the facilitator:

Adapt the activity to your group. The "group identities" section works the best when the subgroups feel a strong connection to their group. If you work with a group, who has members from different nationalities / regions / towns / schools, these factors can be used as identity builders.

Also, at the final statements, adapt the statements based on the age / interest / characteristics of the participants.

Using the video of the advertisement can give an extra layer to the group discussion if the facilitator provokes thoughts around the aim of the producers and the feelings that it creates.

Name of the activity: Strangers

Type of activity: Group activity

Age group: 15+

Duration of the activity: 30-45 minutes

Task: Participants will explore cultural perceptions by recreating the narrative in a video.

Necessary materials: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RpjHSiQLPmA

Facilitation of activity (flow):

1) Watch the short movie, Strangers (approx.7 minutes, no text):

   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RpjHSiQLPmA

2) Divide the group into subgroups of 4, and ask the groups to narrate the movie (give a description of the thought of the characters / One group drafts the thought of one character, another group the other ones). Prepare for a synchronized read.

3) After a narration try, go into a round of questions:

   - What happened?
   - What is the difference between the 2 stories?
   - What is the difference between prejudges and stereotypes?
   - How do they work?

Name of the activity: Quiz

Type of activity: Online activity / Can be adapted to a classroom

Duration of the activity: 20 minutes

List of questions:

- Stereotypes can affect how people treat each other? **True** / false
- Stereotypes exist because people see them in which of the following? Books / films and movies / the news / **all of the above**
- Assimilation is: Blending fruits, milk, and ice cream into a smoothie / blending primary colors to make secondary colors / **the blending of a smaller cultures into the dominant society** / the systematic effort to destroy an entire population
- Which of the following is a stereotype? **Canadians live in igloos. / Canada is a welcoming and safe place to live. / Many Canadians like to play or watch hockey.** / Tim Hortons is a Canadian brand.
- Believing that only men can be firefighters is an example of what type of stereotype? **Gender stereotype** / Cultural stereotype / Canadian stereotype / It is not a stereotype.
- Stereotypes can be positive or negative. **True** / false

Tips for the facilitator: This quiz can also be found on the medialiteracy.ro site, among other online interactive activities.

Activity title: Re-make the truth

Type of activity: Individual and group activity

Duration of activity: 90 minutes

Age group: 15+

Expected results: Competence development: critical thinking, creativity and expression, ability of analysis, team work

Preparation:

Activity 1: Prepare the worksheet "THE PERSON REMIND ME OF" and different photos of people, one for each participant, or use the printed photos from the annex

Activity 2: Prepare the worksheets "I AM –CHARACTER POEM" and „THE TRUTH BEHIND THE PHOTOGRAPHY".

Facilitation of activity (flow):

PART I. HE/SHE REMINDS ME OF (Activity on stereotypes, approximatively 45 minutes)

Each participant is given a photograph from a "COLLECTION OF PORTRAITS"[1]. Participants use guiding questions on the given worksheet: "THE PERSON REMINDS ME OF... "[2] to create the profile of the person on their photograph.

Then, during pair work participants will create a story about an imaginary encounter of their characters along the guiding questions on the worksheet.

Choose a few couples to tell their stories.

Close the activity with a short reflection. Use the educational video "STEREOTYPES".

PART II. THE TRUTH BEHIND (Building Knowledge Activity, approximatively 45 minutes)

Divide the group into small groups of 3-4.

Each group will create their own character poem based on the photography and the guiding start lines on the handout "CHARACTER POEM[3]".

Then, the groups can share their poems with all participants, they read them out loud. Worksheets "TRUTH BEHIND THE PHOTOGRAPHY[4]" are given to each participant, the given worksheet corresponds to and is accustomed to the exact poem. The participants study only one concrete story behind the photography. The questions on the worksheet are used for the group discussion.

The facilitator sums up the gained knowledge for a plenary discussion.

[1] See in Annex: Re-Make the truth_Portraits:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KSiyQkn7c8WwdOWbZj0pxZvwsCA7SNMB/view?fbclid=IwAR1aZWrG3DSzhneRt73iM1FbzqvKty9YrpwKSKNhUn2r0gBlo9vZlMJgB5Y
[2] See in Annex: Re-Make the truth_Reminds me of: see above
[3] See in Annex: Re-Make the truth_Character poem: see above
[4] See in Annex: Re-Make the truth_The truth Behind: see above

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Reflection process:

Question for part I:	Question for part II:
- Was it easy or difficult to imagine the background story of the people in the photographs? - How is this activity related to stereotypes? - Are stereotypes good or bad? Why? Give examples! - Has it happened to you that someone has a misconception about you because of your appearance? - Has it happened that you judged someone too quickly and it turned out that you were wrong?	- How was the reality of this photograph? How has the meaning of the photo changed for you now from when you know the truth? - When a photo appeared in the press, how was it understood by the public? - Do you know any other examples when a photo was misused for political campaign? - How would you name this photo? Write a short tabloid message on this photo. - Discuss the quote "The photographer is not just the one who records the past, but the one who devises it." (Susan Sontag)

1.4. Case study: Stigmatization of a minority group

Findings

In the 1970s and 1980s, the term "g*psy crime" was an active part of the police-legal-criminological discourse, and it appeared in news reports and criminal news as well (Juhász, 2010).

