



## Training Fiche Template

<b>Title</b>	PREVENTING AND RECOGNIZING FAKE NEWS
<b>Keywords</b>	News, fake news, information, misinformation, disinformation, news agency, deepfake
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Competence area</b>	<p><b>1. Information and Data Literacy</b>  <a href="#">Competences</a>  <input type="checkbox"/> Media Literacy  <input type="checkbox"/> Browsing, Searching and filtering data, information and digital content  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content</p> <p><b>2. Communication and Collaboration</b>  <a href="#">Competences</a>  <input type="checkbox"/> Engaging Citizenship through digital technologies  <input type="checkbox"/> Interacting with digital technologies for entertainment and culture</p> <p><b>3. Digital content creation</b>  <a href="#">Competences</a>  <input type="checkbox"/> Developing digital content</p> <p><b>4. Safety</b>  <a href="#">Competences</a>  <input type="checkbox"/> Protecting the environment  <input type="checkbox"/> Protecting health and well-being</p> <p><b>5. Problem Solving</b>  <a href="#">Competences</a>  <input type="checkbox"/> Creatively using Digital Technologies  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Identifying digital competence gaps.</p>
<b>Objective and Goal</b>	<p>The goal of this module is to support learners become more informed and critical consumers of news and information, better equipped to navigate the complex landscape of online media and distinguish between credible and unreliable sources by addressing two relevant DigComp 2.2. competences, respectively 1.2. Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content and 5.4. Identifying digital competence gaps.</p>



<b>Learning outcomes</b>	<p>By the end of this module you will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Understand and define the concept of fake news</li><li>➤ Differentiate between and other related concepts such as misinformation, disinformation, mal-information and de-information;</li><li>➤ Know and recognize the characteristics of fake news articles</li><li>➤ Understand the psychological and social factors making people more vulnerable to fake news, misinformation and disinformation;</li><li>➤ Critically evaluate and differentiate between reliable and non-reliable information sources</li><li>➤ Check the credibility of news sources</li><li>➤ Recognize and avoid fake news and misleading information.</li><li>➤ Recognize the dangers and negative society impacts of fake news and disinformation in digital era.</li><li>➤ Develop skills in checking the information or the news sources.</li><li>➤ Know where look for trusted information and how to access trustful news resources or providers.</li><li>➤ Develop abilities to avoid spreading fake news and prevent misinformation or disinformation.</li></ul>
<b>Contents arranged in 3 levels</b>	<p><b>Module name: PREVENTING AND RECOGNIZING FAKE NEWS</b></p> <p><b>1. Unit name: Understanding the fake news concept</b></p> <p>1.1. Introduction</p> <p>People have always used communication, with information being transmitted in different ways that evolved over time from direct communication (face-to-face dialogue) to indirect communication (written or printed texts and images). The evolution of communication methods has also resulted in changes in the structure of information and messages sent.</p> <p>Compared to traditional modes of communication (newspapers, radio, television), recent ones (the Internet, social media) have radically altered the methods and speed of news dissemination, allowing them to reach far more people in a short period of time.</p> <p>In the digital age, the rapid and widespread dissemination of information, as well as the desire for sensational, encouraged fake or incomplete news.</p>



## 1.2. DigComp 2.2.

The Digital Competence Framework for Citizen (DigComp) is a tool developed by the EC, providing a common understanding of what digital competence is. DigComp 2.2. is an updated version of the previous DigComp.

It is structured on multiple levels, covering 5 main competence areas: Information and Data Literacy, Communication and Collaboration, Digital Content Creation, Safety and Problem Solving. For each competence area, it defines a set of competences, along with example of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The contents of this module address two highly relevant digital competences as defined in DigComp 2.2., respectively 1.2. *Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content, under Area 1 Information and data literacy*, and 5.4. *Identifying digital competence gaps, under Area 5 Problem solving*.

The first competence, 1.2. Evaluating Data, Information and Digital Content, is described in DigComp as “to analyse, compare and critically evaluate the credibility and reliability of sources of data, information and digital content. To analyse, interpret and critically evaluate the data, information and digital content.”

