ReNews

Bringing fresh eyes
to media literacy

MEDIA LITERACY HANDBOOK

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS THE RENEWS PROJECT?

ReNews is a transnational project funded by the Erasmus + Programme of the European Union, aiming at improving Media Literacy Education (MLE) skills. ReNews works to empower a new generation of digital citizens, improving their resilience against hateful content and disinformation online as well as developing critical thinking skills.

What is Media Literacy Education? Why is it important?

Media literacy education offers keys to learn how to identify facts and process information. It provides a better understanding of how the media work, particularly by analysing how they achieve their objectives. **Media literacy education aims for everyone to use media wisely, to express themselves and to participate in public debate relying on facts, not emotions.**

Who and what is this manual for?

This handbook is designed for trainers, teachers, librarians and professionals from the socio-educational field. Ready-to-use resource, this guide is organised by themes and offers theoretical content, examples of exercises, and food for thoughts on media literacy. The content of this manual has been designed for young people between the ages of 14 and 18, but we encourage you to adapt the activities and examples to the age group you're teaching to.

Why is Media Literacy Education important in the Covid context?

This handbook has been developed in the particular context of the global health crisis of COVID-19, **characterised by an exponential use of the Internet and social networks as a gateway to information**. Given this thirst for information, media literacy is all the more crucial to provide users with critical thinking skills and tools to be well informed.

Final exercise: Creating a web magazine

This handbook leads and guides students to a final production in the form of a web magazine. Indeed, **Media Literacy Education is not only about understanding and safely using media, it is also about encouraging young people to become involved as responsible citizens.** They will be invited to put into practice the concepts they have learned by becoming apprentice journalists themselves. They will create a digital magazine in which they can integrate articles, podcasts and videos. The media productions of young people who wish to do so will then be published on the project website.

RESOURCE ROADMAP

TOP TIPS FOR DELIVERING MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION

A collection of some of the main takeaways that can help teachers deliver the best possible lessons to their students from experienced trainers.

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HEALTHY MEDIA DIET

This section - which can be used as a handout for students - offers 10 tips for students to take control of their media and information practices.

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Key Topic 1 MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

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This chapter discusses hate speech and online abuse. It aims at empowering students to identify and respond to hate speech online in a constructive way as well as developing their digital citizenship.

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This section functions as a guide to help both teachers and students to create a web magazine to hone their media literacy skills.

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TOP TIPS FOR DELIVERING MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION

From our collective experiences delivering media literacy education to young people across the world, we have learned many valuable lessons on how to make this learning as engaging and impactful as possible.

Here is a collection of some of the main takeaways that can help you deliver the best possible lessons to your students:

1 Ensure that media literacy can be embedded into your school timetable, and links to wider learning outcomes across the curriculum.

Given how busy schools are, it is important that media literacy is not perceived as an additional burden. Take language from the national curriculum and show how media literacy education fits into it. This may be via Citizenship classes, or as module additions in other relevant subjects (e.g. history; media studies; ICT) or as an extracurricular offer throughout the year.

2 Lessons should balance discussion-based learning with practical activities.

This will allow students to absorb vital information, formulate their own opinions and work through 'grey areas' with their peers. It also ensures that media literacy is anchored in something tangible and relevant to their everyday lives, rather than an abstract set of terms.

3 When discussing key topics, use examples that will resonate with your students.

For example, when referencing a biased publication, or a platform where they might find echo chambers, be sure to relate these to young people's real-life experiences; this should encourage them even more to take part in activities and discussions.

4 Balance the negatives with the positives.

Yes, the online world can be a scary place where lots of bad behaviour can be found. But it can also be a positive environment, where all users can learn, explore, share, and connect with each other. Try to strike a balance: avoid suggesting that problematic behaviour is everywhere, or that they should be sceptical of everything they encounter online – this could breed news avoidance or a trend towards conspiracy theories.