Its use in 2005 came out of the primarily criminological from a range of terms used in technical language, and was transferred to the media and public discourse when Tamás Polgár, Tomcat blogger for Magyar Televízió Freedom of Speech in his program talked about the computer game Olah Action, which aimed to exterminate the "G*psies".

Synopsis

The case study aims to demonstrate how important words are in terms of stigmatizing a social group.

We analyze how the expression "g*psy crime" changed prejudices about the Roma in Hungary in the 2010s.

The use of the term g*psy crime was adopted by the growing right wing, and the conflicts between Hungarians and Roma culminated in violent crimes.

The perpetrators legitimized the acts of violence against the Roma with the fact that the "G*psies" were criminals and therefore should be persecuted.

Olah Action PC game homepage. "The goal is to cleanse the country of gypsies by passing through the counties of Hungary."

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Tomcat then appeared in the media for months voicing his views on "g*psy crime" - usually in relation to some current event –, emphasizing the biological determination of Roma in relation to crime.

The term only became a spectacular political slogan starting in December 2006, when Jobbik - riding on the social indignation caused by the murder in Olaszliszka - launched the ciganybunozes.com website, and then in a campaign took possession not only of the word itself, but also of the coexistence of "G*psies" and "non-G*psies", and the topic of his conflict, as well as the possibility of its interpretation. That's when the following change in meaning took place: the media stereotype of "g*psies", which suggested stupidity, work avoidance, hen-stealing, but overall "harmlessness", changed, and the image of aggressive, dangerous, murderous "g*psies" developed in the public.

From the summer of 2007, the Magyar Guard, founded by Jobbik - and since then legally disbanded - specifically justified its creation and demonstrative marches announced in "defense of the majority" with this, for example. On December 9, 2007, the Hungarian Guard parades in Tatárszentgyörgy, Pest County.

Confusing the name of a social group with crime, and consistent, persistent use of the term leads to unnoticed stigmatization and strengthens prejudices.

Discussion

- **What do you think, how could we stop prejudges?**
- **How could the media shape public opinion in a positive way while fighting for clicks?**
- **When might it be necessary to limit freedom of speech?**

Conclusion

The inclusion of the term "G*psy crime" in everyday usage confirmed the intensification and sharpening of emotions that led to fear-inducing behavior and physical violence during a difficult economic period in Hungary. In connection with the presentation of minority groups, we must strive to describe the members of the group as individuals and not in a homogenous, simplistic way that can be described with one or two adjectives. That is why it is unacceptable to talk about "g*psy crime" in general.

References

Veronika Munk, Romák reprezentációja a többségi média híreiben az 1960-as évektől napjainkig, 2013 pp.95-98.

2. Fair and equal representation

2.1 General considerations

This section will look at why fair and equal representation in the media is important, examining both the consequences of when it is not provided, and the positive effects of such representation. The differences between fair and equal representation can also be discussed.

2.2 Definitions and concepts

Representation. "Representation is how media texts deal with and present gender, age, ethnicity, national and regional identity, social issues and events to an audience. Media texts have the power to shape an audience's knowledge and understanding about these important topics."[5]

Ideology. "These are ideas and beliefs, held by media producers, which are often represented in their media texts."[6]

Tokenism. "Actions that are the result of pretending to give advantage to those groups in society who are often treated unfairly, in order to give the appearance of fairness."[7]

We can also make a distinction between **equal representation** and **fair representation**. Equal representation is more to do with proportionality. It follows the idea that minorities are represented in the media proportionally to their makeup in society. Fair representation is more to do with ensuring that minorities are presented as complex and multifaceted people, without relying on stereotypes.

Why is good representation important?

Media has a lot of power to influence the way we think about the world and people in it. When minority groups are misrepresented in the media, it can affect both how they are perceived by others, and can damage how they feel about themselves. Studies have shown that when people haven't interacted with particular racial groups directly, they rely on stereotypes seen

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[5] https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z9fx39q/revision/1

[6] https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z9fx39q/revision/1

[7] Cambridge English Dictionary

on screen for their ideas about that group. Bad representation can spread false information about groups and shape public perception of them. Good representation on the other hand can spread awareness and bring attention to causes that affect minority groups, effecting positive social change.

"Beyond just mirroring reality, representations in the media such as in film, television, photography and print journalism create reality and normalize specific world-views or ideologies"8

2.3 Activities

Name of the activity: Headlines

Type of activity: Face to face group activity

Age group: 16/18+

Duration of the activity: 50 minutes

Objectives/Expected results: To help learners to understand and be able to recognize the elements of fair and equal representation, develop critical thinking and analytical skills.

