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FREuDe

JEAN MONNET CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE
COMMUNICATION, FACTS & REGULATION FOR EUROPEAN DEMOC

TRUTH AND DARE: KIDS VS. FAKE NEWS

WHAT IS FAKE NEWS?



Fake news is another word for “disinformation”. It means information that looks and sounds like true, but which is false or not totally true. Sometimes, even if statements might be false, the events they are referring to might be real.

Fake news is made to look like news: it is catchy so that it attracts the attention of more readers and gets more clicks or shares.

The aims of this content are different: sometimes it is to mislead and manipulate the public, for certain advantage. However, sometimes it can happen that fake news comes from lack of understanding and full knowledge of a situation.



Some fake news is easier to spot than others – it has spelling mistakes, is hosted on a suspicious site, or has been shared with no supporting evidence.

WHERE IS FAKE NEWS?

Often fake news is shared **social media post** (like a tweet, post, or comment) or in the style of a traditional **news article**. However, it can take many forms, including images and videos. Fake news is mostly found as hoaxes or deliberately false information.



Sometimes fake news can look very realistic and may have been spread widely or picked up by lots of different sites.

WHO MAKES FAKE NEWS?

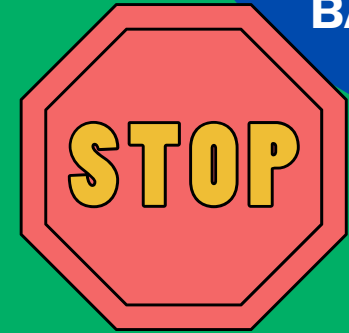
It does not only appear on untrustworthy sources, but we might see it on Instagram profiles, newspapers, and media channels that usually we consider reliable.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

Fake news can spread because people want to deceive people or because people want to make money from clicks. This is very much the case on social media.

In practice, you may find yourself reading something you consider interesting, without knowing it is fake news. You might decide to share it with your friends and family via Whatsapp, or maybe you share the Instagram post on a story. Many people will see it and find it interesting as well, and might even share it in their turn. In this way, the information provided will be taken for accurate, when it is not.

WHY IS IT BAD?



- ✗ It is bad for our society and community because it can distort the truth. Fake news about people or groups of people can create hate and violence in a society.
- ✗ It is bad for how we run our lives because as citizens we might find ourselves making decisions based on wrong information. It can be the case when casting a vote, or making an investment.
- ✗ It can poison the trust people have in institutions and undermine democracy. This can happen in health, politics, the economy but also in school. Indeed, during an exam, we might give a wrong answer based on information we retrieved on the internet which is in fact fake news.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Sometimes, media try to trick you with false information or make up stories. The online world is full of false information and rumors that spread quickly. You can be a target of false information, someone who shares it without knowing, or even someone who stands up against it by finding the truth.



Here are basic questions to ask when you encounter a piece of media:

- ✓ Who made this?
- ✓ Who is the target audience?
- ✓ Who paid for this? Or, who gets paid if you click on this?
- ✓ Who might benefit or be harmed by this message?
- ✓ What is left out of this message that might be important?
- ✓ Is this credible (and what makes you think that)?

Here are some tips and tricks how you can spot fake news:



- ✓ Look for unusual URLs or site names, including those that end with ".co"
- ✓ Look for signs of low quality, such as words in all caps, headlines with glaring grammatical errors, bold claims with no sources, and sensationalist images.
- ✓ Check a site's "About Us" section. Find out who supports the site or who is associated with it.
- ✓ Check Snopes, Wikipedia, and Google before trusting or sharing news that seems too good (or bad) to be true.
- ✓ Whether other credible, mainstream news outlets are reporting the same news. If they're not, it doesn't mean it's not true, but it does mean you should dig deeper.
- ✓ Check your emotions. Clickbait and fake news strive for extreme reactions. If the news you're reading makes you really angry or super smug, it could be a sign that you're being manipulated. Check multiple sources before trusting.

HOW DO WE DEFEND OUR SOCIETY?

Fake news is a huge challenge for Europe. To fight against fake news everyone needs to work together. All EU countries, EU institutions, online platforms, news media and EU citizens need to support each other and tackle the issue of fake news.

WHAT IS THE EUROPEAN UNION DOING?

The EU has made an **"action plan against disinformation"**. It makes the EU and EU citizens stronger in fighting together against fake news. The action plan raises awareness and motivates people with campaigns to participate in identifying and exposing fake news. The action plan improves the detection of disinformation by investing in digital tools, data analysis skills, and specialized staff that works against the problem of fake news within the EU and its Member States. A very important step is also that major Internet Companies like Google, Facebook, Twitter, and Mozilla have agreed to support the action plan and work together against disinformation.

The **2018 Code of Practice on Disinformation** brings together online platforms, the advertising industry, fact-checkers, research and civil society organizations to commit to an agreed way of working to counter disinformation (Code means that there are common rules people agree on and follow).

Safer Internet Centres inform and advise children, parents and teachers on digital questions and fight for children's online safety. In Austria this is: Saferinternet.at (office@saferinternet.at)

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) helps the EU institutions and Member States to ensure that the rights of children, just like every other citizen, are respected and protected, including rights to truthful information. FRA helps protect children from fake news, disinformation, and hate speech by building resilience among young people and developing concrete technical tools for monitoring these issues.



WHAT CAN PARENTS AND CARERS DO?

Make sure your child is aware that fake news exists and that there are individuals who spread false information on the internet. It's important to understand that even though it may seem obvious, many children may not realize that not everything they read online is true.

Join in and talk about media with your kids. Have open conversations with your kids about what they see online. Make it a safe space where they can share their thoughts and ask questions. If you come across something that isn't true, talk about it together and figure out the real facts. This helps your kids develop their critical thinking skills.

Question and correct false information. When you find false information, help your kids learn how to ask questions and check if it's true. Teach them to look for trustworthy sources and signs that something might not be reliable. By doing this, you give them the power to make informed choices.

Support fun learning. Look for programs or activities that teach kids about media and how to be smart online. There are cool websites and classes that can help, books and documentaries.

Speak up for better education. Encourage companies that make technology, policymakers, and the government to give kids better tools to learn about media. They should have access to information that helps them stay safe and make smart decisions online. Let's ask for more support and resources to teach kids about media literacy in schools.

Glossary



Society = a big group of people who have something in common; for example traditions, language, culture, etc.

False beliefs = wrong ways of thinking

Institutions = a social structure with rules and norms in which people cooperate and which influences the behavior of people and the way they live.

Democracy = Greek words demos (people) + kratos (rule). It means a government that is ruled by the citizens of the society. People get the chance to say how they want the government to be run by voting on different issues.

Untrustworthy = dishonest, unreliable



Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence FREuDe

Jean Monnet Communication, Facts and Regulation for European Democracy (FREuDe) Centre of Excellence aims to intervene for positive future social change that derives from the commitment and intellectual input across disciplines, such as Sociology, Law, Education, Childhood and Youth studies, European studies and Politics, as well as Communication scholarship and Security studies. Moreover, the Centre addresses the question from the perspective of future autonomous citizens, today's children, and explore closely the ways in which information and Europe feature in their lives.



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SCAN TO READ THE FULL BROCHURE

