

European Union on how to combat disinformation and fake news



WIDE - Wider and Deeper EU
Proj. Ref. Num. 101176547
Jean Monnet Teacher Training





Training objectives

Main objective

Familiarising students with EU mechanisms and strategies to counter disinformation and developing critical thinking and media content analysis skills.

Specific objectives

- Understanding the definitions and mechanisms of disinformation spread
- Learning about EU strategies and tools to combat fake news
- Acquiring skills to recognise fake news and media manipulation
- Equipping teachers with teaching tools to teach students to critically analyse information
- Introducing media and digital education in the EU context



Training Program

Module 1: Introduction to the problem of disinformation

- 1.1. What is disinformation?
- 1.2. Mechanisms of disinformation spread
- 1.3. The role of social media and algorithms
- 1.4. Exercise

Module 2: EU action against disinformation

- 2.1. EU policy on disinformation
- 2.2. Code of practice on disinformation
- 2.3. The role of the European Digital Media Observatory
- 2.4. Exercise

Module 3: Information verification tools

- 3.1. How to recognize deepfakes and manipulated content?
- 3.2. Introduction to fact-checking tools
- 3.3. Artificial intelligence for content creation and disinformation
- 3.4. Exercise

Module 4: Media Education in School Practice

- 4.1. Challenges in Teacher work in the context of disinformation
- 4.2. Methods of teaching critical thinking - examples of Good Practice in media education
- 4.3. Recommendations for students
- 4.4. Discussion and Summary



Module 1

Introduction to the problem of disinformation





👆 Module 1: Introduction to the problem of disinformation

1.1. What is disinformation?

Definition of Disinformation according to the European Commission

Verifiable false or misleading information, created, presented and disseminated with the aim of obtaining economic gains or misleading public opinion, which may cause public harm.

Public harm includes threats to democratic political processes and policymaking, as well as to the protection of EU citizens' health, the natural environment, or security.

European Commission, Communication on combating disinformation (COM(2018) 236 final, 26 April 2018)

Disinformation is not a simple lie, or the transmission of false information; it is a trick (...). The aim of disinformation is to shape a certain type of perception, the effect of which is that the victim of disinformation takes actions that are beneficial to the disinformant.

/T.R. Aleksandrowicz, Fundamentals of Information Combat, Warsaw: Editions Spotkania, 2016, pp. 83-84./



👆 Module 1: Introduction to the problem of disinformation

1.1. What is disinformation?

Mis-information

information that is false but not intended to cause harm

Example: Someone shares false information about the supposed effectiveness of a home remedy for COVID-19, thinking it helps others.

Dis-information

information that is false and intentionally created to harm a person, social group, organization, or country

Example: An interest group intentionally spreads false information about a political opponent in order to influence the outcome of an election.

Mal-information

information based on reality but used to harm a person, organization or country

Example: Publishing a politician's private emails to discredit him before the election, even though they are true.

/C.Wardle, H.Derakhshan, Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making, Strasburg: Rada Europy, 2017, s. 20./

fake news – the deliberate spread of false information intended to manipulate public opinion clickbait – sensational or misleading headlines that encourage clicking, thus increasing their popularity propaganda – false or distorted information spread to influence political or ideological views conspiracy theories – unconfirmed stories suggesting that events or phenomena are part of a hidden conspiracy photo and video manipulation – the distortion of visual material to mislead or create a false image of reality deep fakes – the creation of realistic fake images, videos or voice recordings using artificial intelligence half-truths – a combination of truth and false information that makes it difficult to detect disinformation internet trolls – users who deliberately stir up controversy and spread false information online



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1.1. What is disinformation?

Types/Methods of Disinformation

- **fake news** – the deliberate spread of false information intended to manipulate public opinion
- **clickbait** – sensational or misleading headlines that encourage clicking, thus increasing their popularity
- **propaganda** – false or distorted information spread to influence political or ideological views
- **conspiracy theories** – unconfirmed stories suggesting that events or phenomena are part of a hidden conspiracy
- **photo and video manipulation** – the distortion of visual material to mislead or create a false image of reality
- **deep fakes** – the creation of realistic fake images, videos or voice recordings using artificial intelligence
- **half-truths** – a combination of truth and false information that makes it difficult to detect disinformation
- **internet trolls** – users who deliberately stir up controversy and spread false information online

- **social bots** – automated accounts used to manipulate opinions on social media by spreading disinformation
- **cherry picking** – selectively presenting facts that fit a particular narrative while omitting other relevant data
- context manipulation – presenting truthful information in a way that changes its interpretation and meaning
- **selective disclosure of information** – choosing only those pieces of information that suit a specific narrative while omitting other equally important aspects of the situation
- **delayed release of information** – publishing information with intentional delay to conceal certain events or alter public perception
- **image manipulation** – altering photographs, images or videos to ascribe them a different meaning and evoke specific emotions in the audience
- **skewed statistics** – presenting statistical data in a way that hides the true picture of the situation
- **reinterpretation of facts** – transforming true facts in a way that changes their meaning or interpretation to serve specific purposes



Module 1: Introduction to the problem of disinformation

1.1. What is disinformation?

Fake News

Fake news are deliberately false or misleading pieces of information published to manipulate public opinion or gain political, financial or ideological benefits.