Necessary materials: Print the pictures of the magazines (A/4 sized, colored copies according to the number of the groups), the article can be given online, or printed

Preparation of activity: Introduce the activity with a quick overview about BREXIT / How the referendum was introduced, what were the results and the consequences

Facilitation of activity (flow):

Examine these headlines from the UK concerning immigration, published before the Brexit vote.

- What are the biases in these headlines?
- What kind of ideas might a person get about immigration if they only got information from newspapers?
- What do you think the long-term effects might be of this kind of representation?

Daily Express: MIGRANTS MILKING BRITAIN'S BENEFITS — Foreigners more likely to claim handouts

Daily Mail: As politicians squabble over border controls, yet another lorry load of migrants arrives in UK declaring ... WE'RE FROM EUROPE — LET US IN!

Daily Express: ILLEGAL MIGRANTS FLOOD IN 500,000 MIGRANTS GET SOCIAL HOUSING

Daily Mail: ASYLUM SEEKERS FERRIED AROUND IN STRETCH LIMO — And guess what, you're picking up the £3,000 bill! — 40% SURGE IN ETHNIC NUMBERS

Daily Express: MIGRANT CHAOS ALL SUMMER — MIGRANTS ROB YOUNG BRITONS OF JOBS

Fair representation also means telling both (or all) sides of a story.

Read this article on the cost of immigration in the UK:

https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/670875/migrants-cost-britain-brexit-eu-referendum-migration-report

Discuss:

- Does this seem like a fair representation?
- Look at the language used to describe the cost of immigration. Highlight any words which you think have been chosen to influence the reader. What does it suggest about the perspective of the author?
- The article reports that migrants cost the NHS £18.6bn, but failed to acknowledge the 127,000 EU nationals currently working within the health service. What can we learn from this about the importance of fair representation?

Name of the activity: Minorities in the press

Type of activity: Online activity / Can be adapted to the classroom

Age group: 14 +

Duration of the activity: 45 - 55 minutes

Task: Participants will conduct an online search on minority related subjects to see how they are reflected in the press.

Objectives/Expected results:

Becoming aware about minorities representations in the most well-known media portals in your country.

Necessary materials: Internet access

Preparation: Participants will be split into groups.

Facilitation of activity (flow):

1. Please conclude 3 of the main online media portals in your country. Decide in the groups, which are these and also conclude which are the minorities in your country and write them on a list.
2. Please regroup in 3 small groups. Each group should hold at least 1 device with connection to the internet.
3. Each group will receive the task to research on 1 of the media portals throughout Google search engine, 1 or max 2 minority related news in a specific time period. For ex. in Romania, 1 of the main media portals is agerpres.ro so the participants should research for 2022 how many news were published related to Hungarians on agerpres.ro and what the subjects were about.
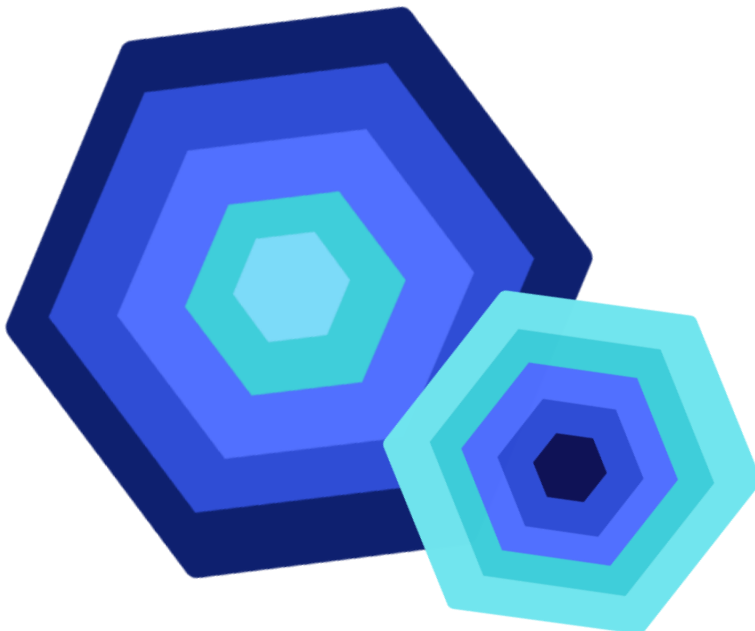
4. Optional: Each group could research the 3 most accessed news about their researched minority on that specific media portal the group is researching and read them, to tackle the focus of the article.

5. Each group will have max. of 25 minutes work and 5 minutes to present the results.

6. Reflection:

Each participant will reflect on the activity, by using one of the following reflection questions:

- How did this activity develop your knowledge about fair and equal representations?
- How did you feel about the topic during the exercise?
- What would your suggestion be to that media portal, which You have researched?