5 Encourage students to demonstrate effective media literacy on and offline.

Impactful media literacy education encourages and inspires young people to demonstrate a set of positive behaviours and attitudes when engaging with media in its various forms. Ask them in follow-up lessons: have you identified disinformation online yet, and how did you respond? Have you stood up for a friend online, and called out abuse and harassment? Be sure to celebrate these examples of good digital citizenship, so students recognise the value in their good deeds.

HEALTHY MEDIA DIET

In an ever more connected world where you can find information everywhere, a healthy media diet diet is essential for young people.

Consuming media is like eating. Getting information from media which share reliable information is providing your mind with healthy and fertile food to understand the world around you, interact with others, and build and develop your critical thinking skills.

We suggest that you take control of our media and information practices in 10 points:

1 **PAUSE AND REFLECT**
In a context of rapid and abundant flow of information, take your time to check and reread the information.

2 **CHECK SOURCES**
Who is the author? Which media published the information? Is it known for being trustworthy?

3 **CHECK PUBLICATION DATE**
When was the information published? Is it still relevant?

4 **DISTINGUISH FACTS FROM OPINIONS**
In some cases, the news article precises if it is opinion based, otherwise, look for cues, biases and opinions.

5 **DIVERSIFY SOURCES**
Use several sources and compare them to get a more complete picture.

6 **SHARE AN ARTICLE THAT YOU FULLY READ**
Titles don't always tell the whole story and can sometimes be misleading.

7 **SEARCH**
Don't just wait for information. Look for it.

8 **QUESTION YOURSELF**
If you always agree with what you read... it may be time to confront other opinions and sources.

9 **REPORT DISINFORMATION/ HATE SPEECH ONLINE**
Don't let yourself be dragged down by a polemic generated by a hate message or false information. Be proactive and promote positive content! You will lift others peers up and improve your online community.

10 **PARTICIPATE**
Create a blog, a vlog or a magazine. Get involved in a constructive and creative way on social media.

Key Topic 1.

MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students know what information and media are.
- Students can identify their country's main media outlets.
- Students understand the difference between traditional and online media.
- Students understand the role and importance of media and journalists in a democratic society.
- Students understand the influence of social media in our relationship with information.

POTENTIAL STARTER ACTIVITY:

During 10-15 minutes, students analyze "news" to see if they can be considered information in the journalistic sense.

You can guide them with these questions:

Are all of these examples news in your opinion? If not, how would they qualify? What are the characteristics of news? How do we prioritize the information?

Examples:

- ***"I went skateboarding with some friends yesterday"*** Anecdote
- ***"The Christmas celebration falls on December 24"*** Commonplace
- ***"I heard that one of my classmates posed naked in a photo"*** Gossip/ Rumor
- ***"Saturday November 7, Joe Biden is elected 46th president of the United States according to Le Monde"*** Information

INTRODUCTION

Information is critical for our societies. In an increasingly complex world and media environment, news outlets have a responsibility to facilitate citizens' understanding of current events. If the information we receive is not reliable, severe consequences could arise, from irrational reactions to putting our political and social systems at risk.

During elections for example, the media are a key source for voters to inform themselves on candidate's proposals, programmes and debates. They act as safeguards for the smooth running of our democracies and are protected by freedom of press laws.

Technologies and the Internet allow for massive dissemination of information of all kinds. This digital world requires citizens to have the tools, skills and resilience to navigate safely and positively. Furthermore, within a fast-paced and ever-evolving online realm, critical thinking skills and adaptability are essential.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Media: the means of communication, for example radio and television, newspapers, magazines, and the internet, that reach or influence people widely.

Information: conveyed fact that comes from identified, verified and corroborated sources.

Critical thinking: Combination of a state of mind and a set of practices that allow one to step back from one's environment to form an opinion or make a decision. In the context of information processing, it means taking the time to inform oneself, to evaluate the information, to distinguish between facts and interpretations, to confront the different interpretations and finally to evaluate these interpretations.

Information in the journalistic sense must fulfill three criteria:

1. It must be of public interest:

To be considered information in the media and social sense of the word, a fact must be of public interest. For example, the fact that Mark went skateboarding with his friends last week does not constitute information that is likely to be of interest to all the other citizens.

