

# **TRAINERS' MANUAL**

FOR MEDIA AND  
INFORMATION LITERACY

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"I don't know what you mean by 'glory,'" Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously.

"Of course you don't- till I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!'"

"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument,'" Alice objected.

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean- neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master-that's all." <sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Lewis Carroll (1971, reprint), *Through the Looking Glass*. London: Penguin Books, p. 81.

# INTRODUCTION

Whose understanding of meaning is right? Alice's, Humpty Dumpty's, or the reader's? Who, in this case, is the master, the owner of the meaning? Would Humpty Dumpty talk to Alice differently if she were a boy? Do the characters of the Looking Glass world, or Wonderland, perceive Alice as a migrant? Is she guilty of eating a cookie that clearly says "Eat Me" without consulting a doctor or a pharmacist? Is chasing the White Rabbit actually a hunt for an explanation?

Media literacy is a critical re-examination of media content, or, simply put, reading between the lines. The mechanism of re-examination is built by every person individually, in accordance with their knowledge, wishes and predispositions. On some imaginative, ideal level, a media-literate person would be able to distinguish, at all times – and in everything s/he reads, hears, or sees – the essentials from non-essentials, to recognise the elements of propaganda or covert advertising, to detect implicit and explicit hate speech, and, after recognising one of these elements, to be able to identify various manipulative strategies of media and politicians, to look for what has been embedded through bias, and what has been omitted...

Although there are many definitions of media literacy, this guide will rely on the term **Media and Information Literacy (MIL)**, which refers to a citizen's cognitive, technical and social skills and capacities to access, critically evaluate, use and contribute information and media content through traditional and digital information and media platforms and technologies. Being literate in this sense is to understand how these platforms and technologies function, how to respect the rights of others when asserting one's own rights, and how to identify and avoid harmful content and services. The purpose of media and information literacy is to make effective use of information and media content and platforms in order to meet one's individual and community needs and interests, and to exercise one's active and responsible participation in traditional and online

public spheres and in democratic processes.

Since the public today is not only a passive observer, but rather an active creator of content, one who leaves comments on Facebook and other portals, tweets about floods or concerts in his/her town, makes digital photo albums for Instagram and 'vlogs for YouTube, spreads information about upcoming protests or agitates for a particular political option, a media-literate person is expected to act responsibly, and review critically the content s/he creates.

If we take a look at the media landscape of the Western Balkans, we will find that the worst media are often the cheapest and most accessible; that the audience – just like anywhere else around the world – mostly lacks the time and tolerance for long texts or analysis; that "intrigues" are constantly being manufactured; that fake news is being produced so quickly that the truth falls further and further behind; that hate speech is everywhere around us, including media and political discourse.

The goal of media literacy is not to create overwhelming scepticism towards the media, nor to abandon the newsstand or the television. The only intention is to promote a healthy degree of suspicion and curiosity that could be of great help to us in trying to discover what lies behind media content. That, of course, is not easy: it often involves learning and digging into data, which can turn into a long and tedious process. It is a fantasy to expect readers to be analytically sharp every time they pick up a newspaper or their mobile phone. Fortunately, in the Western Balkans, there are also a few media outlets that perform those tiresome processes for us. Their journalists are constantly searching through databases, seeking hidden information of public importance, dealing with corruption, nepotism, hate speech and false news.

All in all, there are reasons for optimism, but there is also a lot of work ahead of us, especially in the field of media literacy! The aim of this e-guide is to help future MIL trainers to formulate their educational

programmes in a simple and interesting way. In that sense, this manual is intended for representatives of non-governmental organisations, teachers who want to strengthen MIL in schools, and also journalists. For each of the modules there is a list of exercises and materials you can use, with the majority of the activities being adaptive to different target groups.

Keep in mind that there are unlimited creative variations on these possibilities.

At the very beginning, we will give a brief overview of age groups for whom media literacy programmes are suitable, with specific characteristics, tips and tricks for each of them. After that, we will present these five modules, together with suggested activities:



1. Visual Literacy
2. Media and Diversity
3. Information Verification
4. Online Safety
5. How Media Function

In the end, you will find a list of useful links to help you improve your programme and get fresh, creative ideas.

# 1. WORKING WITH DIFFERENT TARGET GROUPS

## TRAINING WHEELS: MIL for children

Working on media literacy with children is very important and very challenging at the same time. It is essential – because of their high exposure to media content that they cannot fully understand – and challenging for at least two reasons. First of all, there is often an inversion of traditional roles in technical know-how, with children commonly knowing more about using certain gadgets and applications than their parents and teachers. Secondly, the approach must be adapted to each age level. Children are often wrongly perceived as a homogeneous group, but it is not a good idea to train different age groups at the

same time because the suitability of various tools and approaches will depend on the degree of a child's cognitive development. Children up to seven years of age have a strong imagination and intuition, but limited abstract thought. On the other hand, in the 7 to 11 year age group, children can understand broader concepts and the context in which a particular media message is made. Finally, teenagers have theoretical, hypothetical and counterfactual thinking, with abstract logic and reasoning. There may have to be a further differentiation of approach for non-neurotypical children, for example those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.



Activities for children within the framework of media literacy training can be very creative: from composing alternative, modern re-tellings of traditional fairy tales (see Module 4) to the Treasure hunt game, which require the children to use both offline and online tools. Games that combine the real world and virtual reality reflect the multi-dimensional environment in which young people will live, work and spend their leisure time, and can feature maps, codes, balloons, puzzles, clips, applications, QR codes, drawings, music, Lego and virtual reality glasses. The possibilities are endless, but this guide will offer some concrete examples.