Tips for the facilitator:

Be aware of the time period and prepare with statistics related to media portals used in your country and also about statistics related to minorities in your country.

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3. Hate speech

3.1. General considerations

Hate speech is a prevalent problem in our society nowadays, even though it is heavily regulated. An inclusive approach to media literacy looks at hate speech as more than just a type of prohibited speech, beyond, at its consequences. Often times, the limits to the freedom of expression are misunderstood and hate speech either goes unsanctioned, is ignored or sometimes is legitimated in the media due to unethical or incorrect news covering practices.

3.2 Definitions and concepts

What is hate speech?

At a basic level hate speech can be thought of as communication which attacks, promotes, or justifies hatred against a person or group of persons.

The definition of hate speech does vary from country to country. For example…

In Romania hate speech is defined as: "*instigation of the public, using any means, to hatred or discrimination against a category of individuals*".[9]

In Hungary: "*any person who, before the public at large, incites violence against*
> *a) the Hungarian nation;*
> *b) any national, ethnic, racial or religious group or a member of such a group; or*
> *c) certain societal groups or a member of such a group, in particular on the grounds of disability, gender identity or sexual orientation, is guilty of a felony*".[10]

United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976) – Article 20 (2):*...any propaganda for war and any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.*

The Council of Europe Recommendation on Hate Speech (1997):

The term 'hate speech' shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin.

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[9] https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-REF(2018)042-e Art 369 Criminal Code.
[10] https://www.article19.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Hungary_responding_to_HS.pdf Section 332 of the Criminal Code.

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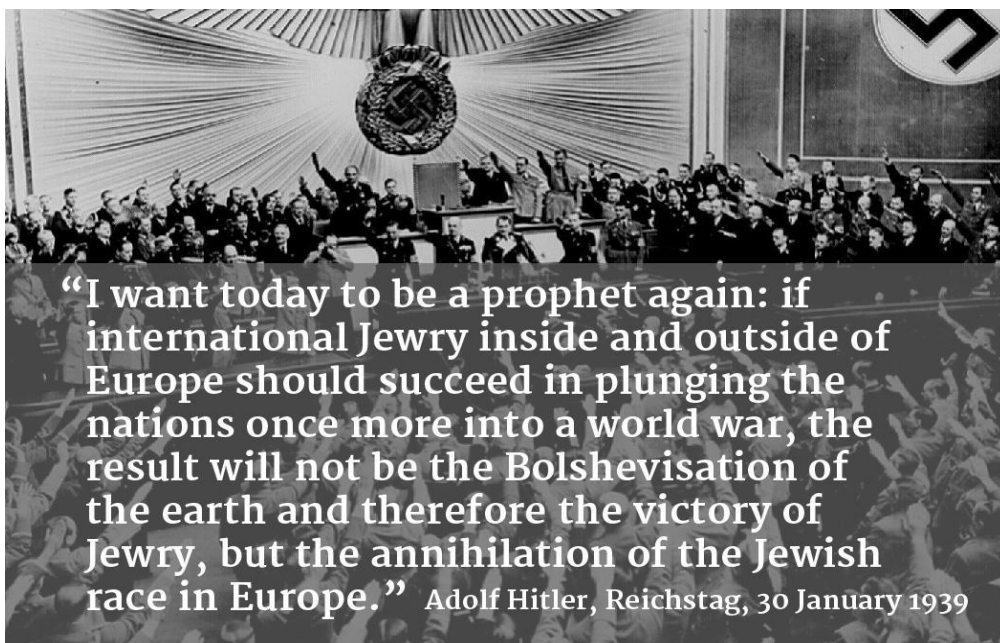Erasmus+ Programme
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As we can see there are "protected characteristics" such as race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, sex, gender, gender identity, or serious disability which are recognized internationally.

Why do we have hate speech law?

The problem with hate speech is that it diminishes tolerance and enables discrimination. It is a step towards violence against others and even genocide, for example, the Holocaust can be thought of as beginning with hate speech.
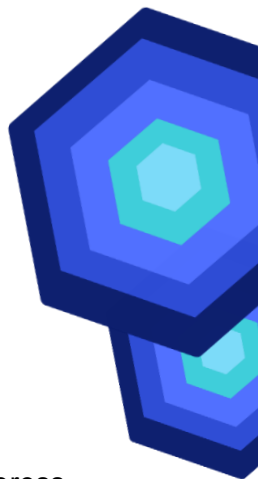
Following World War II, many nations passed laws to curb the incitement of racial and religious hatred. These laws started out as protections against the kinds of anti-Semitic bigotry that gave rise to the Holocaust and have evolved into modern hate speech laws.

"I want today to be a prophet again: if international Jewry inside and outside of Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, the result will not be the Bolshevisation of the earth and therefore the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe." Adolf Hitler, Reichstag, 30 January 1939

Why are definitions of hate speech different?

The opposite principle to hate speech is free speech. Free speech allows a person to express opinions without restraint or censorship. Countries have to balance free speech against hate speech.

