



Question what you get. Media education to fight Disinformation

Educational Manual

Journalistic tools to fight disinformation

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Educational resources

- Think like a journalist. A course with essential journalistic tools to identify disinformation
- Ready to use prototype national courses. Teacher to teacher: share your learnings
- Hands on: creating your own digital resources
- QYourself in action: when theory comes to the classroom

1. Introduction

QYourself is a Media and Information Literacy (MIL) project that aims to **transfer basic journalistic tools and knowledge** to teachers in different educational contexts **to fight disinformation**. Our educational resources have been designed collaboratively between trainers, university researchers and fact-checkers, so that teachers can **integrate journalism techniques into regular classes** in a simple way.

The project incorporates a **strategic alliance between two areas of knowledge** that are fundamental and complementary in addressing the challenge posed by disinformation: **Journalism**, which proposes what theoretical and practical notions can be useful in dealing with it, and **Education**, which deals with how to implement that knowledge in the classroom.

During the project we have developed **Open Educational Resources (OER) based on the journalistic method and designed to be integrated into different educational environments** with the aim of developing the necessary skills in a context of information explosion that makes it difficult to identify truthful content.

The resources include a **set of journalistic tools and knowledge**, so that teachers can work with their students on key aspects such as the origin of the information (**difference between issuer and source**), the **analysis of information sources**, the **distinction between information and opinion**, or the **identification of the elements of a news item**. Based on this common proposal, **each partner country - Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland and Greece - has designed its own version adapted to its educational reality**, and applied it during a teacher training course which can be accessed free of charge through this manual.

In addition, the project has developed **four digital training courses for teachers** on the pedagogical use of social networks, the **creation of visual content with Canva**, the management of **virtual classrooms with Moodle** and the production of **educational videos**, whose materials have also been collected as reusable resources in this manual.

Finally, **real examples of classroom application** have been documented to show how participating teachers have implemented these strategies in a variety of contexts. All these resources are available in six languages and have been designed to facilitate their use, adaptation and dissemination among education professionals.

This handbook provides information about the phenomenon of **disinformation in the European context**, as well as proposals put forward by the Academy to strengthen **Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in educational environments**. It also offers information about how students and teachers perceive disinformation and media literacy, the way students consume information, and contributions from experts in MIL, with the aim of offering a global vision of the current challenges and the strategies needed to tackle disinformation in the classroom.

All these contributions come from a **research** carried out in the framework of the project, in which **hundreds of students, teachers and experts in misinformation and media literacy have participated**. The diagnosis has allowed us to identify educational needs, and to outline the **design of the most effective strategies**, always taking as a reference the European Framework for Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu) and the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation, the visualisation of which can be found in Annex 2 of this handbook.

In addition, the handbook provides information on the **methodology** we have used to design our educational resources. The theoretical and practical contents have been selected after having reviewed and adapted the university training of the Bachelor's Degree in Journalism according to three criteria: **competence and media and information literacy, journalistic method, and teaching orientation**. Teachers will find here the competences and learning outcomes that the project aims to transfer, as well as the main theories of communication and journalism that will be useful to reflect on the phenomenon of disinformation.

Finally, the handbook concludes with the **Open Educational Resources (OER)** generated during the project, which will be linked to the **QYourself website toolbox**, including social media spaces for educators to discuss the teaching challenges encountered. QYourself will therefore be useful for all teachers who wish to increase reflective media experiences in the classroom, with the aim of enabling their **students to understand and use the information they receive in a more critical and responsible way**.

2. X-ray of a problem: disinformation in the EU

The **fight against disinformation** has become a **political priority for the European Union**, because it poses a **threat to the founding values of the Union**, and because it poses one of the greatest risks to **global stability** alongside the climate crisis.

Defined by the European Commission as **verifiably false or misleading information** which is created, presented and disseminated for profit or to deliberately mislead the public, and which is likely to cause public nuisance, disinformation is not always easy to identify, because it often replaces truth with plausibility, combining false information with truth.

Although it is not a new phenomenon, the digital age allows for an **unprecedented spread** of disinformation. Today, anyone can create content, disseminate it and share it through social networks or phone messaging apps. A scenario of over-information and disintermediation that makes it difficult to identify truthful information, causing uncertainty among people and fostering their polarisation.

Disinformation often pursues economic benefits, has ideological and electoral objectives or serves geopolitical interests. At its core, it seeks structural changes in the public sphere, **undermining citizens' trust in democratic institutions**.

People tend to believe disinformation messages because of a number of **cognitive and emotional factors**. Disinformation exploits our strong emotions to manipulate us and spread its message. Part of our human heritage is cognitive bias, which is why we tend, for example, to seek information that confirms what we already believe (**confirmation bias**). The algorithms of the internet and social networks, which know us very well because they know what content we consume, will serve it to us on a silver platter to reinforce our pre-existing beliefs.

Consuming **quality information** and knowing which media outlets provide it is essential because **information influences our decisions and interactions with others**. Poor quality information can lead us to make the wrong decisions or draw the wrong conclusions. This is what the instigators of disinformation want, and we all contribute to it when we share it, whether we do so consciously or not.