2. It must be factual:

Information must involve facts; it must be factual. Following on our example, this means that the score of the match or a player being injured on the field are information in their own right because they comprise observable facts, actions, and results. Conversely, rumours of a player being transferred to another club is not information.

3. It must be verified and verifiable:

To confirm its status as information, a fact must be verified and verifiable. In other words, we must pay heed to the idea of proof to check the facts.

MEDIA HISTORY

Following the Second World War, supports multiplied and cement themselves; homes were equipped with television, radio channels proliferated and many newspapers and magazines were created. When we talk about «traditional media» we refers in particular to all the mass media that characterised the 20th century (television, radio, written press).

As a result, the information available to citizens has become more substantial and varied than it was before, reinforcing the democratic influence/role of the media. With the emergence of the Internet in the early 1990s, the sources of information have become even more diversified. It is therefore up to us, responsible citizens, to take a step back from the information we have access to in order to determine its reliability.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Today, traditional media are competing with «new media» that have emerged thanks to the democratization of the Internet. (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Tiktok, Twitter, blogs etc.).

The latter have changed people's relationship with information. **Based on interaction, social networks have made it possible for internet users to become actors in the public debate.** This active role of the citizen is embodied by the possibility for anyone to comment / post / broadcast / very easily import information online. Nevertheless, this possibility offered by social media to any citizen can potentially be dangerous:

- difficulty distinguishing between expert and uninformed opinions
- difficulty in prioritizing the value of information
- circulation of dis- and misinformation.
- circulation of hateful content
- generalized state of anxiety

JOURNALISM

ACTIVITY: EMBODYING THE JOB OF A JOURNALIST

DURATION: 45 minutes

EQUIPMENT: computer with PowerPoint and an overhead projector, flip chart

1. Divide the class into small groups of 3/4 people
2. Each group answers the following questions for 15 to 20 minutes and reports back to the other groups.

Imagine you are a journalist:

- What is your job?
- What are the rules you are bound to follow?
- What organizations and persons are you working with?
- What are the different stages of your work as a journalist?

OBJECTIVES:

Encourage students to find their own definition of journalism, understand their role and how media, the local media environment and international media environment function.

ELEMENTS OF ANSWERS:

The different stages of the journalist's job with the example of a money heist

1. The fact. (The Royal Mint of Spain was taken hostage by a group of eight people dressed in red suits)
2. The alert. A journalist is informed by his sources. (The Royal Mint staff, witnesses, social networks...)
3. The verification. Several journalists are mobilized. (They interview the Royal Mint Public Relations Officer, the police, the witnesses on site...)
4. Writing. The journalist writes his article or commentary. (The editors proofread and correct, caption the photos)
5. Publication. When the information is cross-checked, it is published.

The journalist is a professional bound to respect deontological rule (ethics, methods and objectivity) He is not a simple vector of information; he helps others to have the keys to understand current events.

There are many possible ways a journalist can address information. For example, you can find: "**Breaking news**" when the journalist, trying to be as neutral as possible, merely presents and recounts the facts in detail. You can also have an "**Explained information**" or a "**Commented information**" in which the journalist analyses the facts, and has more freedom to interpret and decipher the context by giving his/her opinion or judgment.

The very profession of the journalist has been **impacted by the arrival of social networks. Journalists no longer have a monopoly on information.** Sometimes this can lead to an increase in false or incomplete information or information taken out of context. In other cases, it can produce remarkable examples of «citizen journalism», capable of analysing and critically looking at aspects of society that are not taken into account by mainstream journalists.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND CALLS TO ACTION

Neutrality and objectivity are ideals and objectives, they are impossible to achieve even for a good journalist. If you want to read news as objectively as possible, you must look at the facts and recognize comments and opinions as such. Moreover, encourage your students to diversify their sources across the media landscape.