For example, America and Germany both protect freedom of expression under their constitutions. America provides strong protection for freedom of speech so that most speech is protected. While in Germany a person may be arrested for certain hateful things they say.

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But even within countries the definition of hate speech may be debated. For example, neighbors, politicians, and family members may have different levels of tolerance so that what is just rude to one person is hate speech to another.

Definitions of hate speech therefore reflect the legal, social and political culture of a country.

Problems with hate speech

As we have seen, one of the main problems with hate speech is defining it. Even where a definition is created it may be disputed. For example, under the UK definition insulting words, behavior or displays used to qualify as hate speech. A campaign was launched and in 2013 the law was altered so that "insulting" was removed from the definition.

Even where a definition is decided and settled in order for people to be protected from hate speech the law must be enforced. For example, while Hungary has laws against hate speech the EU has found that there has been a lack of enforcement which has meant "*relevant criminal provisions remain effectively dormant, with even the most severe cases reaching the incitement threshold going unpunished*"[11]. Guilty verdicts in cases where minorities, such as the Roma or LGBTQI people, are targeted are extremely rare.

Technology, in particular, social media has meant that hate speech has become a greater problem. Social media allows a person to broadcast their opinions to many people all over the world, even complete strangers. It can be difficult or even impossible to punish those who publish hate speech as a person may be anonymous on social media. It also requires those in charge of these platforms to define hate speech and remove content that fits these criteria.

3.3. Activities

Name of the activity: How would you describe it?

Type of activity: A face to face introductory activity

Age group: 14+

Duration of the activity: 20 minutes

Objectives/Expected results: To introduce the different concepts of hate speech, support the learners' competencies in conceptualization.

Necessary materials: A/4 papers and pen / according to the number of participants. White board and markers to take notes.

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[11] https://www.article19.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Hungary_responding_to_HS.pdf page 4.

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Facilitation of activity (flow):

- Ask the participants what they think hate speech is and ask them to write down their definitions.
- Go around the group and ask each participant to read out their definition. Write the key-words on the white board.
- Once the definitions have been read out, discuss the definitions – their similarities, differences and why they think these similarities/differences exist.

Tips for the facilitator:

The conflict between freedom of speech and hate speech can be discussed. Questions related to legal regulation of freedom of speech can be discussed related to the following video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skuLK0YpksI

Name of the activity: Do's and don'ts

Type of activity: face to face activity

Age group: 14+

Duration of the activity: 20-30 minutes

Objectives/Expected results: To encourage active action against hate speech.

Necessary materials: A/4 papers and pen, according to the number of groups

Facilitation of activity (flow):

- Split the group into groups of 3-5, and ask them to discuss and write down what they think someone should do if they:
  a. Have been the victim of a hate crime, and
  b. Have witnessed another become the victim of a hate crime.
- Then ask the groups to read out their top pieces of advice. Discuss potential positives and negatives of their suggestions.
- Then tell them the techniques of dealing with a hate crime which are detailed below.

  a. **What to do if you are the victim of a hate crime:**
    - Make the person aware that their statement is discriminatory.
    - Write down any and all of the details of the crime as soon as possible after the event, like the characteristics of the perpetrator and the threats/comments made.
    - File a report with the police and take down the officer's number.
    - Report the online content as discriminatory.
    - Find support from friends, family or professionals.

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b.   What to do if you have witnessed a hate crime:

- Don't just ignore it, let the person know that their statement is discriminatory.
- Give the victim eye contact while calling the perpetrator out to show support.
- Attract attention to the event to ensure you and the victim are not alone.
- Do not provoke the perpetrator or be violent towards them.

Tips for the facilitator: Establish that the participants are in a safe space. Constantly check in with your participants regarding their emotional comfort when discussing these subjects. Stop at any time necessary.

Name of the activity: Mapping hate speech

Type of activity: A face to face activity

Age group: 14+

Duration of the activity: 40 minutes

Objectives/Expected results: To develop learner's ability to recognize hate speech, its impact and discover opportunities of actions against it.

Necessary materials: Handouts (see below) or the questions written on a white board. A/4 papers and pens according to the number of the group.

Online Resource: Hate Speech and Online Gaming

http://www.nbcnews.com/id/36572021/ns/technology_and_science-games/#.Uk1cpIamiSp

Facilitation of activity (flow):

Students can work on their own, in pairs or small groups on the worksheet/questions below:

How can I recognize, that it is a hate speech	Who might witness this?	My own experience	Impact on communities	What can be done?

At the end of the activity students share their findings with one another.

Tips for the facilitator:

Particularly for students who are gamers. The discussion should focus on the impact of hate speech for the individual and for the communities where it happens.

Reference:

Adaptation of the activity: Action Against Hate Speech, A resource for teaching and learning about Hate Speech, https://generation.global/assets/resources/hate-speech-english.pdf

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Name of the activity: Teen voices

Type of activity: Online activity

Age group: 14+

Duration of the activity: 30 - 45 minutes

Task: Participants will get familiarized with the meaning of hate speech and why and how it spreads online.