This competence encompasses knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to address key issues in today’s society necessary to meet the increasing digital literacy requirements of today’s society, such as awareness of the fact that the online environment may contain biased information, including misinformation and disinformation and citizens should be able to evaluate the quality of those contents, the reliability of sources and understand that even if a topic is widely reported it doesn’t necessarily mean it’s true.

The other competence addressed by this module is related to user’s ability to identify and understand his/her own digital skill gaps and be willing to work on them, by developing a disposition to keep learning, seeking opportunities for self-development and keeping up-to date with the digital evolution.

We will help you acknowledge and understand some of the main factors (cognitive, emotional, social) that increase people’s vulnerability to fake news, and misinformation/disinformation in general.



### 1.3. What is fake news

Although it received significant attention from media and policy makers during the last years, the 'fake news' concept is rather difficult to define and delimitate from other forms of 'information disorders' (Wardle, C. 2020). Various online dictionaries, articles and even scientific papers provide different, broader, or narrower definitions and conceptual analyses.

With a simple Google search, you will find plenty of definitions. Here are just several examples:

"Fabricated information that mimics news media content in form but not in organizational process or intent." (Lazer et al., 2018).

"False or misleading information presented as news." (Wikipedia)

"Newspaper articles, television news shows, or other information disseminated through broadcast or social media that are intentionally based on falsehoods or that intentionally use misleading framing to offer a distorted narrative". (Kavanagh et al, 2018)

Many alternative terms are also used: 'junk news', 'pseudo-news', 'false news' and even pejorative words.

But no generally agreed upon definition seems to be available. This led to even more debate and difficult conceptual delimitations: 'Fake news reports exhibit a lack of truth, but they need not be literally false – they may just be misleading in that they state something that is literally true but conveys something false.' and '...inadvertent journalistic errors should clearly not qualify as fake news.' (Jaster & Lanius, 2018)

So, what is and what is not fake news, actually?

The authors cited above bring some useful clarifications. They identify two factors which must be present together in order for a piece of news to be classified as fake news:

- Lack of truth (false or misleading)
- Lack of truthfulness (the presence of intention to deceive)



They classify other types of unreliable news, e.g. journalistic errors gone viral, satire and parody, or highly selective reporting as 'problematic news'.

Other authors see fake news as a species of disinformation (Fallis, 2015)

Fake or misleading news could take various forms such as:

- misinformation;
- conspiracy theory;
- pseudoscience;
- propaganda;
- partisan news;
- sponsored content.

Therefore, fake news should be understood within context and complementary with other concepts such as misinformation and disinformation which we will approach in the following sections.

#### 1.4. Misinformation and disinformation

Disinformation is false or misleading content that is spread with an intention to deceive or secure economic or political gain, and which may cause public harm.

Misinformation is false or misleading content shared without harmful intent though the effects can be still harmful.

Apart from these 2 forms, some authors also differentiate between:

Mal-information, which refers to "true information is used with harmful intent" (Wardle and Derakhshan, 2018). "Typical mechanisms include, extrapolation/intrapolation, deformation, cherry-picking." (Marchetti, Mastrogiorgio, 2023). Those techniques are often used by yellow journalism (sensational journalism, without necessarily providing false content).

De-information refers to content that is true but results into an unintentionally fake message due to the lack of competence on the producer's side. (Marchetti, Mastrogiorgio, 2023).

An interesting and even more detailed typology of fake content, based on creators' intent and dissemination means has been



developed by the author Claire Wardle and explained in her article *Fake news. It's complicated*.

The infographic shows 7 types of mis and disinformation:

- Satire and parody (no intention to harm but has potential to fool)
- Misleading content (misleading use of information to frame an issue or individual)
- Imposter content (impersonation of genuine sources)
- Fabricated content (100% new and false content, designed to deceive and do harm)
- False connection (visuals, headlines or captions do not support the content)
- False context (genuine content shared with false contextual information)
- Manipulated content (when genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive)

Creating a comprehensive typology which is also easy to understand and retain is more difficult than it seems, especially that such content is dynamic, evolving and developing based not only on the creators' contribution but also on what users generate, pay attention to or share.