Key Features of Fake News

- Sensationalism and emotional impact – often provoke strong emotions (outrage, fear, joy)
- Lack of credible sources – not supported by facts or reliable evidence
- Image and context manipulation – use of doctored photos, videos or quotes taken out of context
- Rapid spread – especially on social media, aided by algorithms and shares



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1.1. What is disinformation?

EFFECTS OF DISINFORMATION

Social

- **Societal polarisation** – false information often deepens divisions, pitting different social groups against each other
- **Erosion of trust in institutions** – fake information can undermine the credibility of governments, media and scientists
- **Deterioration of public debate** – an influx of false information makes constructive discussion and substantive conversations more difficult

Political

- **Election manipulation** – false information can influence voters' decisions, altering election outcomes
- **State destabilization** – hostile states may use false information to weaken political opponents and destabilize governments
- **Propaganda and authoritarianism** – governments may employ false information to control the narrative and suppress opposition

Health

- **pread of harmful theories** – e.g. anti-vaccine movements leading to decreased immunization rates and the resurgence of dangerous diseases
- **Dangerous medical practices** – people may forgo effective treatments in favor of false therapies (e.g. using pseudo-medicines instead of evidence-based medicine)

Economic

- **Fraud and financial losses** – false information about companies can affect stock markets, trigger financial panic or facilitate online scams
- **Loss of jobs** – companies may suffer reputational damage due to false information, leading to layoffs and bankruptcies

Psychological

- **Fear and panic** – false information can lead to mass hysteria (e.g. during a pandemic)
- **Deterioration of mental health** – an overload of false information can cause stress, paranoia and uncertainty
- **Cognitive impairments** – people may struggle to distinguish truth from falsehood, leading to the so-called “information bubble” effect



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1.2. Mechanisms of spreading disinformation

Phases and elements of information disorders

Disinformation, as a phenomenon related to information disorders, should be considered in three key elements:



Sender (Agent)

Who created, produced and distributed the information?

What were their motivations?



Message

What was the type of message?

What format was it presented in?

What were its characteristics?



Recipient (Interpreter)

How did the recipient interpret the message?

What actions (if any) did they take in response to the information they received?

Considering these three elements helps to better understand the mechanisms of disinformation and its impact on society..



👆 Module 1: Introduction to the problem of disinformation

1.2. Mechanisms of spreading disinformation

The Life Cycle of Disinformation

1. Creation of Disinformation

- Deliberate lies or manipulations – individuals, organizations or states create and disseminate content intended to mislead or manipulate public opinion
- Misinterpretations – disinformation can arise from misunderstandings or misinterpretations of facts, which are then widely spread

2. Publication / Distribution

- Social media – crucial for spreading disinformation quickly to a wide audience
- Traditional media – newspapers, television or radio, especially when the topic is controversial or evokes strong emotions
- Blogs and websites – it's easy to create a site or blog that publishes false information and, with SEO optimization, reaches a broad audience
- Messaging apps – in private groups and forums, disinformation can spread at lightning speed

3. Spread

After publication, disinformation spreads rapidly:

- Contagion – users share or comment on the disinformation, the audience network expands, and the content gains popularity (especially if it is controversial, emotional or sensational, it quickly goes viral)
- Echo chambers – in closed groups (e.g. Facebook groups, online forums), like-minded individuals can reinforce the disinformation among themselves, making it harder to debunk

4. Reinforcement and Amplification

- Amplification by authorities – if well-known figures, influencers or politicians share or endorse disinformation, it gains credibility in the eyes of their supporters
- Repetition – the more often a piece of information is repeated (e.g. in the media, by acquaintances, across various platforms), the more likely it is to be accepted as true
- Confirmation bias – people are more inclined to believe information that matches their preexisting beliefs, which can lead to further circulation of disinformation within specific circles



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1.2. Mechanisms of spreading disinformation

5. Reactions and Debunking

Disinformation can be debunked or contradicted, but not always effectively:

- Fact-checking – organisations dedicated to verifying information can identify disinformation and expose its falsehood
- Advocates and experts – specialists, researchers or journalists often attempt to debunk disinformation by presenting evidence, studies and reliable information
- Outrage or criticism waves – in response to disinformation, especially on controversial topics, discussions and protests may erupt, leading to its public debunking

6. Resistance to Debunking

Disinformation is not always successfully debunked:

- Long-lasting influence – many people do not change their beliefs even after disinformation is debunked (due to psychological mechanisms such as confirmation bias or resistance to changing one's mind)
- “Backfire” effect – some individuals may continue to believe disinformation even after it is disproven, especially if the content was previously widely circulated
- Narrative shifting – even after original disinformation is debunked, its influence can persist through new, modified versions or theories that emerge in response to its refutation

7. Forgetting or Persistent Doubt

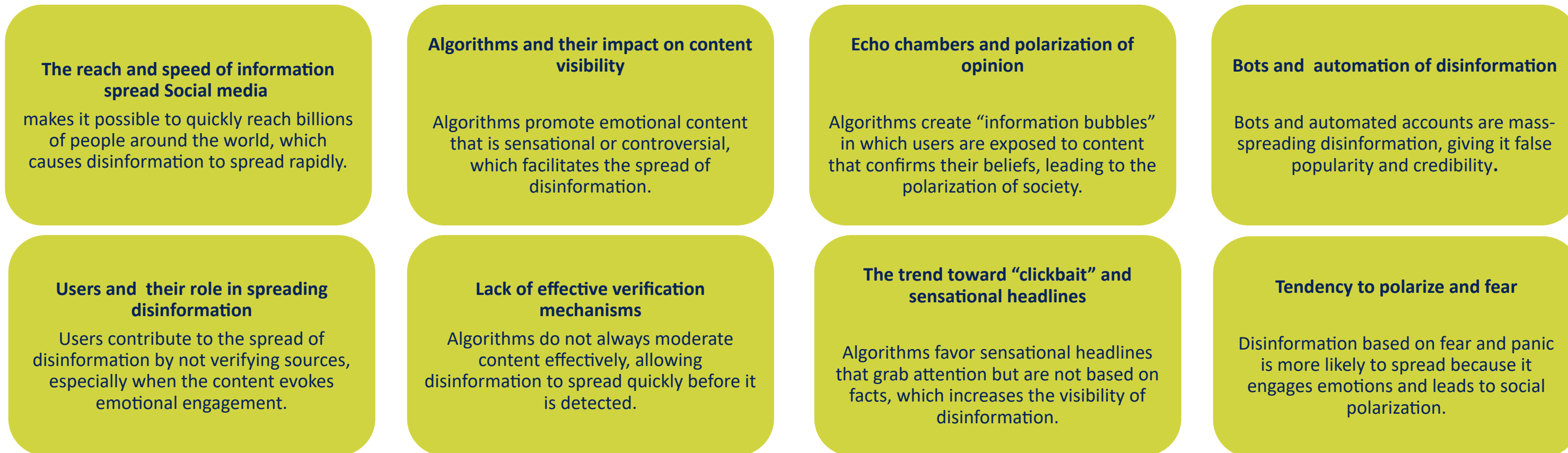
- Forgetting – if the disinformation was not sufficiently controversial, did not spread widely or was quickly debunked, it may be forgotten
- Persistent doubts – when disinformation has taken root within certain social groups, its refutation may have only a limited effect, and doubts can linger for a long time



👆 Module 1: Introduction to the problem of disinformation

1.3. The role of social media and algorithms

Modern technologies, fast, fast approach to a huge number of people, which makes them an ideal solution for spreading inaccessible information:





👆 Module 1: Introduction to the problem of disinformation

1.3. The role of social media and algorithms

Filter Bubble (information bubble)

A phenomenon where access to diverse information content is limited. This means that an individual, consciously or unconsciously, receives information only from certain sources that reinforce their preexisting beliefs and views.

Filter Bubble vs. Filter Bubble

Although these terms are often used interchangeably, the “filter bubble” has a slightly narrower meaning. It refers to the operation of online algorithms that select content based on our previous interactions on the web. As a result, the user receives information aligned with their interests and views, while other content is filtered out.

Echo Chamber

A closed communication environment in which users mutually reinforce their beliefs, and any conflicting information is ignored or actively countered. In such a setting, individuals are primarily exposed to content that confirms their existing opinions, which can lead to the strengthening of their biases and a false sense of certainty.