Objectives/Expected results:

Becoming aware what does hate speech mean and share examples, personal stories about the concept.

Necessary materials: Internet access

Facilitation of activity (flow):

1. Please watch the following material:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vUdWpwLv10
2. Split the group in small groups and each group answers one of the questions posed by the video, which are the following:
   a. How do You define "Hate speech"?
   b. Have You encountered hate speech online?
   c. Why do people post hate speech online?
   d. How do You report hate speech?
3. Each group will have max. 20 minutes work and 5 minutes to present the results.

Reflection:

Each participant will reflect on the activity, by using one of the following reflection questions:

- How did this activity develop your knowledge about hate speech?
- How did you feel about the topic during the exercise?
- What would your suggestion be to other teens regarding the concept of hate speech?

Tips for the facilitator:

Be aware of the time limit for the activity and be aware not to encourage gossiping.

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3.4. Case Study: Hate speech leads to violence

Findings

Bijan, an Iranian refugee with learning difficulties living in the UK suffered years of harassment which involved racist abuse and damage to his property. To defend himself he decided to take pictures and videos of the incidents.

On the evening of 11 July 2013 Bijan saw a neighbor drinking a can of beer in front of his flat and he decided to film him. The neighbor misinterpreted this action as Bijan taking pictures of his daughter and forced his way into Bijan's flat shouting "I'm going to f*ck you up." Bijan dialed 999 and told the operator that he had been racially abused. The call was flagged as a hate crime and categorized as a 'grade one' incident requiring an immediate response.

Synopsis

Bijan, an Iranian refugee living in the UK suffered years of harassment which involved racist abuse and damage to his property. To defend himself he decided to take pictures and videos of the incidents. The subject of his pictures misinterprets his actions, which leads to Bijan's arrest and later on, in an act of retaliation by his abuser, to his murder.

When the police arrived 15 people had gathered around Bijan's flat. Bijan was arrested for breach of the peace. Bijan was released from custody despite the police recognizing there was a risk of retribution. Rather than these threats being taken seriously the police regarded Bijan as a 'pest' and was released without protection. Over the next few days Bijan contacted the police on numerous occasions following his release stating his life was in danger. Hours after his last call to the police, the neighbor with the help of an accomplice, beat Bijan unconscious, dragged his body outside and set it alight and Bijan was killed.

- Hate crime was flagged and categorized as a 'grade one' incident requiring an immediate response after Bijan's first call to the police.
- After the quick arrival of the police forces, Bijan was brought to the station.
- In practice, it has been difficult to foresee the possible consequences of the tension between the neighbors.

Discussion

- **Action against hate crimes is a priority, which is supported by the quick arrival of the police and the careful handling of reports.**
- **Yet the victim of the violence was held responsible by the police.**
- **What aggravating circumstances can you recognize in this specific case?**
- **Who can be held responsible? What could the parties have done to prevent the tragedy?**

Conclusion

Hate crime is preceded by hate speech. Therefore, we have to take action in our online and offline environment to stop the spread of hate speech.

References

Practical way to combat hate speech in our online space:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77j7Wfussrc
https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/ether/hate-crimes-uk-victims-stories

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4. Incitement to violence

4.1. General considerations

If defining hate speech, we have seen, is influenced by legal, social, cultural contexts, incitement to violence is much less flexible in definitions. This helps us identify it easier and know to act against it.

4.2. Definitions and concepts

Incitement to violence is the category of hate speech that contains a direct threat against a social group. In American jurisprudence - that strongly defends freedom of speech - hate speech is only punishable if it incites immediate, actually named, seriously illegal action against a specific target group and the conditions for the act of violence to be provoked are also present in reality.

In criminal law, incitement is the encouragement of another person to commit a crime. Depending on the jurisdiction, some or all types of incitement may be illegal. Where illegal, it is known as an inchoate offense, where harm is intended but may or may not have actually occurred.

The Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights requires that any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.[12]

4.3. Activities

Name of the activity: Where is incitement to violence nowadays?

Type of activity: Online activity/face to face activity

Age group: 14+

Duration of the activity: 45 minutes

Task: Participants will analyze incitement to violence in the media and reflect on it.

Objectives/Expected results:

Becoming aware what does incitement to violence mean and share examples, personal stories about the concept.

Necessary materials: Internet access, pencils and A2 poster alike sheets of paper

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[12] nternational Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 20, 2

Facilitation of activity (flow):

1. Split the group in 4-5 small groups (min of 3 people/group)
2. Each group tackles a social group, which faces nowadays (in the past 2 years) incitement to violence and describes the group and its situation as reflected in the media and the causes for the violent attacks at their behalf.
3. Design a poster which could be used in order to diminish incitement to violence against this social group.
4. Each group will have max. of 20 minutes work and 5 minutes to present the results. Please use the internet for further examples and resources.
5. **Reflection:**
a. Each participant will reflect on the activity, by using one of the following reflection questions:
   - How did this activity develop your knowledge about incitement to violence?
   - How did you feel about the topic during the exercise?
   - What would your suggestion be to media portals in order to reduce the incitement to violence messages/initiatives nowadays?