# DIGGING DEEPER: MIL for youth

Generations that have been familiar with multimedia content since birth are so-called *digital natives*. Generations born before the 1980s experience a certain distance between themselves and media, whereas for today's youth that distance is almost non-existent. With the expansion of the Internet and social networks, consumption of media content and information in general is

more than one multimedia device simultaneously. Instead of determining correct and incorrect answers, it is necessary to foster debate, discussion of ideas, the cause-and-effect relationship, alternative options and ethics. Activities for youth should incorporate content that they come into contact with every day: advertisements, vines (short videos), 'vlogs, memes and gifs... In this way, we show them that media



In what way does working with young people (older than 15) on media literacy differ from working with children? Firstly, with young people it is possible to discuss the complex social and media context in which a message is created and in which it spreads. It is also possible to consider the potential impacts of such a message on different age and social groups. Secondly, young people have wider technical knowledge of tools and gadgets, and also more patience than younger cohorts, so it is possible to work with them using more independent activities. Thirdly, at this age, the formation of more complex views is beginning, making this the right time for discussions on myths and stereotypes, as well as about implicit and explicit forms of hate speech.

taking on a completely new dimension and new characteristics. Today, we live in conditions of *multiscreening*, which means that we are using

literacy is not an abstract discipline, but an essential skill for interpreting and creating the content which is important to them.

# CUTTING EDGE: MIL for other generations

Although media literacy programs are most often focussed on young people, the inclusion of the adult population in educational programmes of this sort should be encouraged. It is possible to create custom training for different age groups (and don't forget the retirees!), as well as for different types of expert: teachers, librarians, PR experts, politicians, historians, artists and critics, and even – though it may seem illogical – journalists, too.

As for the teachers, it is necessary to talk about media literacy not only as a new school subject, but above all as a new approach to learning all subjects. Media literacy is not only applicable only to classes of the mother tongue (“Literacy”), literature and civic education, where it is specifically part of the curriculum represented in individual teaching units.

For example, it is possible to study the emotional impact of sound and music in various genres of film through music classes, or graphic elements of advertising messages through art classes. Even some concepts in the natural sciences can be more easily explained and understood using media literacy techniques.

Is improving media literacy necessary for journalists, as well? Although they are expected to possess a high level of knowledge in this field already, it makes sense to develop this knowledge further, especially when its application requires a certain level of skill in digital technology. Journalists should be familiar with modern strategies of visual, audio and textual manipulation, and also with the ethical controversies contained within modern journalism.



The inclusion of retirees in media literacy programmes is also important, primarily for the sake of preventing digital exclusion. Although we must not take stereotypes at face value, the elderly do have different interests and different views of the world, and – something crucial for designing their training – a different level of digital literacy. In programmes dedicated to retirees, it may be necessary to develop computer literacy as well, in parallel with the media literacy training. Activities must be coordinated so that they are not too technically demanding, as there is a real possibility that some participants will have very limited physical mobility. It is crucial at this point to show the participants the practical benefits of their studies – from being able to access new services or greater efficiencies (e.g. bill-paying online), to knowing the tricks of deconstructing disinformation.

# 2. PREPARING MIL TRAINING AND/OR WORKSHOP

## Practical Guide

Let's get one thing clear: media literacy is not ONLY about media, because it is deeply connected with political and financial literacy, with our culture of communication and our value systems? In short, with everything around us. Therefore, media literacy is actually functional literacy for the 21st century.

It is important to understand how the media create visual messages and suggested interpretations, and this issue will be addressed in the first module of this guide. It is also necessary to look in depth at how the media represent the reality we live in – from the groups we belong to, to those we perceive as “other”; from experiences that are close to ours to

experiences that we will never encounter. This will be the topic of Module 2. The next module is dedicated to the eternal search for truth: how to determine whether information is credible and how to combat misinformation? The fourth module trains us to be careful with our personal data, because we leave our digital prints in the cybersphere even when we are not aware of it. Fifth and finally, it is important to understand the parameters of the social and political context in which the media function: who is the media owner, how the outlet is financed, what kind of pressures the journalists are exposed to and how that affects content.



# MODULE 1

## Visual Literacy

This module is focussed on images and how they construct our perception of the realities that surround us. In that regard, the module should include analysis of images that are being used by media and consumers in daily media consumption, and how these should be critically understood. The module should also include the aspect of production, in a variety of forms of visual

storytelling (the basics of mobile video production, photo production and editing, usage of sound in visual storytelling, etc.).

Although we often perceive photos, pictures and illustrations very superficially, their details and meaning can be very significant. The best proof for this thesis is the famous smile of Mona Lisa, which has been interpreted in hundreds of different ways.



In order to fully understand the role of an image in the media, one needs to answer the following questions: what is the message of this photo? Why was this photo chosen? What is the palette of colours? Is this image real or doctored? How is this photo related to the text it is attached to?

Today, there is a massive trend for photo enhancement, and Instagram has become a place where we display our most attractive side, in both looks and lifestyle. In order to correct imperfect reality, we often use different effects and filters. This processing of visual content in a virtual environment influences the real world: from an individual and her/his self-esteem, through employment and relationship prospects, as well as impacting on fashion, politics and tourism. Video and photographic content are almost indispensable elements of successful news stories today, and large media companies strive to turn “reading” into a multimedia experience, using

clips, illustrations, maps and infographics. Take a look at how CNN presented the story of a group of guys from Veles, North Macedonia, who posted very successful false news during the 2016 U.S. Presidential election campaign... and earned a fair amount of money doing so ([link](#)). Another example is the Australian Broadcasting Company’s coverage of the “social credit” system in China (whereby social status and privileges are based on your “rating”). In Leave no dark corner, ABC combined text, images and video ([link](#)). These examples represent a new way of storytelling, in which the text still exist, but is less important than visual content.



The knowledge that participants will gain from this module can also be applied in module 3 (the module dedicated to the deconstruction of disinformation), since false news is often constructed on the basis of image and video manipulation ([link](#)).