Content Personalization Algorithms

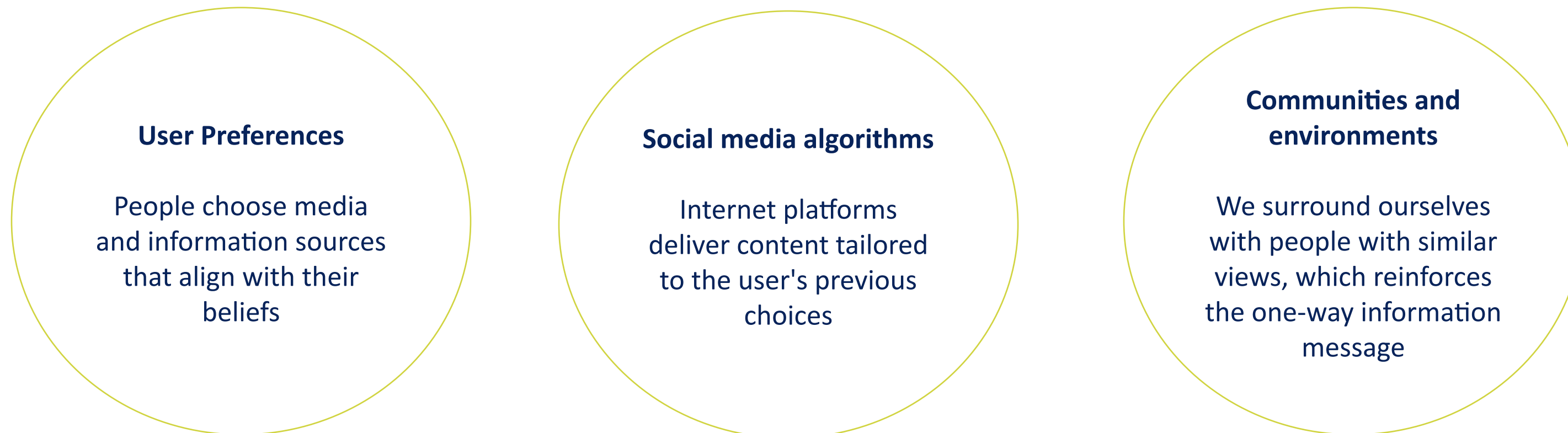
Systems that analyse user data (such as preferences, browsing history, interactions with specific content, demographics) to tailor displayed information to individual needs and interests, thereby placing the user within a filter bubble / echo chamber.



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1.3. The role of social media and algorithms

How do information bubbles and echo chambers form?





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1.4. Exercise: Analysis of specific cases of fake news from different sources (group discussion)

Group 1

Contaminated Milk in Germany

In 2017, social media posts emerged suggesting that milk produced by a popular German brand had been tainted with dangerous chemicals, triggering panic among consumers in Germany. Supposed photos of contaminated milk began circulating online, raising fears that the products could pose health risks.

Within hours, the false claims spread rapidly across social media, as users shared posts and warnings. Many people started removing that brand's products from store shelves, even though no health authority had confirmed any danger.

Group 2

Arrest of Polish Tourists in Spain

In 2018, posts appeared on a popular social media platform suggesting that a group of Polish tourists had been arrested in Spain on charges of illegally gathering plants. The post included photos of the "arrested tourists" and dramatic descriptions of the alleged incident, which was said to endanger the safety of Poles abroad.

Despite no confirmation from Spanish authorities, the claims spread rapidly among Polish users. Many people began expressing concern and fear for their compatriots' safety, unaware that the entire incident was fabricated.

Instructions:

1. Identify the sources of disinformation. What content elements make the fake news credible to users?
2. Discussion on spread. Which social-media mechanisms contributed to the rapid dissemination of these reports? What emotions were leveraged to share them?
3. Consequences of disinformation. What social, health, economic and reputational impacts did these false claims have?
4. Proposed actions. What measures should be taken to prevent the spread of similar fake news in the future? What can users, social-media platforms and the press do in this regard?
5. Presentation. After completing the analysis, each group prepares a brief presentation summarising their findings and proposed solutions.



Module 2

EU action against disinformation





👆 Module 2: EU action against disinformation

2.1. EU policy to combat disinformation

The European Union has adopted a **comprehensive strategy to combat disinformation**, which includes legal regulation, cooperation with digital platforms and public education. The European Union is taking a range of actions to combat disinformation, which poses a serious threat to democracy and social cohesion.

EU Code of Practice on Disinformation

In 2018, the European Commission adopted the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation, a voluntary commitment for online platforms, advertising agencies and others to take action against disinformation. The Code includes increasing transparency of political advertising, limiting the creation and dissemination of fake accounts and promoting media education. In 2022, the Code was updated to better address the challenges of disinformation.