In the European Union, steps have been taken in the fight against disinformation. In this regard, the **EC Code of Best Practice on Disinformation** is a pioneering framework for tackling the spread of false or misleading information. Established in 2018, the Code of Best Practice was significantly strengthened in 2022, with the aim of being recognised as a Code of Conduct under the Digital Services Act. In February 2025, the Commission and the European Digital Services Committee approved the integration of the 2022 Code of Best Practices on Disinformation as a Code of Conduct on Disinformation in the framework of the Digital Services Act.

Among the European Commission's efforts to tackle disinformation is **Media and Information Literacy (MIL)**, defined by UNESCO as a set of indispensable skills to foster critical thinking in this constantly evolving digital landscape. MIL is a process through which people learn **skills to cope in this media ecosystem**, including the ability to understand and use the information they receive in a **more critical and responsible way**. This is the context of QYourself, which aims to transfer basic journalistic tools and knowledge to teachers in different educational contexts in order to fight disinformation.

The following sections address three key aspects: the importance of the European Framework for Digital Competence of Educators in the fight against disinformation, the proposals of experts to strengthen media and information literacy in educational settings, and the measures taken in five EU countries: Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland and Greece. All this information has been collected during desk research carried out by QYourself's partner organisations. The full research can be found in **ANNEX 1**.

2.1. Building bridges: DigCompEdu and the EU guidelines against disinformation

The **European Framework for Digital Competence of Educators** (DigCompEdu) is an initiative promoted by the European Commission. It aims to provide a common framework describing the digital competences that educators need to possess in order to effectively integrate technology into their pedagogical practice and improve teaching and learning in today's digital context. The **DigCompEdu framework** was developed in collaboration with education and technology experts from across Europe, and currently offers 22 digital competences divided into six main thematic areas:

1. Professional engagement
2. Digital resources
3. Teaching and learning
4. Assessment
5. Empowering learners
6. Facilitating learners' digital competence

Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training (European Commission, 2022) emerged in 2020 as an integral part of the **Digital Education Action Plan** (2021-2027). These guidelines are specifically designed to empower teachers and educators to train young people in digital skills and competences. This set of guidelines builds on several key initiatives, such as the **Action Plan against Disinformation**, the **European Action Plan for Democracy**, the **Digital Services Act** and the **updated Better Internet for Children strategy**.

Educators' digital literacy should help to combat disinformation, through the digital competences they acquire and develop in themselves, as well as in those they teach. Let us consider the main thematic areas into which the DigCompEdu digital competences are grouped to understand how they contribute to combating disinformation.

1. **Professional engagement** involves keeping abreast of the issues raised by disinformation and participating in professional development programmes focused on identifying and addressing them, as well as collaborating with colleagues and experts in the field.
2. The **competences grouped under the term “digital resources”** enable the effective and responsible use, creation and sharing of digital educational content, which plays a crucial role in combating disinformation. Educators can use or **create digital resources that teach learners to critically evaluate online information, identify reliable sources and recognise signs of disinformation.**
3. To address disinformation, educators can design **activities that develop critical thinking and analytical skills**, so that students can discern between truthful and deliberately false information.
4. **Assessment** can include questions about identifying disinformation, evaluating the credibility of sources and implementing strategies to combat disinformation.
5. **Empowering students to be critical and responsible in their consumption and production of online information** is essential to combating disinformation. Educators can foster students' self-efficacy by providing them with tools and strategies to navigate safely and effectively in the digital environment.
6. By facilitating the **development of learners' digital competence**, educators can help them acquire the skills necessary to recognise, resist and counter online disinformation. This involves teaching them to use tools and techniques to verify information, as well as to understand the reasons behind disinformation and how it can affect society.

ANNEX 2 presents some learning objectives, pedagogical practices, practical activities and reflections drawn from the Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training promoted by the European Commission that relate to these six DigCompEdu digital competence sets for educators. First, the document shows a graphic, which establishes a connection between both documents, with the aim of helping teachers to contextualise their educational projects and activities. Then the document also presents SWOT analyses for four specific groups (senior, adults, migrants and young people), based on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that may arise when working with these groups within the framework established by these two European reference documents.

2.2. Educating in the digital age: the role of Media and Information Literacy (MIL)

Most of the articles and studies presented converge on a similar approach. The authors agree on the **significant digital transformation and its impact on various areas of society,**

including education. Therefore, the priority importance of digital literacy and technology training is recognised, suggesting its integration into the academic curriculum.

Special emphasis is placed on the **transversality of media literacy** and its close relationship with **critical thinking**, which enhances understanding and dialogue among students. In addition, the relevance of the role of the teacher is highlighted. However, in general, a high percentage of teachers with little digital training is reported, highlighting the need to improve this situation.