In some instances, it is necessary to analyse the details in order to check the authenticity of the photo or to trace its source. We will deal with the specific tools in module 3, and in this one we will review only one of the examples that show

us that a high level of visual literacy can offer valuable insight: in this video ([link](#)), *First Draft* demonstrates the fascinating methodology of checking a location using observation, search and logical reasoning.



Before starting the exercises, you can do several introduction activities which would focus participants' attention on the importance of details.

For example, start by analysing specific visual content in two rounds. Initially, show a photograph or illustration to participants for a very short time – only two to three seconds. After that, they should describe their first impression. They can do this by using key words (one to three) or a whole sentence. In the second round, the participants look at the photo/ illustration and analyse it in detail, carefully considering visual and qualitative elements and possible messages of the content that may have been hidden at first glance. You can ask the following questions: What details did you miss during the short preview? What impression or purpose do these details serve? If the participants' interpretations are different, why is that so?

Secondly, we recommend the excellent two-minute video *Test Your Awareness: Whodunnit?* ([link](#)) in which the detective is trying to find out who killed a gentleman whose body is on the floor. While the attention of viewers is dictated by the flow of inquiry into the alibis of characters present, important events are passing unnoticed. When the detective denounces the old lady planting petunias as the killer, he turns to the viewers and asks, "How observant were you?" It turns out that in just one minute, there have been 21 changes on the set: from paintings on the walls, to clothing, furniture, flowers, and the very deceased himself. Even if we replay the video, we can "track" the movement of one, two or three elements, but our attention is unfortunately limited and most of the changes will again go unnoticed.

## Module 1: The training plan

1	Introduction	30 minutes
2	<i>Exercise 1: Analysis of newspaper front page or magazine cover</i>	30 minutes
3	Break	10 minutes
4	<i>Exercise 2: Caption contest</i>	20 minutes
5	<i>Exercise 3: Video production</i>	60 minutes
6	Break	5 minutes
7	Conclusions	15 minutes



# Exercise 1.1: Analysis of front page or cover

**THE GOAL: GETTING FAMILIAR WITH THE ROLE OF VISUAL CONTENT IN MAINSTREAM MEDIA**  
**REQUIRED MATERIAL: NEWSPAPER**

Present the front page of a number of newspapers and analyze the use of graphic elements. The discussion can address the following questions: what is the newspaper's target group? How can we tell? How is the logo designed? What is the layout of elements on the page and which of these elements do we notice first? What is the

palette of colours? What is the relationship between text and image? Is there any implicit message in the image? If vulnerable groups are portrayed in the photos, how are they presented? Do the photos support any stereotypes? If you consider the photograph inappropriate, which photograph would you use instead?



## Exercise 1.2: Caption contest

**THE GOAL: BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATION BETWEEN IMAGE AND TEXT**

**REQUIRED MATERIAL: 10 PHOTOS, WRITING PAPER FOR DRAFTING**

Choose 10 photos with different content. They can be from a media archive, but also so-called stock photos (you can find a large number of free ones on, for example, [Freepik \[link\]](#)). Divide the participants into pairs and give them the task of writing a description for each photo. You may want

to limit the choices using specific requirements: (1) to make a caption using only one word; (2) to make a witty caption; (3) to make a caption in the style of a headline; (4) to make a caption out of the title of a movie or song... Finally, participants can vote for the most creative results.



## Exercise 1.3: Video production

**THE GOAL: GAINING INITIAL EXPERIENCE IN CREATING VIDEO CONTENT**

**REQUIRED MATERIAL: COMPUTERS, INTERNET**

This activity is based on the insight that composition, or the production process, will unlock the process of deconstruction: by selecting and combining different elements for a video, someone will become aware of the stages of this process and of ways to pack a particular message into audiovisual material. Today, it is not necessary for us to be expert editors in order to make interesting video material. On the contrary, there are more and more websites that enable us to create interesting content, even if we have only basic technical literacy and a little time. If you have the technical conditions (computers and good

internet connection), divide the participants into pairs and give them the task of making one short video (40 to 120 seconds) using photos and a short text. Customise the topic to their needs and professional orientations: for example, teachers can present a school lesson, reporters can announce or illustrate a story they are researching, and teenagers can prepare an advertisement for a play, which they will later share on social media. Here, we will introduce you to some websites where you can create interesting video materials without much knowledge about montage. For additional references, see *Useful Links*.



**Animoto** ([link](#)) is a website adapted for creating videos for social media. You will be offered two options – a more personal one (Animoto Memories) – or another, commercial option (Animoto Marketing). Select one of the templates offered or start from scratch. There is also a wide selection of melodies available.



**Powtoon** ([link](#)) allows you to create videos and presentations for personal, educational and business purposes. It is especially suitable for children, since it follows the visual logic of a comic book, with lots of cartoon characters and effects. There is also a 'blog through which it's possible to learn some additional editing tricks and keeping up to date with constant innovations.



**Biteable** ([link](#)) is based on five simple steps: (1) Pick a style, (2) Add your content, (3) Choose a track, (4) Tell your story and (5) Share it with everyone. This website allows you to create a video according to your needs; there are Business, Charity, Explainer, Infographic and many more packages available.



**Rawshorts** ([link](#)) is ideal for anyone who wants to create educational video materials, so it is suitable for teachers, students, and also journalists who aim to present a complicated story in an illustrative and interesting way. Special attention should be paid to the template which creates the illusion of stop-motion animation.

# MODULE 2

## Media and Diversity

This module follows on from the previous one, in that it will also build upon critical understanding of how various media forms (articles, headlines, video features, etc.) and genres (popular media,

informative, etc.) are shaping our understanding of the “other” (minorities, vulnerable groups, etc.). Issues like hate speech and war propaganda will be analysed under this module.



When analysing media content dealing with vulnerable groups, it is important to ask ourselves the following questions. How do the media create an image of “others”? How do stereotypes and prejudices spread? What is the role of an image in this process, and what is the role of text? What kind of readers’ comments can we expect, on an online article on this topic? What are acceptable and offensive expressions for members of vulnerable groups? How would I feel if the group negatively characterised a group I belong to?