Action Plan against Disinformation

In 2018, the European Commission adopted an Action Plan against Disinformation, which aims to strengthen the EU's capacity to identify, monitor and respond to disinformation. The plan includes, among other things, setting up a network of disinformation monitoring centres, supporting cooperation with online platforms and promoting media education among citizens.

Funding projects to combat disinformation

The EU funds various projects to combat disinformation, such as research initiatives, educational campaigns or the development of fact-checking tools. An example is a project to establish and assess measures to counter disinformation, misinformation, harmful information, fake news and conspiracy theories.

Approach to Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference

The EU has adopted the FIMI (Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference) conceptual framework, which focuses on interference in the political processes of Member States through disinformation and information manipulation. This framework includes, among other things, an analysis of the techniques used by external actors, such as Russia and China, to destabilise European societies.



👆 Module 2: EU action against disinformation

2.1. EU policy to combat disinformation

The main pillars of the EU's policy against disinformation

Legal regulations

- Digital Services Act (DSA) – imposes obligations on large internet platforms in terms of content moderation and algorithm transparency.
- Disinformation Code of Practice – voluntary commitments by internet platforms (including Google, Meta, TikTok) to limit fake news.
- Disinformation Action Plan (2018; 2022) – a strategy to strengthen society's resilience to false information.

Monitoring and analyzing disinformation

- European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) – an institution that analyzes fake content and works with fact checkers.
- StratCom Task Force (EEAS) – a unit that combats foreign propaganda, including Russian disinformation.

Collaboration with online platforms

- Require technology companies to report on their actions against disinformation.
- Support tools to verify facts and flag suspicious content.

Media education and societal resilience

- Educational programs that teach critical thinking and recognizing fake news.
- Supporting independent media and investigative journalism.



Module 2: EU action against disinformation

2.1. EU policy to combat disinformation

Main EU Departments and Units for Combating Disinformation

- **European External Action Service (EEAS)** – responsible for the StratCom Task Force, which monitors and counters Russian disinformation. Manages a network of experts and runs information campaigns.
- **Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT)** – develops regulations for online platforms (e.g. the Digital Services Act).
- **Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM)** – monitors disinformation narratives and conducts information campaigns.
- **Directorate-General for Home Affairs (DG HOME)** – supports Member States in countering hybrid threats, including disinformation.
- **European Council & General Secretariat of the Council (EC, GSC)** – coordinates Member State actions to combat disinformation.
- **European Parliament (EP)** – carries out analyses and studies on the impact of disinformation on the EU.
- **European Commission (EC)** – cooperates with online platforms and implements anti-disinformation regulations.



👆 Module 2: EU action against disinformation

2.1. EU policy to combat disinformation

EU's Approach to Combating Foreign Information Manipulations and Interference (FIMI)

In response to the rise in information attacks—especially after Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the 2022 aggression against Ukraine—whose aim is to influence political processes in the EU, deepen social divisions and disrupt free debate, the EU counters hostile uses of technology and tactics such as increased automation, the deployment of artificial intelligence in FIMI campaigns (including bots, deep fakes) and election meddling.

- **EU Priority:** Effectively responding to Foreign Information Manipulations and Interference (FIMI) as part of countering hybrid threats
- **Common principles:** Since 2022, the EU has agreed on unified definitions, detection methods and analysis protocols for FIMI to facilitate information sharing among Member States
- **Challenge:** Establishing a coordinated response system at the EU level and enforcing sanctions effectively
- **FIMI Toolbox:** Key actions within this framework to counter threats from state actors like Russia and non-state entities
- **EEAS response options:** The European External Action Service proposed four response strategies based on incident severity: Ignore: No reaction, to avoid amplifying manipulation; Contain: Reporting inauthentic networks and content to platforms; Minimize: Removing fake accounts and disinformation content; Redirect: Guiding audiences toward reliable information



Module 2: EU action against disinformation

2.2. Code of Conduct on Combating Disinformation

Voluntary initiative created by the European Commission in 2018, aimed at cooperation with technology giants and online platforms (Meta, Google, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok and others) in the fight against disinformation. The Code of Practice includes actions such as promoting transparency of political advertising, removing fake accounts, preventing algorithmic manipulation and improving overall transparency on online platforms.

In 2022, the Code was updated to better address evolving disinformation threats, such as COVID-19 pandemic falsehoods, the war in Ukraine and pre-election manipulation.