Specifically, in Greece, despite clear intentions to improve the current reality, the conservative tradition in education hinders progress towards greater media literacy in the education system. In the case of Italy, the low level of digital skills of the population, with 51% of the working age population not using the Internet or not achieving basic digital skills, raises concerns among experts. In contrast, Germany has seen improvements in the indicators set in 2021, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The organisations mentioned by various countries have very similar objectives and functions. Although it is sometimes difficult to draw clear boundaries between them, it is possible to classify them into **two distinct categories**. First, there are those whose main mission is to **verify news and information**. Examples are *EFE Verifica* in Spain and *Demagog* in Poland. On the other hand, there is a second, broader group focused on **media literacy and the promotion of critical thinking in educational settings**. Examples of this second block are *KboM* in Germany, which stands out once again, *Maldita Educa* in Spain, *Karpos* in Greece or *The Institute for Critical Thinking* in Poland.

On the other hand, the context described in the previous section helps to understand why Italy has organisations especially dedicated to bridging the digital divide, such as the *Cooperativa Sociale E.D.I. Educazione ai Diritti dell'Infanzia e dell'Adolescenza*.

2.3. How we deal with disinformation in Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland and Greece

Firstly, it is important to note that **all countries participating in the project: Italy, Greece, Poland, Germany and Spain, follow a strategy consistent with the EU framework**. Most of these countries, except Poland, already have **laws in place to regulate issues related to disinformation**. Although Poland does not yet have laws in place in this area, in 2022 a Polish Senate Resolution highlighted the need to establish them. In addition, with the same exception, these countries have **agreements with technology companies to regulate and remove certain types of content**, as in the case of Germany with the NetzDG law since 2017.

However, despite the efforts of all these countries to combat disinformation, Germany seems to have made more progress in this regard. In contrast, Poland is in a different position. Each country has taken different approaches to tackling the problem. For

example, Italy is focusing on **media literacy and the implementation of educational policies**, a strategy shared by other countries such as Poland with its Open Educational Network Programme and Germany with GMK. Germany stands out for working closely with **experts and social platforms to combat and prevent disinformation**. On the other hand, Greece has introduced criminal laws and promoted the audiovisual industry, although it has faced criticism for possible threats to freedom of expression.

It is relevant to mention that some countries have addressed the issue of **disinformation in terms of national security**, in the case of Spain, for example, responsibility was assigned to the agencies and entities of the National Security System in 2019. For its part, Poland also proposed establishing security policies.

3. Voices from the Classroom: What do we know about media literacy and disinformation?

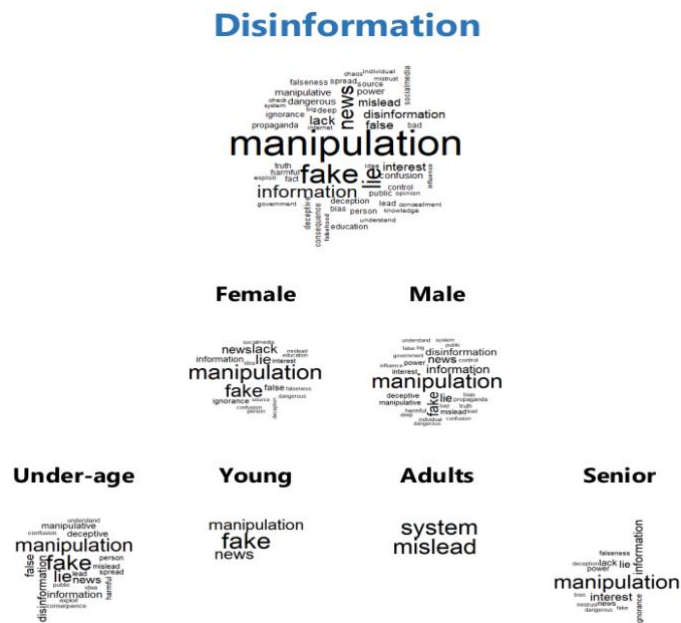
To explore social representations of the terms disinformation and media literacy, students (**ANNEX 3**) and teachers (**ANNEX 4**) from five countries (Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and Spain) were asked to freely write down the first four words that came to mind to describe these terms¹.

3.1. Students about disinformation

In students' narratives about disinformation, words such as manipulation, false, lie, interest, mislead and news stand out, reflecting disinformation as a dangerous phenomenon, deliberate and motivated by hidden interests, whose purpose is to manipulate through falsehoods presented as truthful information. It is perceived as a threat to people's ability to access reliable information and make informed decisions.

¹ A total of 96 students (59.4 % female, 40.6 % male; 30.2 % under 14-17 years, 9.4 % 18-25 years, 11.6 % adults 26-45 years, 48.9 % over 60-72 years) and 23 teachers (65.2 % female, 34.7 % male) participated. Extrapolation of the results is limited due to the sample size, but the data is still relevant for the purposes of this project.

Figure 1. Social representations of disinformation (students).



3.2. Students about media literacy

In students' narratives on **media literacy**, words such as **information, critique, media, social media, analyse, freedom and source** appear more frequently. This implies a holistic understanding that combines practical skills (analysing and evaluating information and sources) and a social awareness of the role of media and freedom of expression. Respondents agree that media literacy is not just about passively consuming information, but involves an active and analytical approach to question the veracity of data and to share and create content responsibly. It is seen as a key component of active and responsible participation in a democratic society.