The media greatly influence how identities are perceived. In this process, they sometimes rely on existing stereotypes, or sometimes they create new ones. There are also journalists and media outlets who fight stereotypes and make great efforts to deconstruct perceptions of certain groups. Such a process is usually very difficult, because it is essentially trying to undo tightly constructed attitudes. In addition to the quality of reporting on vulnerable groups, it is also important to consider the frequency of reporting on these groups in the media: how often they have the opportunity to express their views, tell their story, and whether such opportunities are related only to special days, such as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, or a Pride parade.

All these phenomena can be explored through media analysis, which has two forms: basic and in-depth. The first, basic form involves simple analytic reading strategies. By contrast, in-depth analysis is practically

a philosophical discipline, within which we search for hidden, ideological patterns that create a particular linguistic form. In this field, we are searching for the masters of meanings, hidden symbolism, keywords and slogans, positions of power, etc.

This topic is also connected with the issue of hate speech, which is a term that is difficult to define. However, according to the Committee of Ministers of the EU<sup>2</sup>, hate speech is a term that we use to describe broad discourse that is extremely negative and constitutes a threat to social peace. Hate speech covers all forms of expressions that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance.

A particular problem in this area is the spread of hate speech through social networks, which are often not subject to appropriate sanctions. Administrators respond more often to visual content than text containing expression of hatred. Additionally, the number of administrators who understand the

<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/hate-speech>

languages of the Western Balkans is insufficient, meaning that it takes initiative from a significant number of users to remove a message spreading national or religious intolerance, misogyny or homophobia from Facebook. Other online media are not much better at policing, often completely denying any responsibility for of readers' comments. Even if we find an adequate way to react to hate speech and to encourage empathy, one crucial problem – indicated by the German word *Schadenfreude* – would remain. The word signifies the experience of pleasure, joy or satisfaction that comes from learning of, or witnessing, the troubles, failures or humiliations of someone else. It is a controversial feeling that prompts us to seek out sensationalist stories and watch horror films. If your training group is mature enough, you can start a discussion on this issue. Another problem related to our reception of bad news is selective empathy. Look at the *World Tragedy Map* ([link](#)) that explains how the media discourse about victims harmonises with cultural proximity. This map may have been created as a joke, but there's a grain of truth in every joke. In the accompanying article, journalist Hanis Maketab describes selective empathy in the following way:

“Has it been so far drummed into our minds that violence in Middle Eastern and African countries is (so) commonplace that we have become desensitised to the pain and suffering of their people? This is why social media has become all the more important as an alternative means to getting news besides conventional media outlets – we cannot care about something if we don't know about it.”

It is very easy to find examples of low-quality, stereotypical reporting: texts about gay people spreading AIDS, women who have provoked rape by wearing short skirts, useless old people, Roma thieves... However, there are more and more media initiatives that insist on diversity, pluralism of thinking and respect. One of the most successful projects of this kind is Kids Talk on the YouTube channel Hiho kids. In this series, children meet members of vulnerable groups – a woman with dwarfism ([link](#)), an older woman with Alzheimer's disease ([link](#)), a former bank robber ([link](#)), a woman with hearing loss ([link](#))... In the case of a conversation with a girl who is suffering from cancer ([link](#)), we can see the keen insight, good sense and importance of this project: there is no pathos here; the focus is not exclusively on the disease; there is no insistence on painful issues.

## Module 2: The training plan

1	Introduction	30 minutes
2	<i>Exercise 1: The story of my name</i>	15 minutes
3	Break	5 minutes
4	<i>Exercise 2: Hate or tolerate</i>	40 minutes
5	Break	5 minutes
6	<i>Exercise 3: Pandora's Box</i>	50 minutes
7	Conclusions	15 minutes



## Exercise 2.1: The story of my name

**THE GOAL: SENSITISING PARTICIPANTS TO DIVERSITY PITFALLS**  
**REQUIRED MATERIAL: N/A**

This exercise can serve as a good introduction to the diversity module. Every participant gets a task to tell the story of his/her name: how did s/he get it? Is s/he named after someone? If so, do they know that person? Has the participant always liked his/her name; did s/he ever want to change it? Does that name have

any special meaning? Does the participant have a nickname; if yes, how does s/he feel about it? This game is designed to draw out a variety of questions about identity, emotions, sense of belonging and exclusion, and in this respect it can be a good introduction to the discussion.



## Exercise 2.2: Hate or tolerate

**THE GOAL: GETTING FAMILIAR WITH POSSIBLE CONCEPTS OF REPORTING ON VULNERABLE GROUPS**  
**REQUIRED MATERIAL: COMPUTER, INTERNET CONNECTION**

In this game ([link](#)) produced by MilLab, a player is a journalist of the Flash News agency, who produces a story on the topic of migrants. A process of editorial decision-making reveals whether the journalist is sensitive to diversity issues and also, whether s/he observes basic professional standards of balanced reporting.

The game gives each player an opportunity to independently build a story and publish it, seek sources and verify facts. In the first stage, a participant makes decisions by ticking one option from several possible answers; in the second stage, s/he builds a story and publishes it on the agency website.





## Exercise 2.3: Pandora's Box

**THE GOAL: DECONSTRUCTION OF STEREOTYPES THROUGH DISCUSSION**

**REQUIRED MATERIAL: "PANDORA'S BOX", PAPER FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PENS AND CRAYONS, COMPUTERS / MOBILE PHONES**

Each participant takes out the name of one vulnerable group (woman, refugee, Roma [or other ethnic minority in their country], gay, lesbian, transgender, disabled, homeless...), with the task of compiling a list of stereotypes and prejudices on which the media rely when reporting on that group. The list can be compiled on the basis of previous knowledge,

or through an methodical online search of media content about vulnerable groups. After each participant finishes her/his list, a group discussion begins. During the discussion, each of these stereotypes must be matched and neutralised with a counter-argument, which can be based on logic, personal experience or research.

