

## Media literacy program and material for adult educators

### ANNEX 3:

### Tackling Disinformation through Critical Digital Literacy



### Project APRICOT:

Attentive parental education for wise being and co-being in changing times

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

This intellectual output has been conceived and developed by the Strategic Partnership in APRICOT project under the coordination and responsibility of *Šiuolaikinių didaktikų centras/ Modern Didactics Centre* (LT).

**Thanks to all partners for their precious contributes:**

Apricot Training Management Ltd. (UK)

ItF Institut Kassel e.V. – Frauencomputerschule (DE)

Planeta Ciencias (ES)

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**Month/ Year:** November 2021

### 9.3 Annex 3: Tacking Disinformation through Critical Digital Literacy

The ability to think critically involves three things:

1. an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of one's experiences,
2. knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning,
3. some skill in applying those methods.'

Edward M. Glaser, 1941 (Source: Edward M. Glaser, An Experiment in the Development of Critical Thinking, Teacher's College, Columbia University, 1941)

To put it simply, thinking critically means examining in a logical way the things you come across.

#### Critical Thinking and Tackling Disinformation

By thinking critically we can:

- weigh up how much we trust the information we read;
- consider the soundness of the content and information communicated;
- question the author's statements.
- The aim of critical thinking is to try to maintain an 'objective' position.
- Fact-checking is not rocket science, it is driven by one basic question: "How do we know that?"

#### The 3 stages of applying critical thinking to recognising disinformation

##### Analyse -> Decode -> Take Action

##### 1. Analyse

In order to analyse disinformation, one can use many tools, three of which are presented here:

- A. The disinformation elements – agent, message, and interpreter
- B. The Traffic Light Fact-checker
- C. The CRAAP test

##### A. The Disinformation element:

In order for disinformation to be produced and disseminated it goes through 3 phases – Creation, Production and Distribution with 3 main elements:

- **Agent:** The agent is involved in all three phases of the disinformation chain and could be 3 different people – an agent who fabricated the message, an agent who produced the message, and an agent who distributed the message.

- **Message:** The content of the disinformation. This can be communicated by agents in person (via gossip, speech, etc.), in text (newspaper articles, social media posts, website content, etc.) or in audio/visual material (images, videos, TV, edited audio-clip, etc.).
- **Interpreter:** The ‘audience’ which is made up of different individuals, everyone of which interprets information according to his/her own values, beliefs, political positions and personal experiences.

## B. Traffic light fact-checker

In order to analyse a statement, it is useful to distinguish between what can be checked for truth and what cannot. For example

‘Old people said they don’t remember a winter as cold as this.’

Cannot be verified, whereas this sentence can:

‘On this day, the temperature in the city reached an all-time record low.’

News, speeches of public figures, social media posts and all information that is disseminated can be checked by searching for facts and/or figures whose truthfulness can be objectively verified.

- Green are statements that can be fact checked and backed-up with official sources of information;
- Red are statements that cannot be fact checked;
- Yellow are statements that lie in between the Red and Green.

## C. The CRAAP Method

A team of librarians from the USA devised a set of steps helping to determine whether a source is trustworthy.

The CRAAP method looks at 5 main criteria:

- Currency (timeliness)
- Relevance (importance)
- Authority (source)
- Accuracy (reliability)
- Purpose (reason)

**C** for *Currency - the Timelessness of the Resources*

- When was the information published or posted?
- How recent is the information?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Is the information current or out of date for your topic?
- Are the links functional?

### **R** for Relevance – the Importance to you

- Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e. not too elementary or advanced for your needs)?
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining this is one you will use?
- Would you be comfortable using this source for a research paper?
- What kind of information is included in the resource?
- Is the content of the resource fact or opinion? Is it balanced?
- Does the creator provide references or sources for data or quotations?

### **A** for Authority – the Source

- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
- Are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given?
- What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations?
- What are the author's qualifications to write on the topic?
- Is there contact information, such as a publisher or e-mail address?
- Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source?
- Are there advertisements on the website?

### **A** for Accuracy – Reliability and Truthfulness

- Where does the information come from?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
- Can you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge?
- Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion?
- Are there spelling, grammar, or other typographical errors?

### **P** for Purpose – why it Exists

- What is the purpose of the information? To inform? Teach? Sell? Entertain? Persuade? Manipulate?
- Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
- Is the information fact? Opinion? Propaganda?
- Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases?
- Is the creator/author trying to sell you something?
- Is it biased?

## **2. Decode**

This section includes:

- The stress matters exercise for decoding the message
- Fake news detective – tools to detect fake news

### **2.1. The Stress Matters**

Focus is a very important part of a message. Sometimes small changes in form can produce a quite different meaning. Decoding a message requires paying attention to small details that can drastically affect it. Here you will see how just changing the emphasis in a sentence produces a different meaning.

Same words, different messages with the change of emphasis....