In the era of social media, it is important to question the truthfulness of information circulating online. **Who wrote it? What is their background? What is their objective? Finally, how can we discern the true from the false?**

Giving your opinion on a specific topic on your social media does not make you a journalist. Yet, it is important to encourage citizens to take part in the process of information flow (e.g. the opportunity to create a citizen media/blog, to comment/correct on wrong/false information and to give sources or fact-check).

Dealing with huge amounts of information is a challenge for humankind, young citizens play a key part in this. They need to be able to pause, to withhold their judgement and to think critically before reacting to pieces of content. **In short, encourage your students to think critically.**

Key Topic 1.

ACTIVITY

WORD CLOUD: DISCOVERING THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE

DURATION
30 minutes

EQUIPMENT
Whiteboard, pens or markers

ACTIVITY INTRODUCTION

In this word cloud activity, the word 'media' is written on the board. Students are asked to work as a group to reveal what they know about the world of media and combine their knowledge.

The activity gives you the opportunity to present the major players of your country's media in a clear and organised fashion whilst pointing out how they differ.

In addition, you will have a clear idea of your audience's media habits (What kind of media do they use? Where do they get their news?) and will be able to tailor the workshop to their habits and preferences. Students should be encouraged to provide details or support for their responses and to give their opinions to further discuss certain topics.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

1. Write the word 'media' on a visual aid and jot down the names of media outlets or types (television, radio, written press, social media) that participants come up with.
2. Categorise the media outlets participants suggest by their type.
3. Identify which media are public and private.
4. Separate traditional media from social media. Most participants will be frequent users of social media (Instagram/Snapchat/Facebook) either to deliberately look for news or just to pass the time. For this reason, the question of social media's place in the media landscape will either be brought up spontaneously by participants or by the instructor. This is a good time to introduce themes of democratisation of information on the internet and the potential for manipulation brought about by social networks.

At the end of this activity, you can open the discussion with questions such as:

- **Are social networks media?**
- **What are the differences with traditional media?**
- **Does the possibility of posting or writing on a social network make every Internet user a potential journalist? Why?**
- **Which types of media do you trust the most with delivering neutral information? Why?**

Objectives of the activity:

- Realize a mapping of all media by category (television, radio, print, social media)
- Understand the distinction between private and public media, understand who owns what and the interests of each
- Understand the distinction between the information distributed on traditional media and on social networks

Key Topic 2.

MEDIA BIAS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students can define what is meant by 'bias'.
- Students can spot and analyse different types of biased writing.
- Students can explain the basic effects of media bias on society.
- Students can explain the benefits of getting information from different sources, as well as the risks of a narrow media diet.

POTENTIAL STARTER ACTIVITY:

Display a biased headline e.g. "Kylian Mbappe is the best football player on the planet" or "The internet is the most important invention in the history of mankind".

Ask your students:

- Do you think this is true, false or neither?
- Is this a form of mis-/disinformation? Why/why not?
- What was the intention of the writer? (e.g. to persuade, inform, debate)
- As a reader, what purpose might this article serve?

Display the below definition of bias: have they seen this type of content before, e.g. on social media? If so, can they provide specific examples?

INTRODUCTION

It can be argued that, to some extent, **all media contains varying degrees of bias**. Everybody, including trained journalists and editors, approaches the world through the lens of their own experience and can make assumptions about other people, events or issues, whether consciously or unconsciously. As seen in the previous chapter, there are various ways information can be presented to us, and all of these are likely to reflect the author's bias in some form.

Bias presents itself in different ways and to different extents in each piece of content. For example, many breaking news outlets attempt to be as neutral as possible, adhering to an ethical code, and seeking to report solely on the facts of a situation, with the author's own opinion 'hidden' as far as possible. However, other media outputs actively seek to sway their readers in a certain direction, and may blur the line between fact and opinion. Some publications prefer this type of opinion-based style over factual reporting, either because they have a particular political or social agenda, because their editorial team all share a similar worldview, or because they recognise that sensationalist, partisan media often attracts a bigger audience!

Social media are not exempt from this, as their business model functions around engagement from users (likes, comments, reactions etc.). Controversial content is more likely to elicit a response, and can therefore be promoted by platform algorithms (the system which governs information shown on a Newsfeed, for example).