# MODULE 3

## Information Verification

This module will raise awareness on opportunities and risks offered by new media, focussing on critical understanding of sources in media (who is providing information, under what circumstances and to whom); the difference between journalism and “citizens’ journalism”; usage of social networks as sources of information. This module will also tackle the problem of “fake news”, by providing insight into the roots and consequences of the problem.

Modern technologies have enabled very sophisticated manipulations, but on the other hand, there are more and more tools available to verify the authenticity of data. In the Western Balkans, there are several successful fact-checking media: those who check the statements of politicians ([Istinomer](#), [Istinomjer](#), [Faktoje](#), [Faktograf](#)), and those who are fighting against false news ([Raskrikavanje.rs](#), [Raskrinkavanje.ba](#), [Raskrinkavanje.me](#), [Fake News Tragač](#), [Proverka na fakti](#)).



Why is this struggle important? Part of the answer to this question can be found in the research *The spread of true and false news online*<sup>3</sup> published in the March 2018 issue of *Science*. To understand how false news spreads, Soroush Vosoughi and his team used a dataset of rumour cascades on Twitter from 2006 to 2017: about 126,000 rumours were spread by approximately 3 million people. The results? “Falsehood diffused significantly farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth in all categories. The effects were more pronounced for false political news than for news about terrorism, natural disasters, science, urban legends, or financial information. Controlling for many factors, false news was 70% more likely to be re-tweeted than the truth. Our results were dramatic: Analysis found that it took the truth approximately six times as long as falsehood to reach 1,500 people. When we estimated a model of the likelihood of re-tweeting we found that falsehoods were fully 70% more likely to be re-tweeted than the truth.”

When checking data, we should be very precise. Sometimes news that looks like a lie or a complete absurdity can be true. On the other hand, sometimes

news that seems to be an undeniable truth has nothing in common with reality. Take this [example](#): Researchers at the University of Washington have

<sup>3</sup> Soroush Vosoughi, Deb Roy, Sinan Aral (2018). The spread of true and false news online. *Science*, Vol. 359, Issue 6380, pp. 1146-1151.

produced a photorealistic former US President Barack Obama. Artificial intelligence was used to precisely model how Obama moves his mouth when he speaks and this technique allows them to put any words into their synthetic Barack Obama's mouth. This is why the famous Poynter Institute in its *40 time-tested tips for journalists that never go out of style* ([link](#)) suggested as its last tip: "If your mother says she loves you, check it out."

What are the reasons for spreading disinformation? Sometimes an error occurs by chance. On the other hand, false news can spread as part of political

propaganda or covert advertising, and disinformation can be found in the form of satire or troll content. If you are interested in the endless world of misinformation and if you want to know how to fight it, *Checkology* ([link](#)) is the right place for you. This course consists of 12 basic lectures, with short illustrated video guides. *Checkology* offers interactive exercises with examples from the media, as well as explanations of the right and wrong answers. In addition, you can find a handy guide about disinformation on the *First Draft news* ([link](#)) website, which is primarily dedicated to visual manipulations.



If the focus of your training is on this module, you can rely on a range of free tools. You can check the authenticity of photos by using *Google Reverse Image* ([link](#)), but don't forget the Russian search engine *Yandex* ([link](#)), which often gives better results. You can find more information about suspicious images on *TinEye* ([link](#)), and on controversial sites via *WayBack Machine* ([link](#)). For checking tweets, use *Twitter Advanced Search* ([link](#)); meanwhile, *Facebook Graph Tips* ([link](#)) can be used for more information about Facebook accounts. If the analysis of manipulation requires working with maps, we suggest the service *Map Checking* ([link](#)), and if manipulation is based on scientific results, *Sci Hub* ([link](#)) can be extremely helpful.

## Module 3: The training plan

1	Introduction	30 minutes
2	<i>Exercise 1: Fake or not</i>	30 minutes
3	Break	10 minutes
4	<i>Exercise 2: A needle in a haystack</i>	50 minutes
5	Break	5 minutes
6	<i>Exercise 3: The Movement</i>	30 minutes
7	Conclusions	15 minutes



# Exercise 3.1: Fake or not

**THE GOAL: GAINING INSIGHT INTO DIFFERENT TYPES OF VISUAL MANIPULATION**

**REQUIRED MATERIAL: COMPUTER, PROJECTOR**

This activity relies on knowledge from the first module: participants should guess whether the displayed image is real or doctored. Interesting examples can be found on the site *Fake a photo* ([link](#)), which will show you the elements from

which doctored photos were composed. The portal *Snopes*, the leading media outlet in the fight against disinformation, also contains a large archive of detected fake and mis-captioned photos ([link](#)).





## Exercise 3.2: A needle in a haystack

**THE GOAL: GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH BASIC SEARCH AND FACT-CHECKING TOOLS**

**REQUIRED MATERIAL: COMPUTER, TEST (VIA GOOGLE FORMS OR KAHOOT)**

Each participant must verify 15-20 given claims, using Google and other searching tools. The test can be easily created using Google Forms, which

will also allow easy calculation of the score at the end. The claims can refer to different spheres of life, science and culture. Here are some examples.:

A	Vaduz is the capital and the largest town in Liechtenstein.	F	Homer Simpson and Bart Simpson are voiced by the same actor.
B	In 1905, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to a woman for the first time.	G	Both Mother Theresa and Akira Kurosawa were born in the year when Halley's Comet appeared.
C	MMCCCLXVII + MCDXCI = MMMDCCLVIII	H	Nikola Tesla was Time's Person of the Year once.
D	The word "Ulysses" is not used in James Joyce's Ulysses, except in the title of the novel.	I	The top 10 nations in ice hockey (world ranking for men, 2018) are all from the Northern Hemisphere.
E	This picture is made by Nicolaes Tulp: 	J	This is a cover page of <i>Time</i> from 2009: 

**Answers:** A – No (It is the capital, but not the largest city), B – Yes, C – Yes, D – No (It can be checked on Gutenberg.org), E – No (it is made by Rembrandt), F – No (It can be checked on IMDB), G – Yes, H – No (He was on the cover page, but he was not the Person of the year), I – Yes, J – No (It is a fake cover page)

In addition to these examples, you can also offer claims taken from local political, economic and social contexts. For example, Currently, Serbia is the only ex-Yugoslav country to have a woman as prime minister; the coats of arms of Budva, Ulcinj

and Mojkovac all contain yellow; the minimal monthly consumer basket in North Macedonia in August 2018 cost €525; Tirana is not twinned with any African city; athletes from Bosnia and Herzegovina have won two Olympic medals.