Figure 2. Social representation of media literacy (students).

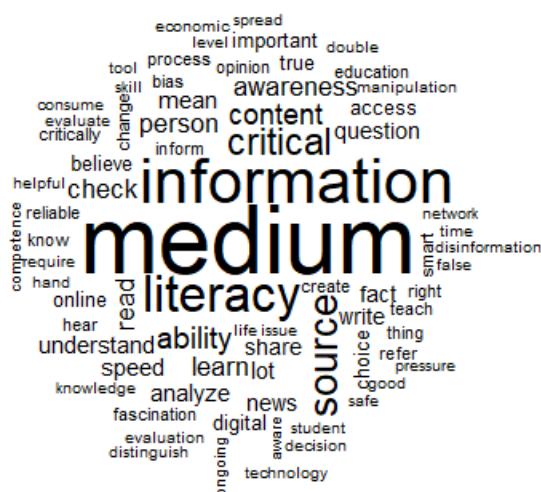
[illegible]

In the teachers' narratives on disinformation, the words that appear most frequently are: information, disinformation, person, disseminate, media, fake news, false, social and social media. This reflects a direct association of the term with false information, although the critical view is not as unanimous as in the case of the student group.

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In the narratives on **media literacy**, the words that appear most frequently are: media, information, literacy source, critical and capacity. Teachers seem to focus on literacy practices, emphasising the importance of being critical of sources in order to have the ability to understand the information and the media behind its dissemination.

Figure 4. Social representations of media literacy (teachers)



Teachers see disinformation as a major risk for European democracies. They cite the lack of media literacy among the population as a key factor facilitating the spread of fake news, and also comment on the vulnerability of pupils in dealing with disinformation circulating on the Internet. Respondents agree that media literacy should be included in the respective curricula. Teacher training in media literacy is also considered essential.

3.5. How do students get information?

We asked students ($n = 119$) from different countries and age groups about their main sources of information². In terms of **frequency of Internet access**, 86.6% of respondents admit to using the Internet more than once a day, the majority between 6 and 10 times a day. In terms of age, 92.3% of participants aged 18-25 use it daily for any purpose, while this percentage reaches 100% in the 26-45 age group. Younger (14-17 years) and older (60-72 years) respondents show a slightly lower frequency of Internet use, which could be due to the greater restrictions on use at younger ages and the technological leap in the older age group.

In terms of **accessing the news**, 77.4% of respondents say they do so at least once a day, and a third between 2-5 times a day. The frequency increases with age, which could be due to factors such as: interest in current affairs and social responsibility, consumption habits and access to technology, or the availability of time. In this sense, it seems that older people feel a greater responsibility to stay informed.

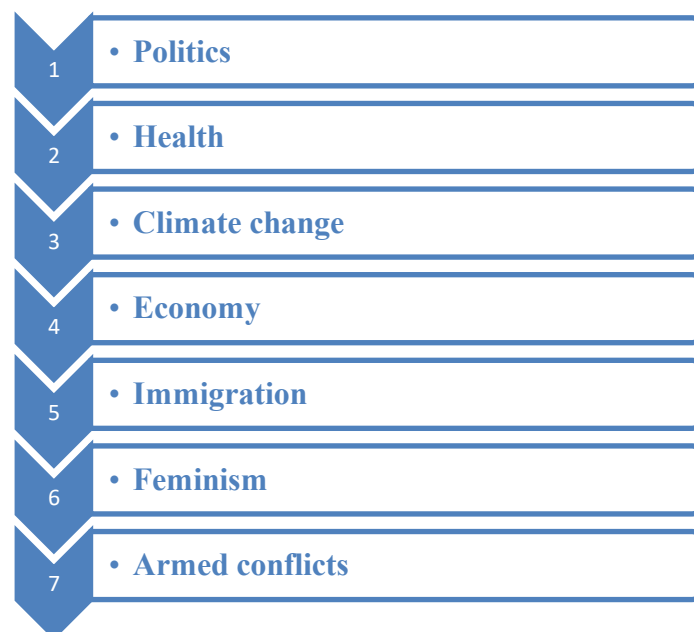
² Although the size and composition of this sample do not allow us to consider their responses as representative of the entire population to which they belong, they do give us an accurate picture of their beliefs, habits and prejudices on these issues.

In terms of **news platforms** used, teenagers prefer *TikTok*, *Instagram* and *YouTube*, in line with their digital lifestyle and their search for entertainment and immediacy. In contrast, older people, who are less accustomed to new technologies, opt for traditional sources (television, radio and print media), which are perceived as more reliable and familiar.

In terms of **interest in the news**, younger people show a lower level of engagement. In adulthood, interest in current affairs increases, possibly because of the need to make informed decisions. At older ages, interest in news increases more, probably because of more time and the desire to stay connected to the world.