- **Transparency of political advertising** – platforms must ensure transparency of political ads, including information on sponsors, targeting and campaign expenditures.
- **Limiting algorithmic manipulation** – platforms are required to prevent algorithmic manipulations that can facilitate disinformation.
- **Countering fake accounts and bots** – platforms should implement measures to detect and remove fake accounts and bots spreading disinformation.
- **Education and awareness raising** – promoting disinformation education and developing citizens' critical-thinking skills.

- **Strengthening election protection against disinformation** – platforms must monitor and respond to disinformation, especially during pre-election periods, to safeguard electoral processes.
- **Reducing the impact of disinformation on public health** – actions aimed at limiting health-related disinformation, for example concerning pandemics and vaccines.
- **Increasing transparency of sponsored content** – platforms must ensure clarity around sponsored content so users know which posts are advertisements.
- **Protecting younger users** – platforms should shield younger audiences from disinformation and harmful content.



Module 2: EU action against disinformation

2.3. The role of the European Digital Media Observatory

The European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) plays a key role in the EU's fight against disinformation.

Its main tasks are:

- **Monitoring and analysis of disinformation** – identifying trends and strategies used to spread fake news
- **Collaboration with fact-checkers** – bringing together independent experts and journalists to verify content authenticity
- **Support for researchers and research institutions** – providing data and tools for disinformation analysis
- **Public education** – organising awareness campaigns and supplying educational materials on disinformation and digital media
- **Advice to EU institutions** – assisting in the development of regulations and strategies to counter false information

EDMO has been operational since 2020 and collaborates with media organisations, universities and information-security experts.



Module 2: EU action against disinformation

2.4. Exercise: Proposals for EU action to combat disinformation in education

Group 1

What educational tools and media literacy programmes should be developed at EU level to help teachers effectively teach students about disinformation?

Group 2

Could cooperation between secondary school teachers in different EU Member States in sharing experiences and educational materials improve the effectiveness of teaching about disinformation?

Group 3

Is there a need to create EU-wide educational materials on disinformation that could be used in secondary schools?

Group 4

How can secondary school teachers, together with EU fact-checking organisations, support students in learning to recognise and counter disinformation?



Module 3

Information verification tools





Module 3: Information verification tools

3.1. How to recognize deepfakes and manipulated content?

Deepfake is a video or audio manipulation created using artificial intelligence.

Detecting Deepfakes

- Detection challenges: Deepfakes are becoming increasingly sophisticated, making them hard to identify. Subtle changes in facial expressions, eye movements and voice are difficult to detect—even for algorithms. Thanks to artificial intelligence, deepfakes can appear nearly lifelike, further complicating detection.
- Key indicators: Unnatural eye or facial movements; poorly synchronized lip movements with audio; image quality issues (e.g. facial distortions) and audio anomalies (e.g. unnatural voice); unrealistic lighting or visual artifacts (e.g. blurring).

Tools and Methods for Verifying Deepfakes

- **Material comparison:** Compare the suspect footage with other recordings of the same person. Check if speech patterns and gestures are consistent.
- **Cross-check with reliable sources:** Pay attention to the origin of the footage, especially on social media. Always verify with independent, reputable sources.
- **Online detection tools:** Use available deepfake detection services (e.g. Sensity AI, Deepware Scanner, Microsoft Video Authenticator, Reality Defender, Sentinel), but remember they are not foolproof.



Module 3: Information verification tools

3.2. Introduction to fact-checking tools

Fact-Checking Tools

Fact-checking tools are platforms and applications designed to verify the accuracy of information—especially news items, articles and claims published in the media. They employ various methods such as source analysis, fact verification, comparison with reliable data and contextual research. Their aim is to identify disinformation, fake news and manipulation to help users distinguish true information from falsehoods.

Detecting Fake News

- **PolitiFact** – a global platform that checks the accuracy of claims, especially in the political context
- **Snopes** – a popular site dedicated to verifying information worldwide
- **Check Your Fact** – a fact-verification tool that evaluates the truthfulness of statements
- **FactCheck.org** – a website offering fact checks and analysis of political claims
- **Google Fact Check Tools** – Google’s tool for searching fact checks and assessing content credibility

Detecting Deepfakes

- **Sensity AI** – a platform offering video and image analysis to identify deepfakes
- **Deepware Scanner** – a tool using artificial intelligence to analyse faces and detect signs of manipulation
- **Microsoft Video Authenticator** – software that examines images and videos for manipulation traces, providing a likelihood score that the material has been altered
- **Reality Defender** – a tool developed by AI Foundation that analyses audio and video content for manipulation
- **Sentinel** – a platform employing advanced algorithms to analyse multimedia and detect deepfakes



Module 3: Information verification tools

3.3. Artificial Intelligence for Content Creation and Disinformation

Widely Available, Popular, Free AI-Powered Content Creation Tools, e.g.:

- **ChatGPT (OpenAI)** – for generating texts, answering questions, writing essays
- **Writesonic** – enables the creation of articles, blog posts and other content
- **QuillBot** – a tool for paraphrasing text and improving writing style
- **Rytr** – AI for generating marketing copy, blogs and emails
- **Slick Write** – an AI assistant that helps correct spelling and grammar

AI content-creation tools can sometimes produce so-called **“AI hallucinations.”** This means that artificial intelligence may generate false or incorrect information that sounds plausible. It can include inaccurate facts, misattributed quotes or fabricated data. Therefore, it is always worth verifying AI-generated content.



Module 3: Information verification tools

3.3. Artificial Intelligence for Content Creation and Disinformation

Detecting content created by AI-based tools

- **GPTZero** – detects AI-generated text by analyzing writing style
- **CopyLeaks** – offers a free version for detecting AI-generated content
- **Hugging Face's AI Detector** – uses machine learning to distinguish human-written text from AI-generated text
- **AI Text Classifier by OpenAI** – a tool that helps identify whether text was generated by GPT models
- **AI Detector by Grammarly** – a tool that helps detect AI-generated content by analyzing writing patterns and differentiating human and AI-created text



Module 3: Information verification tools

3.4. Exercise: Using Fact-Checking Tools to Analyze Specific News

Group 1

Fact-checking on social media

Teachers analyze popular Facebook or Twitter posts using fact-checking tools to assess the credibility of the information.

Group 3

Video Analysis

Teachers select potentially manipulated videos from the Internet, using tools to check the authenticity of the material.

Group 2

Analyzing Newspaper Articles

Teachers select an article from the online press and check the facts using tools.

Group 4

Assessing the credibility of information sources

Teachers select articles from various sources (e.g. websites, social media) and analyze them using fact-checking tools.



Module 4

Media education in school practice





👉 Module 4: Media education in school practice

4.1. Challenges in the work of a teacher in the context of disinformation

In an era of universal access to information, teachers face a new challenge – the fight against disinformation.

Main challenges

Recognizing and debunking disinformation

Many students lack the skills to assess the credibility of sources.

Teachers must help students analyze information, point out manipulation techniques, and show the differences between facts and opinions.

Developing critical thinking

Schools should teach analysis and interpretation of content rather than passive reception of information.

Teachers must encourage students to ask questions, verify content, and see the intentions of information senders.

Technology and social media as sources of information

Modern technologies facilitate access to content, but contribute to the spread of disinformation.

Teachers should be familiar with popular platforms used by students and educate them on responsible use of media.

Fake News and Conspiracy Theory Among Students

Some students may believe in conspiracy theories or fake news that align with their beliefs.

In such situations, teachers must be sensitive to providing evidence and referencing scientific sources.

Social pressure and disinformation among parents

Sometimes disinformation also reaches parents, which can lead to conflicts between school and family.

Teachers should be able to talk to parents, point to reliable sources of information and build trust.



Module 4: Media education in school practice

4.2. Methods of teaching critical thinking

Media education

- **Media education** is not just about learning to use technology, but above all about developing critical thinking and media content analysis skills.
- **Media education is the key to functioning** consciously in an information-driven world.
- Introducing **media education in schools** allows students to better understand how the media operate and to use them consciously.
- Act consistently – teach critical thinking and responsible information use.



👆 Module 4: Media education in school practice

4.2. Methods of teaching critical thinking

Media education – how to teach conscious use of media?

1	Teach understanding of media mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• explain how content personalization algorithms work• discuss the impact of media on society and opinion formation
2	Introduce fact-checking into your everyday learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• teach how to recognize fake news and disinformation• show how to check the credibility of sources
3	Organize debates and content analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• practice comparing the same information in different media• discuss manipulation in ads, headlines and social media
4	Teach responsible content ceation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• encourage students to publish content online consciously• organize media projects, e.g. creating reliable articles or social campaigns
5	Show the consequences of media influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• discuss cases of manipulation and their social consequences• analyze examples of ethics (or lack thereof) in journalism



👉 Module 4: Media education in school practice

4.2. Methods of teaching critical thinking

How to burst media bubbles and free students from the echo chamber?

Learn about algorithms and media manipulation

- Explained as a solution to the content personalization algorithm
- Show how the media can take advantage of a vacation

Organize analysis of different sources of information

- Compare news from different media
- Require the use of independent and international sources

Conduct debates and discussions

- Prepare topics that force you to look at things from different perspectives
- Encourage you to argue based on facts

Practice verifying information

- teach how to use fact-checking tools
- give tasks that involve checking the truthfulness of news

Challenge people to step outside their bubble

- require them to follow content from multiple sources
- organize a “week of reading other media”



Module 4: Media education in school practice

4.3. Examples of exercises for students

Fact-checking in practice

Goal: Learning how to verify information and recognize fake news.