Tips for the facilitator:

Be aware of the time limit for the activity and be aware to prepare at least 3-4 examples of social groups who face incitement to violence, for ex: homosexual people, Jewish people, minority groups, Roma people, etc.

4.4. Case study: Holocaust Denial - Crime

Findings

On 16 April 2015, in a final judgment of the Szeged District Court, V. Z. was found guilty of publicly denying the sins of the National Socialism. The defendant made the following comment under an online report on Rainer Höss (Höss is a well-known activist against European neo-Nazism, his grandfather was the commander of the Auschwitz death camp) on the Origo news portal on 21 November 2014:

"Let's leave this holokamu (holo-fake – fake, invented holocaust), and even if it is true, what this man has to do with the actions of his grandfather???"

The defendant later regretted his deed and apologized in a letter to Tett és Védelem Alapítvány (Action and Protection Foundation, that organized the Holocaust memorial event in connection with which the article in question was born).

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Synopsis

The case study focuses on the topic of Holocaust denial. In a broader sense it addresses the question of limitations of freedom of expression and tackles the question: How freedom of speech relates to disinformation?

At the trial, the accused pleaded guilty and reiterated his regret and remorse. The court found the accused guilty, but in view of the mitigating circumstances, in particular his confession and remorse, did not impose a sentence, sentenced him to a six-month probation measure and, as a special rule of conduct, a visit to the Páva Street Holocaust Memorial Center.

Rainer Höss; his grandfather, Rudolf Höss, was the commander of the Auschwitz death camp, killing more than a million people, including 430,000 Hungarian Jews. As a human rights activist, Rainer Höss is trying to draw the attention of as many young people as possible to the fact that what should not have happened decades ago cannot happen again.

Main issues:

- The right to freedom of expression vs. the regulation of incitement
- Holocaust denial is explicitly or implicitly illegal in many European countries, as part of laws banning the revival of Nazi organizations and Nazi propaganda, or by laws banning the denial of genocide in general.
- Drawing the right line between incitement, incitement to hatred and freedom of expression is also a source of significant international debate.
- In Hungary, "Whoever denies, doubts or insignificantly publicizes the genocide and other acts against humanity committed by the national socialist and communist regimes shall be punished by imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years" since 2010.

- In Hungary, before April 10, 2010, Holocaust denial was not punishable if it remained within the framework of expression and did not couple with incitement to hatred.
- This case is among the first final judgements in Hungary.

The analysis of this case takes focuses on the following theoretical concepts:

- **Freedom of expression**

Freedom of Expression is protected by Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It means that You have the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of your choice without interference and regardless of frontiers. This means: You have the freedom to express yourself online and to access information and the opinions and expressions of others.

Freedom of expression is not an absolute right. What does it mean?
It means that freedom of expression can be limited if the restriction:

- Is provided by the law
- Pursues a legitimate aim
- Is necessary for a legitimate purpose[13]

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[13] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wg8fVtHPDag

- **Legal regulation of Holocaust denial / One of the restrictive forms of freedom of expression**

According to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, "Holocaust denial seeks to erase (or change) the history of the Holocaust. In doing so, it seeks to legitimize Nazism and antisemitism."

The European Court of Human Rights case law has relatively broadly approved restrictions regarding Holocaust denial. In these cases, the Strasbourg court generally rejected claims alleging violations of freedom of expression without a trial, accepting that **statements denying the Holocaust do not enjoy protection of freedom of expression.** Thus, a category of false statements of fact has been created, which is clearly outside the scope of protected speeches. According to the Constitutional Court of Hungary, "The rules on protected expression of opinion do not cover false statements of fact", however The Court emphasized on several occasions that, although false statements of fact, as opposed to value judgments and criticisms, are not in themselves constitutionally protected, consideration of all the circumstances of a given case may lead to the conclusion that a false statement is not constitutional prosecution. It is important to differentiate between facts and opinions.

- The Holocaust is one of the most thoroughly documented historical events.
- The "Holocaust denial" seeks to refute and invalidate the well-founded facts of the Nazi genocide affecting European Jews.
- Spreads misleading information and based on the denial of historical facts.
- Among the often-denied facts is that the killing of six million Jews did not take place at all during World War II; that the Nazis had no official policy or intention to exterminate the Jews; and that there were never gas chambers in the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp.[14]

Main points to consider:
- The freedom of expression is not an absolute right. Can be restricted by the law, by a legitimate aim or purpose.
- Holocaust denial is prohibited by the law – since the freedom of expression does not cover speech that can incite to discrimination and violence.
- We must differentiate between opinions and facts because people might have the right to their opinion, but spreading information like denying the Holocaust is regulated and prohibited by the law.