In Figure 5 we find a list of **topics** on which respondents believe they have identified **false or misleading information** (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Issues on which false or misleading information is believed to have been identified



4. Listening for action: what MIL experts tell us

In order to better understand the phenomenon of disinformation and the importance of Media and Information Literacy (MIL), interviews and round tables were held with 12 experts in the field. Their reflections make the current challenges and strategies necessary to combat disinformation with MIL tools visible. The full content of their contributions can be found in **ANNEX 5**.

Throughout this process, three main thematic blocks have been explored:

1. Disinformation and the importance of consuming quality information.

2. How disinformation works on individuals

3. The value of Media and Information Literacy

First, in relation to **disinformation** and the importance of consuming quality information, experts warn that the digital age has allowed the spread and impact of disinformation to be amplified, a circumstance that poses significant risks for democratic societies. Its effects range from the **erosion of trust in democratic institutions and social polarisation to threats to public health, economic stability and even international relations**.

In this sense, they point out that, although societies can survive in an environment of high levels of disinformation, this is not the case of democratic societies, which require a high degree of trust and transparency in aspects ranging from electoral results to the functioning of public institutions. Hence, all agree on the importance of consuming **quality information**, which they define as that which, in its compilation and elaboration process, has been treated with **honesty, professionalism and with no intention to manipulate**. The consumption of quality information, they point out, is important for making informed decisions, and is closely related to democratic mechanisms that protect basic human rights.

On the other hand, and in terms of how disinformation works on people, experts agree that **disinformation is often well constructed, using hooks that are highly attractive to people**. It resonates with emotions, sensitive issues and personal contexts, which makes people particularly susceptible to it. Disinformation, they point out, **is often personalised, and the algorithms used by large digital platforms and social networks contribute to this process**. When dealing with conspiracy-minded people, they advise empathising with them and encouraging open discussion, as disinformation is often shared out of fear or uncertainty.

Finally, regarding the importance of Media and Information Literacy in tackling disinformation, experts believe that, to be effective, it must encompass several key components and skills, such as **understanding the media landscape, promoting critical analysis, recognising bias and propaganda, and understanding the role of algorithms**, among others. They caution that there is no magic bullet against disinformation, and that MIL measures should encourage critical thinking when analysing different types of content in order to identify the differences between different forms of disinformation and quality news and information.

When promoting media and information literacy in educational settings, experts advise a **dual application**, that is, theoretical and practical, and consider that it should be hopeful, continuous and collaborative. They believe that combining pedagogical experience with fact-checking could yield great results among students, and that for integration in classrooms, it is essential that journalists work together with teachers.

5. From the University to other classrooms: how we select our journalistic tools

The **theoretical and practical contents** offered in this manual have been selected after having reviewed and adapted the **university training of the Bachelor's Degree in Journalism**. The corpus of the analysis has been the report presented for the verification of the Journalism degree and approved in Spain by the National Agency for Quality Assessment (ANECA), and all the updated teaching guides published by the Faculty of Social Sciences and Communication of the University of the Basque Country (EHU). Interviews were also held with the lecturers of the subjects relevant to this study.

Three **criteria were used to analyse and select content transferable to QYourself**: media and information competence and literacy, journalistic method, and orientation towards teaching.

- **Media competence and literacy.** The Bachelor's Degree in Journalism offers theoretical and practical training based on the development of students' competences and seeks learning outcomes oriented towards both the analysis and production of informative and communicative content. In this analysis, we have selected and prioritised the aspects aimed at **promoting analytical logic and not so much creative or productive logic**, given that the target audience of QYourself does not seek to become a communication professional, but rather to **increase their media and information competence in order to fight against disinformation**.
- **Journalistic method.** The aim of the Bachelor's Degree in Journalism is for students to acquire the journalistic method and to be able to discern truthful information from untruthful information, as well as to create professional communicative products. Our analysis has considered only those aspects in each subject that are directly linked to the conceptual framework and objectives of the QYourself project. In short, we have selected those clearly aimed at **combating disinformation through the use of the journalistic method**.
- **Teaching orientation.** Finally, all the analysis has taken into account the specific development that the teaching staff carry out in each subject in order to determine their usefulness in subsequent phases of the project. In other words, the entire selection has also taken into consideration the **teaching methodologies, theoretical-practical contents, training activities and learning resources that can be transferred to the target audience of QYourself**.