## Exercise 3.3: The Movement

**THE GOAL: GETTING TO KNOW THE BACKGROUND OF CREATING MEDIA MANIPULATIONS**

**REQUIRED MATERIAL: COMPUTER, PROJECTOR**

Are you ready for *The Movement*? This video broadcast on the Comedy Central channel ([link](#)) demonstrates the process of creating a manipulation. Take a look at this ten-minute video and answer the following questions: why was this idea, which is completely absurd, uncritically accepted in the media? Which persuasive strategies did the “author” use?

How are the unconvincing elements of the story hidden? If you were the media editor who received the project book of *The Movement*, what would you check before calling the bodybuilder? If you were a TV host, what would you ask a bodybuilder who “never stepped foot in a gym”? What are the consequences of this unprofessional media approach?

# MODULE 4

## Online Safety

This module explores how we use new technologies. What is the meaning of privacy on social networks, and how can we be more responsible about our own and others' privacy? This topic is extremely important for adults and young people alike.

*Do us all a favor n kill ur self* – “This was one of the comments that 14-year-old Hannah Smith from the UK received on the social network Ask.fm, prior hanging herself in her bedroom”, according to Tijana Milosevic in her study “Protecting Children Online?”<sup>4</sup> in which she examines social media companies' cyber bullying policies. “In response to Hannah's suicide, some 15,000 people signed an online petition requesting the UK government to act against Ask.fm. The UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, called the website vile and asked its advertisers to boycott it. Ask.fm issued a

statement of condolence and promised to improve its safety measures and cyber bullying policies”. However, this study shows that social networks that we use several hours per day are still insufficiently interested in joining the fight against cyber violence.

When it comes to children, parents can block children from downloading certain applications, and the Windows operating system allows restrictions on an account assigned to a child. Also, sites like YouTube have settings that can hide inappropriate content. It is desirable to get information about programs which filter websites that you do not want to be available to your child, such as ContentWatch ([link](#)), CYBERSitter ([link](#)) and NetNanny ([link](#)). It is also useful to set restrictions on computers and phones using the Parental Control option.



If we imagine the Internet as an iceberg, standard browsers allow us to see only the tip. Some 90% of the Internet is made up of non-indexed websites, that can be a haven for hidden activity, from banned free speech to distributing child pornography, selling drugs and weapons, or facilitating identity theft. We should not create unnecessary panic, but should be aware that taking care of our data and security is extremely important in the online sphere.

Privacy on the Internet is becoming more and more the privilege of a small number of people. To protect yourself and your child, you need to think about every single piece of personal information that you post on the Internet. Pay special attention to protecting your unique ID number, bank account number, and addresses and passwords for online services. On social networks, protect your privacy by adjusting the visibility of your content, and by changing passcodes and

passwords as often as possible, aiming to make them as “strong” as possible. There are several interesting websites which raise awareness of the importance of this issue; *How secure is my password* ([link](#)) is one of them. It shows you how much time a computer needs to crack your password. For example, if you enter a password “12345678”, the password will be cracked “Instantly”. The password “aqaqaaq” will be cracked in 5 seconds, and “mediamedia” in 59 minutes.

<sup>4</sup> Tijana Milosevic (2018), *Protecting Children Online?*, Cambridge: MIT Press.



You should also take a look at this article: “Are you ready? Here is all the data Facebook and Google have on you” ([link](#)). It is a masterful summing up of what Google knows about you. The subtitles speak for themselves: *Google knows where you’ve been; Google knows everything you’ve ever searched for – and deleted; Google has an advertisement profile of you; Google knows all the apps you use; The data Google has on you can fill millions of Word documents...*

### Module 4: The training plan

1	Introduction	30 minutes
2	<i>Exercise 1: Fairy tales</i>	30 minutes
3	Break	10 minutes
4	<i>Exercise 2: Stalking</i>	30 minutes
5	Break	5 minutes
6	Exercise 3: The Fugle	40 minutes
7	Conclusions	15 minutes



## Exercise 4.1.: Fairy tales

**THE GOAL: BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE BENEFITS AND DANGERS OF MODERN TECHNOLOGIES**

**REQUIRED MATERIAL: PRINTOUTS AND WRITING PAPER**

Each participant gets a printout with the name of a fairy tale. The task is to put the tale into a modern environment, as well as to give the characters access to modern technology. Which online tools could characters use to protect themselves from trouble? Imagine Hansel and Gretel being able to use GPS to find the way home, or Alice asking Wonderland’s Google for advice regarding the magical mushroom. Gepetto

could look for the lost Pinocchio by asking his friends to share a MISSING post on Facebook and Twitter. On the other hand, the wolf from Little Red Riding Hood would have the opportunity to set up a fake social media profile and present himself as a grandmother. How much would modern technology would these characters? Would modern technology save or endanger the characters and affect the outcome of the story?





## Exercise 4.2.: Stalking

**THE GOAL: DRAWING ATTENTION TO THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET**  
**REQUIRED MATERIAL: COMPUTERS, INTERNET**

Participants are divided into pairs. Their task is to find out as much as possible about each other on the Internet in 15 minutes, using all available sources. In the end, when they exchange information about the collected data,

they should answer the following questions: Did I know that all this information about me was publicly available? Did any of the collected data hurt me? Would I like to keep some of this information private?