Discussion

The major problems identified upon analyzing the case are as follows:
- **Have you ever been restricted in expressing an opinion? (You can think of a situation when you had to wear a uniform, when you did not agree with others?)**
- **Give examples of cases where freedom of expression is limited!**
- **What do you think? Was the verdict fair in the case described above?**

Conclusion

Before sharing a news or information, check its authenticity! If you are unsure of the source, do not pass on the news! If you have an opinion, use "Form I"! Always add "in my opinion" to what you have to say. "Remember, your online activity, even if anonymous, will remain." Leave a comment only if you would also make it in person! Support your opinion with arguments and references. Explain why you came to this position.

References
https://tev.hu/jogeros-itelet-holokauszttagadasert/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wg8fVtHPDag
Koltay András: Az Emberi Jogok Európai Bírósága és a blaszfémia mint a szólásszabadság korlátja. Iustum Aequum Salutare, 2017/1.

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[14] Koltay András: Az Emberi Jogok Európai Bírósága és a blaszfémia mint a szólásszabadság korlátja. Iustum Aequum Salutare, 2017/1. 189

5. Teaching inclusiveness with media literacy

At the end of this chapter, we would like to share good practices and experiences with colleagues who are about to start training, which can help them plan their programs more effectively, adapting them to the needs of the target groups.

In addition to the experiences of previous projects with a similar theme, the chapter contains the results of pilot projects implemented within the framework of the InMedia partnership.[15]

From education for tolerance to changing the image of Roma / Influencer training for Roma Youth

The aim of the Roma Influencer Training was to the media representation of the Roma and train young Roma people who can effectively and meaningfully communicate both about the difficulties and values of their own community. The training was realized in the framework of a Horizon 2020 project.

The strength of the project is that it sees education for media awareness not in the narrow sense of strengthening analytical and filtering skills, but in "enabling" the young people involved. During the two half-year pilot period, the participants took part in a hybrid form of theoretical training and practical sessions, where, in addition to the specifics of social media interfaces, they could master the use of tools with which they could create creative, visually high-quality independent content.

The project highlighted a series of challenges that are worth considering when involving disadvantaged participants. According to Zsófia Somogyi-Rohonczy, the coordinator of the project, the most important thing is to know the life situation and circumstances of the participants. It is necessary to assess when, and for what period of time the target group can be involved, and what possible difficulties may stand in the way of their participation.

The available tools must be examined: Do the participants have a computer, internet access, the programs used for work, and the applications necessary to maintain communication? It is also necessary to assess the level of their existing knowledge. Do they have the basic skills needed to write emails and prepare a presentation, etc.? Everything that a facilitator might see as basics, should be questioned. Without this prior knowledge it is very difficult to plan the purpose of the training and the session. It might be useful to plan one or even two pilot periods with fewer participants and with a throughout observation.

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[15] Conclusions from the interview conducted by Artemisszió Foundation (HU) within the InMedia project

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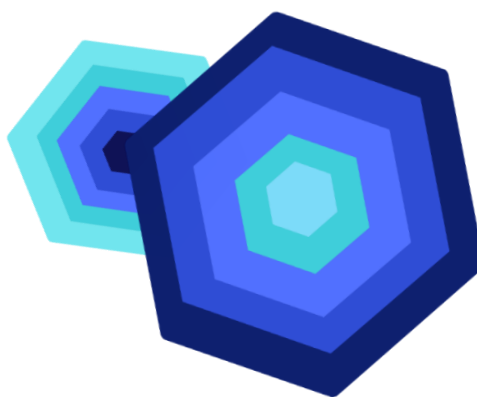Erasmus+ Programme
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The involvement of stakeholders, local organizations representing the community and professionals is very important not only from the point of view of recruitment, but also from the point of view of compiling the work plan. Coordination is the basis of the project's sustainability, so it is worth putting a lot of emphasis on it.

The recruitment should definitely be carried out together with the relevant organizations and key people belonging to the target group.

Regarding the compilation of the content of the program, two conflicting aspects have to be reconciled, which is no small challenge: one is that the ideal process is at least one year, since in addition to the content elements, participants who start from a disadvantaged situation often have to deal with negative self-definitions that can discourage them from work. It is often heard that "I don't even know how to do this", "I don't think I can finish the training". In addition, a commitment to a longer process is also very uncertain due to the family circumstances, work, and uncertain life situation of the participants. Therefore, in addition to flexibility, it is also important for the organizers that the content is attractive and that the participants have a predictable and plannable time schedule when defining the goals and to make it possible for blended, online and offline connection, and to make up for missed lessons - for example, by recording what was said.

During the process, individual mentoring and support for the use of online tools are also of utmost importance. It is also worth counting on the involvement of additional specialists here. Instead of complicated programs, it is worth striving to learn the confident use of a limited number of free, user-friendly applications that can even be used on mobile devices.

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