The analysis process consisted of four phases and generated five deliverables that can be consulted in full in **ANNEX 6**. The synthesis of competences and learning outcomes transferable to QYourself are the following:

COMPETENCES
1. Assess the relevance of information sources 2. Identify documentary sources 3. Interpret texts in context 4. Evaluate sources, data and information 5. Critically evaluate texts
LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Applies theoretical knowledge to concrete cases 2. Associates issues with documentary sources 3. Searches for alternative sources 4. Searches, selects and obtains sources 5. Knows strengths and weaknesses of information products in W 6. Consumes texts critically 7. Differentiates between interpretative, informative and opinion texts 8. Evaluates with rigour the reliability and quality of sources 9. Identifies errors contrary to professional practice 10. Works in teams to obtain information 11. Uses social media with a strategic vision 12. Evaluates the informative elements of a text

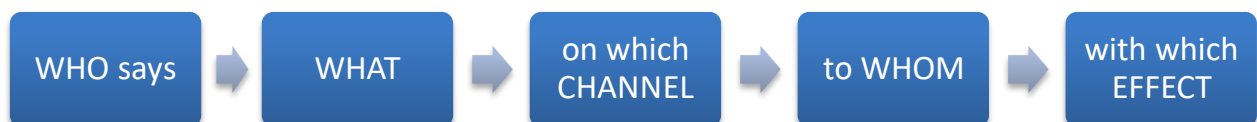
6. Learning to watch: theories of journalism to teach how to think

Students who develop **Media and Information Literacy (MIL) skills** are better prepared to **identify disinformation and hate speech in our society**. And journalism education is important because it provides the necessary competencies for their development. Journalism, which requires **criteria to verify information and validate sources**, which trains professionals who live by asking questions and seeking answers, emerges as a fundamental vector for activating people's critical thinking.

The following is a summary of some of the **basic theories of Communication and Journalism**. Its aim is to provide a basic theoretical knowledge for teachers who decide to use the educational resources provided below. With these materials, teachers will be able to reflect with their students on the need to verify the information we receive in our daily lives, to identify reliable sources of information and to distinguish information from opinion.

- **Lasswell's communication model**

Proposed by Harold Lasswell in 1948, it is a fundamental paradigm in the study of communication that describes the communicative act through five key elements: who says (SENDER), what is said (MESSAGE), through what CHANNEL, to whom (RECEIVER), and with what EFFECT.



This linear model analyses the communication process from the perspective of the sender to its impact on the receiver, considering the content of the message, the medium used for its dissemination, and the target audience. Lasswell developed this approach to address mass communication, but its applicability extends to a variety of communication contexts. The model serves not only as an analytical tool, but also as a practical guide for planning and executing effective communicative acts.

Why is it important for this project?

Lasswell developed his theoretical model in a period of intense political propaganda, which makes it particularly suited to analysing modern disinformation, which often has similar goals. Lasswell's key questions (Who says what, on what channel, to whom and with what effect?) provide a useful framework for **decomposing and examining the**

elements of disinformation. This allows us to systematically analyse the origin, content, medium of dissemination, target audience, and impact of disinformation.

The model pays **special attention to the WHO**, which is crucial to identify and study the instigators of disinformation, as it puts the **focus on the sender of the message and/or the source**. This is particularly relevant in the digital age, where determining the credibility of information sources is critical to combating the spread of disinformation.

In turn, the **CHANNEL** analysis is relevant to **observe how disinformation is mainly spread** through social media and phone messaging apps. The model also includes the analysis of **EFFECTS**, which allows us to **examine the impact of disinformation** on the target audience and on society at large. Meanwhile, although the intentionality of the sender is not explicit in Harold Lasswell's original formulation, the analysis of motivation allows us to understand what disinformation campaigns pursue.

- *Theory of news and opinion genres*

Journalistic genres are divided into two main categories: **news genres** and **opinion genres**. The main objective of news genres is to convey facts and data objectively and accurately, without including the journalist's personal assessments. The news genres are the news item, the report, the interview and the chronicle.

On the other hand, the opinion genres allow the author to express his or her point of view, analysis and judgement on events. They are the editorial, the article and the column. Informative genres aim to answer the basic journalistic questions: What, Who, When, Where, Why and How (5W+1). On the other hand, the opinion genres provide interpretations, arguments and evaluations of the facts.

Why is it important for this project?

The 5W+1 of journalism (What, Who, When, Where, Why and How) are essential tools for people to develop critical and analytical skills in the consumption of information. The application of the 5W+1 allows the journalist to structure clear and complete information, allowing citizens to identify the **fundamental elements of a news story: the facts (What), the protagonists (Who), the temporal (When) and spatial context (Where), the motives (Why) and the circumstances (How).**

By applying these questions, people can **assess the quality and accuracy of the information** they receive, detecting possible omissions in the content. The 5+1Ws also facilitate the understanding of context by helping us to place events in a broader context, allowing us to understand how and why events happen, as well as where and when they occur. The 5W+1 technique teaches the receiver of the message to **break down a news story into its essential elements, facilitating critical interpretation and reducing the possibility of manipulation.**

On the other hand, news journalism reminds us that the sources of information are a fundamental pillar because they provide the raw material necessary to construct truthful and rigorous news, reports and chronicles. The **expert handling of reliable and relevant sources of information makes it possible to check data and go deeper into the facts**, that is to say, **it distinguishes professional journalism from mere rumour or speculation**.

- **Agenda-setting theory**

Agenda-setting is a communication theory that argues that the media has a strong influence in determining what issues the public considers important. Developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in the 1960s, this theory asserts that **the news media establishes what issues to think about**.