It is crucial to understand that opinion-based content is not inherently 'bad'. Unlike reporting which outlines the basic facts of a situation (e.g. key figures, events and places), such pieces can help the reader to interpret events, both in terms of their wider context and potential impact. However, readers must be careful not to confuse the two, and should use them for different purposes - factual coverage to learn about the main elements of a story, and various opinion pieces to help inform or challenge their own views on the topic. By understanding when something is biased, a user can prevent situations where another person (or even an algorithm!) determines their perspective on the world.

KEY DEFINITION

Bias occurs when someone shows disproportionate favouritism or prejudice towards a particular topic, person, or perspective, instead of being fair and balanced. Bias can be found throughout the media - whether in writing, radio, or TV - and is often used to drive people towards a certain point of view. In doing so, biased content often appeals to the audience's emotions, rather than encouraging them to think for themselves.

Key Topic 2.

Limited awareness of bias in the media can lead people to assume that the viewpoint of only a few sources provides 'the full picture', and is therefore the only information they need when forming their own opinion. By out-sourcing the process of analysis and deliberation to others, we may also abandon our own critical thinking skills. This can be problematic if those we allow to shape our perspective have divisive, harmful views towards certain individuals or groups in society, and never provide an alternative viewpoint.

Biased content often relies on sensationalist emotive language to grab the audience's attention, trying to persuade them through gut responses rather than debate or logic. Those publishing content online are aware that it must provoke a reaction (whether a 'like', comment, or share) in order to get more exposure. As a result, there is greater incentive to produce content as dramatic and attention-grabbing as possible. In the next chapter we will explore the potential consequences of such a system - for example that the more we engage with content, the more social media learns our habits and serves us similar content, which can in turn place us within 'filter bubbles'.

Many different types of biased writing exist, including:

- **Positive bias** (favouritism and exaggerated praise for the subject matter) and **negative bias** (extreme attacks and exaggerated negative statements towards the subject matter);
- **Political bias:** Many publications lean towards left or right-wing ends of the political spectrum. This influences reporting, favouring a certain political party, representative or viewpoint that is aligned with a particular brand of politics;
- **Bias by omission:** The topics covered by media outlets may vary, with some choosing not to report certain stories or information supporting different viewpoints or ideas;
- **Bias by selection of sources:** A writer may use more sources that support their views than others, and exclude evidence or data which supports opposing ideas;
- **Statements presented as facts:** Used to convince an audience by leaving minimal space for analysis and/or reflection on the argument: e.g. "The latest controversy is evidence that they have not changed their ways";
- **Emotionally manipulative language/sensationalism:** Topics can be presented in a shocking, outrageous manner, in order to create a lasting and emotive impression. This may distract the audience from thinking critically about the story and can be used for broadly positive (e.g. convincing people to donate to charities) or negative (e.g. stirring up anger towards specific groups, institutions or individuals) purposes.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND CALLS TO ACTION

It's essential that we are aware of bias in the media we consume, and can challenge information to form our own world view. Young people may be particularly susceptible to biased content, if they have had fewer opportunities to hone their critical thinking skills or form opinions on key issues/events. **Here are some top tips you can share with your students to help them identify bias in the media.**

Question how balanced or biased the information is.

Ask yourself, does it take a range of views into account or are the sources all one-sided?

Guard against outrage and sensationalism.

Biased media content will often target our emotions to convince us of a specific viewpoint. Reflect on the language being used in the content you view or read: is it trying to shock or outrage you, and why might the author target your emotions in this way? How do they want you to think, or feel or act in response, and do you actually agree with this perspective?

Slow down online!

On social media we are presented with seemingly endless content and information, all of which is vying for our attention and prompting us to react in some way. This content often targets our strongest emotions, including outrage, empathy and envy, but a knee-jerk response is never the most useful way forward. Pausing before we comment, like, share or even just click on a link enables us to process what we are seeing, consider how we really feel and choose an appropriate response.

Become independent researchers.