## **2. Unit name: The importance of identifying fake news**

### **2.1. Section name: Evaluating information**

Information or news can be evaluated according to:

- how it looks: text, image, sound – one or more features;
- corroboration between all the features of a piece of news or an article when (text, image, sound);
- source credibility and information provider (author, quote);
- author(s) gained competence(s);
- previously known facts about the news subject, compared to the ones in the news;
- scientific facts that can certify the information.

Fact checking



Fact-checking engines or websites can be used to check the accuracy of a text or a statement to determine whether it is true or false are available.

Several examples:

- FactCheck;
- PolitiFact;
- Snopes;
- Truth or Fiction.

Image checking

In order to check the credibility of an image, it can be used as an input query in search engines, the results obtained being related to it.

- Reverse image search engines – examples:
- Google Images
- TinEye
- Openverse (formerly known as Creative Commons Search)

## 2.2. Section name: How do fake news affect you?

According to Statista, more than 70% of Europeans encountered fake news on a regular basis. Although in some EU countries a significant percent of people (up to 45%) verified online information they were doubtful about, according to Eurostat, the EU average was 23% in 2021, with the lowest rates (>12%) in Romania and Lithuania.

Fake news, misinformation and disinformation affect the way people think, vote, the way they make decisions, their belief systems and behaviors. They can also polarize debates, and threaten health, security and environment at risk.

The level of trust in media has significantly decreased, and a majority of EU citizens see the fake news problem as a serious challenge to democracy. The EU acknowledges the fact that large-scale disinformation campaigns represent a major problem for Europe.

What make us vulnerable to fake news?



Exposure to false and misleading information, if not properly addressed, lead to formation of false beliefs. Multiple factors contribute and make people vulnerable:

- Cognitive: including an inclination towards intuitive thinking rather than analytical (lazy thinking), other cognitive failures such as neglecting source cues and counter-evidence, familiarity, etc.
- Socio-emotional: attractiveness, emotional charge of the information along with the emotional state of the receiver, the worldviews of the information consumer.

It is widely recognized that people tend to believe easier the news headlines that resonate with their world view, or when sources are perceived as similar to themselves or otherwise powerful and attractive. Sometimes, they do not differentiate between personal opinions and facts (often the case with, but not limited to, social media 'influencers').

And finally, there are contents so convincing and 'artfully' done that it is almost impossible for the regular citizen without special technology or knowledge to spot them (e.g. deepfakes).

### 2.3. Section name: Interaction with news

Time spent on news websites, the frequency of visits, and the type of news read allow technology to provide algorithms that can determine patterns for future information promoted to users. This is also valid for social media.

As mentioned before, fake news and misleading content evolves and adapts according to what people interact with, pay attention to and share. Always be careful about what you share, and if possible, report problematic content.

When accessing a news site and you are not sure about the address, it is recommended to type the name of the site in a search engine and access the official link provided in the results list instead of typing it in the upper address toolbar. This way, you avoid mistyping the address, which can redirect you to a fake website that imitates an original one.

On personal digital devices, bookmarks can be created for frequently visited news websites.





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### 3. Unit name: Advice and tips for recognizing and avoiding fake news

#### 3.1. How to spot fake news

Useful guidelines, infographics and checklists have been put together during the last years, to support citizens identify fake news, some of them being available in multiple languages.

Such an example is the 'How to spot Fake News' infographic, created by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). It underlines 8 aspects:

- The source (further investigate the source website)
- The author/s (are they credible/real?)
- The date (is it reposted old news no longer relevant for the current events?)
- Further reading (is there consistency between the headlines and the rest of the article?)
- Is it a joke? (parody/satire/any disclaimers?)
- Your own biases (could your own pre-existing beliefs affect your judgement?)
- Experts (if still not sure, asking an expert, librarian or using a fact checking website could help solve the issue)

#### 3.2. News providers - checking the information

EU policy makers and other stakeholders joined forces to improve trustworthiness of online media and counter disinformation. In 2022, a broad range of actors signed the Strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation, an EC document empowering the media industry to adhere to self-regulatory standards to combat disinformation.

During the last years various initiatives took place in an attempt to define clear indicators of trustworthiness for online news. Whereas some of these require a degree of expertise or involve larger-scale resources, here are several aspects you may want to take into consideration when assessing the trustworthiness of online news providers:

- Data on the provider's identity (is it clear who they are, when were they founded, what is their mission and scope, how are they financed? Type of ownership – public/private?)