## Exercise 4.3.: The Fugle

**THE GOAL: UNDERSTANDING THE WIDER CONTEXT OF ONLINE SAFETY**  
**REQUIRED MATERIAL: COMPUTERS, INTERNET**

*The Fugle* ([link](#)) is a free adaptive online game that teaches us how important data security is. In this game, which participants can play alone or in pairs, the main character is the CIO of a global organisation called The Fugle, on the verge of making the first release of a biometrically authenticated mobile payment app. You will steer the project through its final stages, dealing with your internal security team, your colleagues in marketing and PR and of course your CEO. There are many

competitors and individuals out there who would love to get their hands on the data held by your organisation at such a critical time. Can you make the right choices? Can you keep the project on time and within budget? Can you protect your company from attack? Based on the format of the old “Choose Your Own Adventure” books, the game offers you the chance to step into someone else’s shoes and find out if you’re good enough to come out on top.

# MODULE 5

## How Media Function

This is a module that should present how media (traditional, as well as online) operate on a daily basis. What are the roles of editor and journalist? How are we producing information, what are the

main challenges for media in the region in terms of quality content production, capacities, political and economic pressures, etc.



In order to fully understand how the media system works, we need to think about many details. In this context, we can ask the following questions: To what extent is a media outlet independent? To what extent do media respect professional standards? What does editorial policy look like? Are there political or economic pressures? What is the ideological position of the media outlet? What advertising does it contain? How does communication with the audience take place? How strong is the potential impact of this media outlet on public opinion?

According to research, *Media Integrity Matters*<sup>5</sup> (2014), the media landscape of the Western Balkans faces great challenges:

- Public interest is subordinated to the interests of political and economic elites.
- The absence of a free market, strong dependence on financial flows from the state, inadequate regulation on unlawful concentration of ownership, hidden ownership and lack of transparency in trading media shares have led to the media's growing dependence on the state.
- The distribution of state advertising and of various forms of state subsidy represents an area of very high corruption risk. A large part of these funds is given to PR agencies, advertising, marketing and production agencies that are mainly owned by political party loyalists and persons connected with them.
- Public service broadcasters remain the part of

the media system that is most exposed to risks when it comes to particular political interests, thereby preventing independent operation in the service of society as a whole.

- Journalists are threatened, accused and attacked. Investigative journalists are especially in danger.

Audiences are often not aware of this background when they consume a media message. However, it is clear that media messages should always be analysed in relation to the social, political, cultural and media context in which they were generated. Sometimes such insight into the whole system is challenging, but any effort invested in understanding and analysis always pays off because it raises our level of media literacy. If Cicero's sentence, that history is life's teacher means anything to us, it is the story that the progress of our civilisation occurred exclusively when tolerance conquered hatred, when science dominated superstition, when wisdom opposed ignorance.

<sup>5</sup> [http://mediaobservatory.net/sites/default/files/media%20integrity%20matters\\_za%20web\\_2.pdf](http://mediaobservatory.net/sites/default/files/media%20integrity%20matters_za%20web_2.pdf)

## Module 5: The training plan

1	Introduction	30 minutes
2	<i>Exercise 1: Your choice</i>	40 minutes
3	Break	10 minutes
4	<i>Exercise 2: Adaptation</i>	40 minutes
5	Break	5 minutes
6	<i>Exercise 3: Pass the problem</i>	30 minutes
7	Conclusions	15 minutes



# Exercise 5.1.: Your choice

## THE GOAL: GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH THE NEWS SELECTION PROCESS

### REQUIRED MATERIAL: NEWS LINEUP FOR EACH PARTICIPANT

The participants form two groups of five. Each group gets the same list of 30 news headlines, three of which should be selected for the front page of a daily newspaper. The first group has the task of selecting news exclusively on the basis of public interest criteria, while the second group should select news in order to “sell” the newspaper. After joint discussion and gradual elimination,

each group comes up with three selected news items. The final results should be compared and discussed. Here are some suggested headlines. They are fictitious, but easily fit into the social and political context of the Western Balkan countries. In this respect, you can replace “Eldorado” with the name of your country. Meanwhile, “Toto” stands in for a city in your country.

<b>1</b> Prehistoric site discoveries near the capital city	<b>2</b> El Dorado drops in Forbes business ranking	<b>3</b> Where to taste the finest French wines	<b>4</b> El Dorado’s successes in the EU negotiation process	<b>5</b> Frederic Silvers (16) from Toto suspected of smuggling drugs	<b>6</b> Donald Trump declares trade war on China
<b>7</b> The first model from El Dorado on the cover of US Playboy	<b>8</b> Regional agreements will lower roaming prices	<b>9</b> At least 22 children killed by an air strike in Yemen	<b>10</b> Chinese company to invest \$ billion in El Dorado’s north	<b>11</b> Students from El Dorado win second place in Robotics World Championship	<b>12</b> A Belgian wind farm will be launched in southern El Dorado by 2025
<b>13</b> Interview – Haruki Murakami: How to write the perfect sentence	<b>14</b> The golden age for our country is coming, finance minister of El Dorado says	<b>15</b> Madonna teases tour plans: October 2019 in El Dorado?	<b>16</b> Football: 10 things to look out for this weekend	<b>17</b> Research: Why is El Dorado 25 years behind in environmental protection	<b>18</b> Girl (11) from Toto needs €25,000 for treatment
<b>19</b> How to invest in crypto-currencies?	<b>20</b> How much is El Dorado’s football team worth?	<b>21</b> Russia’s secret plan for World War III	<b>22</b> Hundreds from El Dorado join ISIS, US report says	<b>23</b> Google still lets third-party apps scan your Gmail data	<b>24</b> Interview: First Eldoradian in space
<b>25</b> Number of unaccompanied child refugees rises in El Dorado	<b>26</b> Two gypsies arrested in connection with robbing gas station in Toto	<b>27</b> New research: 1 in 20 deaths globally are a result of alcohol use	<b>28</b> Big giveaway: 10 trips to Thailand	<b>29</b> Research: Household expenses higher than income in El Dorado	<b>30</b> A young mechanic dies after being crushed by his car as he worked on it