Procedure:

Divide the class into groups and assign each group a few headlines (true and false). Students must check their authenticity using tools available on the Internet. Then they present their results and explain how they recognized fake news

Creating fake news

Goal: To raise awareness of the mechanisms by which disinformation is created.

Procedure:

Students work in pairs to create short “fake news” on any topic. Each group presents their story, and the rest of the class tries to identify what is suspicious about it. Then discuss what manipulation techniques were used and how they can be recognized in reality.

Analyzing Media Messages

Objective: Understand how media influences audiences and shapes opinions.

Procedure:

Choose a current media topic and provide students with articles from a variety of sources (e.g., liberal, conservative, international). Ask students to analyze how the same topic is presented in different media. Discuss the differences together and consider what persuasive techniques were used.

Experiment with information bubbles

Goal: Understand how algorithms affect the content we see online.

Procedure:

For a week, students follow various sources of information, including those outside their “bubble” (e.g. other political views, other countries). In the next classes, they share their observations: did the algorithms change the proposed content? Did they see new perspectives? Summarize how to consciously manage your media to avoid being locked into a single narrative.



Module 4: Media education in school practice

4.4 Discussion and Summary

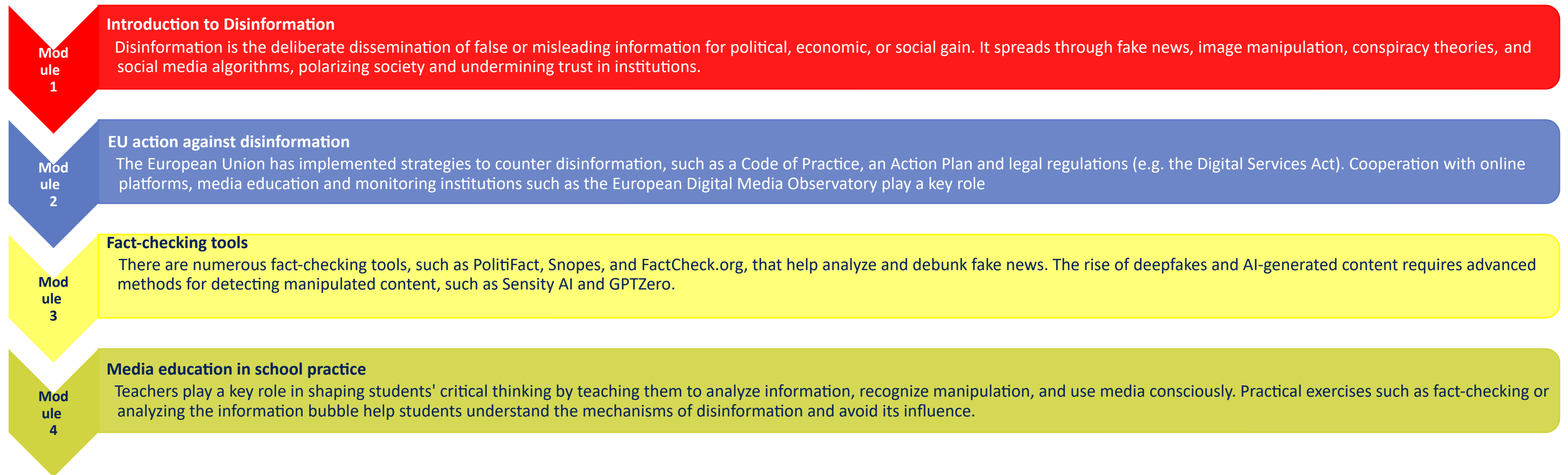
- **Media education is the teaching of a key skill in today's world**, where information reaches us from various sources at lightning speed.
- **Conscious media use allows students to avoid manipulation**, recognize disinformation, and make thoughtful decisions.
- **Verifying content, understanding how algorithms work**, and critically analyzing media messages help cultivate independent thinking and a responsible approach to information.
- Through media education, **students learn not only to consume content but also to create it ethically and responsibly**.
- In a world where **anyone can be a media producer**, the ability to **communicate mindfully becomes as important as content consumption**.



The role of the teacher in shaping students' media habits – how to be a guide and not a censor?



Summary





Don't be misinformed!
Teach conscious use of information!

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Proj. Ref. Num. 101176547
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