By selecting, emphasising and covering certain events, the media **shape the public agenda**, influencing the audience's perception of what issues are relevant. Agenda-setting, therefore, plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion, and can have significant implications in areas such as politics or social change, by putting the spotlight on relevant issues of general interest.

Why is it important for this project?

The **instigators of disinformation try to set the agenda through tactics that manipulate the flow of information and condition social perception**. They use strategies such as saturation of the news space, flooding social media with messages that fit the disinformation narratives they are trying to disseminate. They also exploit **confirmation bias**, disseminating messages that reinforce the pre-existing beliefs of their audience, which facilitates their acceptance.

In addition, they resort to accounts managed by real people hired to broadcast messages on the same topic in a short time, creating a false impression of mass support for certain narratives by using inauthentic accounts (astroturfing). These **disinformation practices**, amplified by digitalisation and the strategic use of less moderated platforms, **allow disinformation instigators to influence priority social issues and erode trust in democratic institutions**.

- **Framing theory**

Framing is a fundamental theory in communication and social science that explores how the media and other social actors present information to the public. This theory explains that **the way an issue is framed or contextualised significantly influences how it is perceived and interpreted by the receiver**.

Framing involves **selecting certain aspects of a perceived reality and making them more relevant** in a communicative text to promote a particular problem definition, causal

interpretation, moral evaluation and/or recommended treatment. This process can occur through the choice of particular words, images, sources of information, and the narrative structure used to present an issue to the audience.

Framing theory is crucial to understanding how news media can influence public opinion, political decisions and social behaviour, highlighting the power of information presentation in shaping perceptions and attitudes.

Why is it important for this project?

Framing theory connects directly with disinformation messages because they operate through the **strategic selection of narrative elements** with the aim of influencing public perception. Framing is based on **highlighting certain aspects of reality while omitting others**, creating interpretative schemas in the receiver. The instigators of disinformation exploit this mechanism in various ways.

Just as journalistic media frame issues to prioritise their importance, those who disseminate disinformation **select and exaggerate details (real or false) to reinforce their narratives, using tactics such as clickbait or sensationalist headlines**. Moreover, framing not only shapes information, but also links it to pre-existing cognitive frameworks (fears, values, identities... everything that shapes our worldview), and disinformation exploits this by connecting false messages to emotions such as fear or outrage, facilitating their uncritical acceptance.

Disinformation uses frames that simplify complex relationships, for example by attributing social problems to single causes rather than multifactorial reasons, a common technique in polarising discourses. Disinformation also exploits the **biases of digital platforms to make their frames circulate faster than verifications**, including the use of bots and fake accounts that replicate messages until they are normalised in the public sphere.

Likewise, just as journalistic framing relies on the credibility of information sources, disinformation uses portals that mimic legitimate media or out-of-context quotes to give the appearance of rigour. The key difference lies in intentionality: while **journalistic framing seeks to contextualise truthful facts, disinformation uses it to replace reality with fabricated narratives**. Both, however, share the ability to shape public opinion through the architecture of meanings.

- **Newsmaking theory**

Newsmaking theory consists of analysing **the way in which news is constructed**, focusing on the **production processes and routines of the media and its journalists**. This perspective understands news as a social construction of reality, influenced by a variety

of organisational, professional and contextual factors, rather than a simple objective selection of events.

Newsmaking examines the day-to-day conditions of news production, including journalists' routines and working conditions, professional culture, organisational dynamics and relationships with news sources. This theory, in short, reflects that **news production is a complex process** in which multiple factors shape the final product that ultimately reaches the audience.

Why is it important to this project?

Drivers of disinformation understand and **manipulate the processes** described by newsmaking theory to infiltrate their false narratives into the professional journalistic ecosystem. They often exploit these processes through **pseudo-media, websites that visually mimic journalistic media**, but whose content cannot be considered as such because it mixes information with opinion, ideology and, in many cases, falsehoods. However, they are specifically designed to be registered as news, and sometimes these reach the professional journalistic media, which unwittingly amplify the disinformation.

Disinformation mimics journalistic narrative structures to achieve this, and positions itself in spaces where journalists are looking for 'viral stories'. They use social media accounts pretending to be experts, or impersonate institutional sources, which are the ones that generate much of the news. In short, they use **deliberate tactics to amplify disinformation, targeting the newsrooms of the news media, as they know what their own production dynamics** are and take advantage of them.

7. QYourself Educational Resources

7.1. Think like a journalist! A course with essential journalistic tools to identify disinformation:

A course plenty of **practical tools inspired by the journalistic method to promote Media and Information Literacy (MIL)** in the classroom. Through five thematic modules, you will be able to teach your students to identify and contrast sources, differentiate between information and opinion, and analyse the key elements of a news story. A proposal adapted from university training in Journalism, designed to help you encourage critical thinking in the classroom.

This course is available in English and some of the other national languages of the project partners on the website, in section ***Think like a journalist! A course with essential journalistic tools to identify disinformation.***

7.2. Ready to use prototype national courses. Teacher to teacher: share your learnings

Examples of training other teachers in the use of our journalistic resources to multiply the impact in the educational environment and generate learning networks. Includes tips on how to organise training sessions, adapt materials and make it easier for your colleagues to integrate these strategies into their classrooms.