## Exercise 5.2.: Adaptation

**THE GOAL: UNDERSTANDING POSSIBLE WAYS OF SHAPING NEWS IN ACCORDANCE WITH A TARGET GROUP**

**REQUIRED MATERIAL: PAPER AND PENS**

Give the same keywords and information to all participants. They should think up news items out of their keywords, but each pair must adapt the news item for a specific target group, by customising the form and vocabulary. Can we spread the same news to both teens and

their grandparents? Would the news look the same in a magazine for men and a magazine for women? How can we differentiate between essential and irrelevant information? How can we make boring, statistical data tangible and interesting?



# Exercise 5.3.: Pass the problem

**THE GOAL: BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF POTENTIAL TYPES AND SOURCES OF OF PRESSURE ON JOURNALISTS**  
**REQUIRED MATERIAL: PAPER**

Divide participants into groups. Give the first group a case or a problem that a journalist/ editor might face. Ask the group to identify and write down the first step in solving the problem or analysing the case (5 minutes). Pass the problem on to the next group and have them identify the next step. Continue until all groups have contributed. Potential tasks:

1. You receive a call from a politician who asks you not to publish information about a corruption case you have uncovered. When you refuse, he begins to threaten. What should you do?
2. A cosmetics manufacturer informs you that he will withdraw advertising from your television channel if you do not stop reporting that testing cosmetic products on animals is harmful. Advertising from this manufacturer accounts for 20% of your total marketing revenue. What should you do?
3. After you published an excellent interview with a transsexual person on your website, she asks you to delete the text because she received a large number of offensive messages through Facebook. What should you do?

# Useful links

Here you will find links to useful sites and channels that can help you organise your training more effectively and better adapt it to your target group(s).

[Center for media literacy](#): This website provides an accessible, integrated, research-based teaching strategy to assist schools and districts in organising and structuring teaching activities through a media literacy lens.

[Checkology](#): This virtual classroom's lessons help educators equip their students with tools to evaluate and interpret news and learn how to determine what news and other information to trust, share and act on.

[Digital literacy for adults](#): This is a great starting point for training aimed at adults, this is a great starting point. This publication contains literacy teaching strategies for people over 55.

[Fact-checkers in the Western Balkan region](#): [Istinomer](#), [Istinomjer](#), [Faktoje](#), [Faktograf](#), [Raskrinkavanje.ba](#), [Raskrikavanje.rs](#), [Raskrinkavanje.me](#), [Fake News Tragač](#), [Proverka na fakti](#).

[First draft news](#): This free service undertakes practical journalism projects in the field, to research effective methods for tackling information disorder online. It also provides practical and ethical guidance on how to find, verify and publish content sourced from the social web.

[Freepik](#): A site with thousands of free photos and illustrations that will help your presentations and teaching materials better engage your students.

[Kahoot](#): This website makes it easy to create, share and play fun learning games or trivia quizzes in minutes. The service is intended for work with children, but adults can also enjoy it.

[Media observatory](#): A resource centre which contains a large body of research dedicated to the issue of media integrity in the countries of the Western Balkans.

[Media smarts](#): A Canadian website with many interesting articles on media literacy, as well as simple games designed for children.

[MilLab](#): This website is aimed at developing critical thinking in youth and supporting informed media consumption, through six topics: Media and Information; Propaganda and Verification; Transparency; Hate Speech; Cyber; Personal Data/ Privacy.

[Presentations](#): If you want to prepare attractive presentations for your training, we suggest [Canva](#) or [Prezi](#). While Canva will provide you with exceptional styling, Prezi creates a dynamic experience.

[Regional initiatives](#): In the countries of the Western Balkans, there are special websites dedicated to MIL, which also offer a large number of educational materials. Some of these websites are: [Digitalni pogon](#), [Medijumska pismenost](#), [MedijskaPismenost.me](#)...

[Vox](#): A YouTube channel offering news and informational coverage, with many topics of relevance to media literacy, from Facebook to confirmation bias, to false news and the media of the future. We are social: This publication contains an excellent overview of up-to-date information on digital trends and social networks for all countries of the world, including the countries of the Western Balkans.

# AUTHOR

**Stefan Janjić** graduated from the University of Novi Sad, Serbia, with a bachelor's degree in journalism in 2014, and was class valedictorian, before earning his M.A. degree in Communicology. He is now studying for a doctorate in interdisciplinary studies of social sciences and humanities, at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. He also works as a project coordinator and media literacy trainer at the Novi Sad School of Journalism, and as a teaching assistant at the Media Department of the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. Stefan has twice won the Extraordinary Award of the Senate of the University of Novi Sad for scientific work, and has also twice received the Award for the best young researcher in the field of social sciences (the Radomir Konstantinović Foundation "Being and Language" award and the NIN literary scholarship). He has been editor-in-chief of the fact-checking website "Fake News Tracer" since 2017. Stefan has published more than 20 scientific papers on discourse analysis, media literacy and information disorders, as well as a novel, *Ništa se nije desilo* (Nothing Happened)



**Media for Citizens – Citizens for Media** is a project by seven media development organizations (**Foundation “Mediacentar”, Albanian Media Institute, Macedonian Institute for Media, Montenegro Media Institute, Novi Sad School of Journalism, Peace Institute, SEENPM**) in the Western Balkans aimed at building the capacity of civil society organisations in the region to advance media and information literacy (MIL).

**Media for Citizens – Citizens for Media**

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