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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is the providers' expertise field relevant to the topic of the published news?</li> <li>○ Is the journalist who created the piece of news an expert? Is his/her professional background verifiable?</li> <li>○ References – are they accessible and credible?</li> <li>○ Is the purpose of the stories clear? Why has the material been created? Does it serve any interests?</li> <li>○ Has the provider been involved in sharing/promoting fake or misleading news before? If errors were discovered, did they corrected them and raised public awareness?</li> </ul> <p>3.3. Reliable news sources – examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Euronews - European television news network</li> <li>• European Commission - Press corner</li> <li>• BBC The British Broadcasting Corporation</li> <li>• Forbes - global media company</li> </ul>
Glossary	<p><b>Disinformation:</b> false or misleading content that is spread with an intention to deceive or secure economic or political gain, and which may cause public harm.</p> <p><b>Misinformation:</b> is false or misleading content shared without harmful intent though the effects can be still harmful.</p> <p><b>Deepfake:</b> an image or recording that has been convincingly altered and manipulated to misrepresent someone as doing or saying something that was not actually done or said</p> <p><b>Echo chamber:</b> according to DigComp, the term refers to “situations in social media and online discussion groups in which beliefs are amplified or reinforced by communication and repetition inside a closed, insulated system. Participants usually receive information that reinforces their existing views without encountering opposing views.”</p> <p><b>Filter bubble:</b> “can result from personalised searches on the inter-net and/or social media when an algorithm selectively guesses what information a user would like to see based on information about the user, such as location, past click-behavior and search history. (DigComp 2.2.)”</p>
Practical advices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify fake news, it is important to check the source of information or the news provider - is the news author mentioned? Is news presented on an official Internet site?</li> <li>• Try to critically evaluate the news content, to see if it is a true or an impossible one.</li> </ul>





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learn how to make the difference between an opinion and a fact.</li><li>• Check the date of the events presented in the news; some 'news' refer to events that are not up-to-date.</li><li>• Only get news from real and credible sources.</li><li>• Do not hesitate to double check the news that seem too good to be true, too weird or too reactionary.</li><li>• Check the official national press agencies or international ones (e.g. Reuters, Associated Press, France Presse).</li><li>• Check whether the news is "satire" or contains any disclaimers.</li><li>• Avoid news sources where texts contain a lot of grammar mistakes, missing letters, many misspelled words.</li><li>• Avoid online news sources that contain many pop-up windows, too many commercials or links to weird news.</li><li>• Double check news that seem too emotional or too repetitive.</li><li>• Avoid news that promote miraculous healings and cures.</li><li>• Be aware of the sensationalism in news stories.</li><li>• When receiving news by email / phone / other personal accounts make sure you know the sender; never access links received with this type of news message.</li></ul>
Self-evaluation (multiple choice queries and answers)	<p>1. Deepfake technology:</p> <p>a) recognizes fake news <b>b) produces fake images, recordings or video calls</b> c) none of the above</p> <p>2. The purpose of spreading fake news can NOT be:</p> <p><b>a) scientific</b> b) political c) financial</p> <p>3. What makes news to be credible?</p> <p>a) promote miraculous healings and cures b) headlines and images do not support the content <b>c) contains verifiable facts, sources or quotes</b></p> <p>4. In the news media, AI (artificial intelligence) can be used to:</p> <p>a) author and produce news b) distribute news base on user`s online behaviour <b>c) both</b></p>



	<p>5. Spot the fake news:</p> <p>a) Neil Armstrong was an American astronaut and aeronautical engineer.</p> <p><b>b) Louis Armstrong - first person to walk on the Moon!</b></p> <p>c) American astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first person to walk on the Moon in 1969.</p>
Resources (videos, reference link)	<p>Kaspersky.com, <i>How to identify fake news</i>, 2022, February 9.  <a href="https://www.kaspersky.com/resource-center/preemptive-safety/how-to-identify-fake-news">https://www.kaspersky.com/resource-center/preemptive-safety/how-to-identify-fake-news</a>.</p>
Related material	
Related PPT	OFFLINE_Course_Preventing and recognizing fake news_EN
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