These courses are available in English and the other national languages of the project partners on the website, in section ***Ready to use prototype national courses: Teacher to teacher, share your learnings.*** They are aimed at the different groups we have worked with.

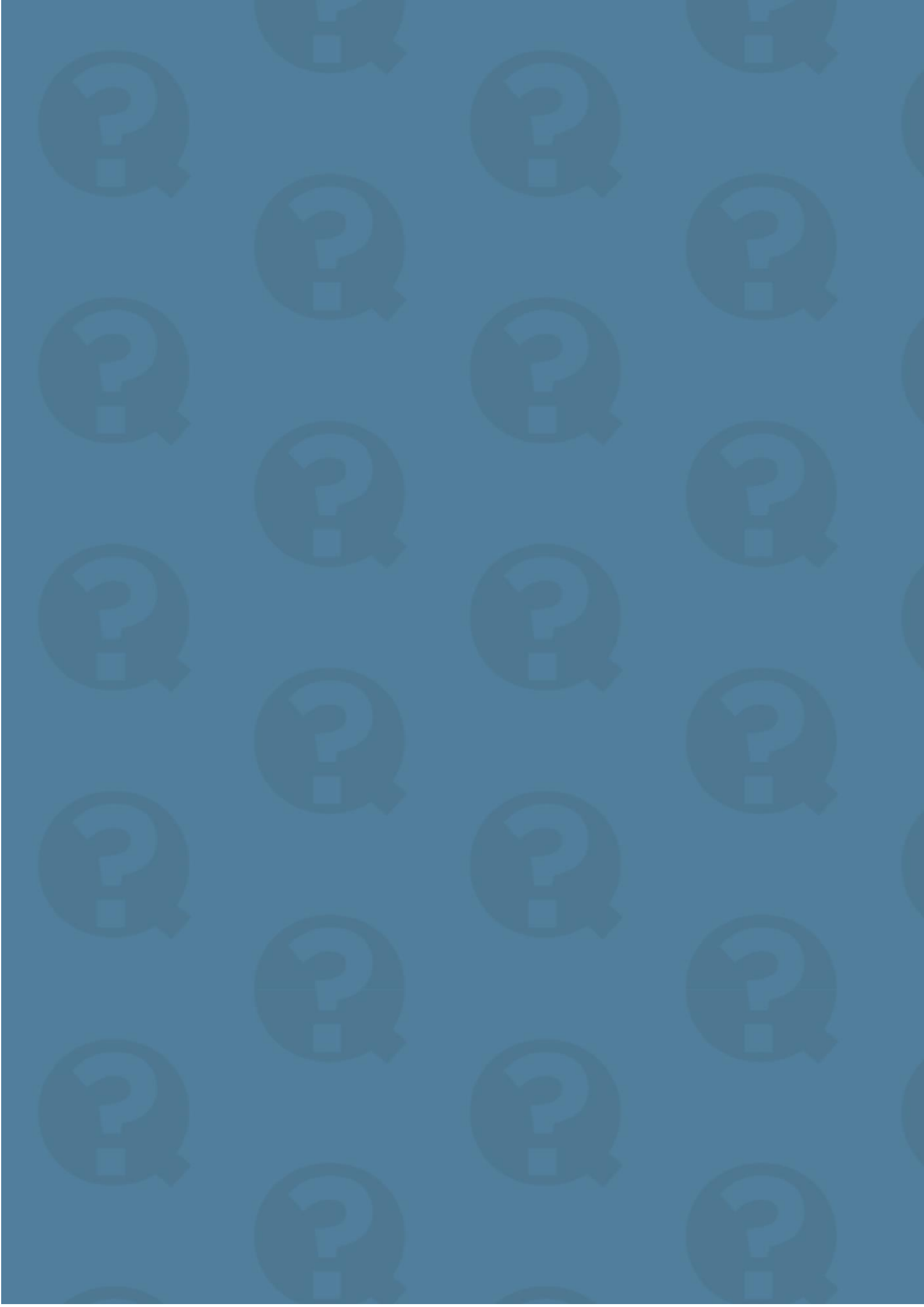
7.3. Hands on: digital tools to create your own resources

Four practical **trainings sessions on the pedagogical use of useful digital tools**: social networks, *Canva*, *Moodle* and video creation. The aim is to enable you to develop your own educational resources to promote media and information literacy by combining creativity, technology and critical thinking. All the contents are designed to facilitate their direct application in the classroom and are available in the website, in section ***Hands on: digital tools to create your own resources.***

7.4. QYourself in action: when theory comes into the classroom

Real experiences of teachers who have implemented QYourself resources in different educational contexts. Activities, didactic sequences and materials applied in practice, which can serve as inspiration or as a starting point to design your own proposals. A space where theory comes to life in the classroom.

These courses are available in English and the other national languages of the project partners on the website, in section ***QYourself in action: when theory comes into the classroom.***





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