1. On Tuesday you are going to speak to the director alone?
2. On Tuesday **you** are going to speak to the director alone.
3. On Tuesday you are going to speak to the **director** alone.
4. On Tuesday you are going to speak to the director **alone**.
5. **On Tuesday** you are going to speak to the director alone.
6. On Tuesday you are going to **speak** to the director alone.

...and the meaning?

- A. I will not speak with the director. You will.
- B. We will not come with you. You're on your own.
- C. The director is busy on Monday. He won't see you then.
- D. I will not speak with you any further. Take your problem to the director.
- E. Are you sure going to the director is the best idea?
- F. I have arranged a personal meeting for you. No more emails.

## 2.2. 'Fake News' Detective

Discovering what is real and what not can be quite challenging. Luckily, there are tools available that you can use:

- To test whether an image is real or has been modified;
- To examine the authenticity of a website;
- And even to find out if a news story can be trusted.

Still, it is up to your skill to put these tools to use and find out the truth.

**Manipulated images:** Sometimes fake images are easy to spot – especially if you know what you're being shown cannot be real. Since the early 20th century, political power has been using picture manipulation in order to remove their enemies or add their friends to historical photos.

Image editing has come a long way since then. Nowadays a good quality fake can be virtually indistinguishable from the real thing – often different real elements can be combined to create something new.

Especially dangerous are deepfakes (deep learning + fake) – replacing one person with another creating realistic looking images or even videos

Most people have fallen prey to some form of image manipulation. On this link, you will find 30 examples where:



- Parts of an image have been cut;
- Two images have been combined;
- A part of an image has been manipulated digitally;
- People deliberately staged a picture.

All in order to create an image that is far from reality. Sometimes just for fun. More often than not, for less innocent motives.

[https://www.boredpanda.com/fake-news-photos-viral-photoshop/?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=organic&utm\\_campaign=organic](https://www.boredpanda.com/fake-news-photos-viral-photoshop/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic)

What can be done?

- Reverse search: see where else the image is used on the internet
- Plagiarism search: see if a file or image is original or plagiarised
- Domain and back link check: Make sure you can trust the source of information
- Fact checking: Have a professional do the research for you

**TinEye:** Tin eye (<https://tinEye.com/>) is a useful website for reverse image search. If you drag an image or copy the URL the website will tell you where it is used on the net. In this way you can find out if the same image has been modified.

Another way to do this is by using **Google Images** reverse search

**Copyscape:** Copyscape to search if an image or a file is original, or plagiarised. You can access it at: <https://www.copyscape.com>

**FotoForensics:** Fotoforensics is a free service that provides an introduction into photo forensics; It is available on: <http://fotoforensics.com> . With its help, you can determine if a picture is real or computer graphics, if it was modified, and even how it was modified.

**Google Fact Check Explorer:** Google provides an opportunity to access fact checks made by journalists and researchers. <https://toolbox.google.com/factcheck/explorer>

**Snopes:** Snopes takes pride at being the oldest and largest fact-checking site on the Internet <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check>

### Advanced web tools to detect disinformation

- <http://whois.domaintools.com/> allows you to find out who is the owner of a particular domain, whether they are genuine or misleading, or perhaps may have a hidden agenda
- <http://backlinkwatch.com/> is a backlink checker. Backlinks are references leading to a website from another website.
- <https://hoaxy.iuni.iu.edu/> It's a tool to detect particular topics or articles. You can find out if the article is a piece of disinformation, but also if there are similar articles on the same topic.

### 3. Take action

This section includes:

- Reporting fake news – tools and methods for reporting
- Critical writing – useful tips to argument your position when sharing and commenting

#### 3.1. Reporting Disinformation

So now you know how to find out if a piece of media is a product of disinformation. How to follow it up? You can let the media know about a piece of disinformation. Most of them don't post them on purpose and will take action once you let them know.

Reporting disinformation on:

- Google;
- Facebook and Instagram;
- Twitter;
- And other useful tools.

**Reporting on Google:** Open the Chrome app . To the right of the address bar, tap More. At the bottom, tap Send feedback. Add details, including steps to help us recreate the issue you're experiencing. Explain what is wrong and don't forget to include a screenshot as evidence.

You can also:

- request that false information is removed from Google maps
- flag reviews, photos, videos, questions and answer
- NB. Before you do so, make sure you are familiar with Google's review and photo policies

#### Reporting on Facebook and Instagram

In order to report a piece of news as fake on Facebook, all you need to do is right click and flag it. The story will then be checked by an independent third party.

- If confirmed as incorrect by the independent party, people will be warned that what they are about to see is false.
- They can still view it for themselves and make their own opinion, though.
- Disputed stories will also provide a warning.

Independent actors offer more options on Facebook

- Graph.tips – experimental graph search
- StalkScan - a tool for scanning all public information on a profile, at the moments only works with your own



- WhoPostedWhat.com.- a keyword search for people who work in the public interest

### Reporting options on Twitter

Unfortunately, Twitter is a lot more limited than other platforms. It does not allow reporting a story as disinformation. You can still report tweets for violation of the terms of service. You will need to be creative with the reasoning.