The internet has opened up endless sources of information for us to explore and learn, so why just accept what you see on your newsfeed as fact? The information we are served on social media, and even the top results on search engines like Google, are not necessarily verified or vetted. Developing a well-informed opinion means being proactive, and not relying on others to dictate your views. Try reading widely around a topic, sourcing your own information and challenging your first impressions - you may not agree with a piece of content, but differing opinions help us to articulate what we do/do not believe!

Key Topic 2.

ACTIVITY

IDENTIFY THE BIAS!

DURATION

30 minutes

EQUIPMENT

Computer with Microsoft PPT, interactive whiteboard or overhead projector, printed examples of biased writing for each group

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTION

1. Separate the whole class into smaller groups (3 to 4 students each)
2. Give each group an example of biased writing.
3. During 10-15 minutes, students analyse the content they've been given. You can help them by asking them some key questions:
   - Is this biased writing? To what extent?
   - What does the author want you to think?
   - What are the signs that it is biased writing?
4. Display the different types of biases that are found on page 13 and on the PPT slide. Ask your students in which categories the example falls. (10 minutes)
5. During this exercise, try to ask them questions such as:
   - Which types of bias are present here?
   - How do you know? What are the signs of this type of bias?
   - Which headline/extract interests you the most?
   - Which one would you share on your social media and why?
6. Finish by leading a discussion on the different consequences of biased writing. Try to introduce the links between sensationalism or emotionally manipulative language and higher rates of engagement online.
7. Finally, you can open up the debate with open questions:
   - Can you convince someone without using biased content?
   - Is bias always dangerous?
   - What is the difference between a fact and an opinion?
   - Does the writer of this headline/text try to present it as a fact or an opinion?
   - Where have you seen bias in the media before?
   - **What impact can bias have on people?**
   - Is biased writing always bad? What purpose can it serve?
   - What makes these stories more likely to be shared online (via social media or private groups)?

Simpler version of the activity:

1. Present your student with a biased piece of text (stating that it is biased)

2. Separate the class in groups of 4 and ask them to find what makes the extract biased (e.g specific wording, sources...)

3. Gather the class and reflect on the findings:
- What does the author want you to think?
- Does the writer present a fact or an opinion?

4. Display the different types of bias that are found in the 'Explanation' section of this chapter, and on the PPT slide.

5. Split the class again into groups of 4 and have them rewrite the extract as unbiased

6. Regroup the class and have students present their rewritten extracts

7. Open up the debate with open questions:
- Can you convince someone without using biased content?
- Is bias always dangerous?
- What is the difference between a fact and an opinion?
- Does the writer of this headline/text try to present it as a fact or an opinion?
- Where have you seen bias in the media before?
- **What impact can bias have on people?**

Key Topic 3.

FILTER BUBBLES/ECHO CHAMBERS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students can define what a filter bubble is and explain its impact on individuals/society.
- Students can define what an echo chamber is, and describe examples from their own lives
- Students can explain the impact echo chambers can have on individuals/society.
- Students can articulate the potential benefits and negative consequences of both filter bubbles and echo chambers.
- Students can explain the benefits of getting information from diverse sources.

POTENTIAL STARTER ACTIVITY:

Ask your students:

- How many of you have looked for a brand or product and then been shown ads about it the next time you logged on?
- How many of you have browsed a specific topic on TikTok/ Instagram (for example videos of dogs or dance routine) and then noticed similar videos filling your newsfeed?
- How many of you have discussed something with friends, then been served similar content on social media?
- How many of you follow fanpages of an artist, sports team or influencer?
- *Optional: how many of you have encountered [insert relevant viral trend] on social media?*

Establish fun rules to support the activity - for example those who reply positively to the questions could run across the room and reach for the wall. This exercise is made to highlight how the internet is tailored to our preferences and history.

INTRODUCTION

When we spend time online, whether using search engines to explore the web, or interacting with other users via social media, the content we see is usually selected by some form of automated system ('algorithm'). Each individual's online experience can be personalised to present them with similar content based on their previous search history, likes or habits.

The more we browse, interact, and share online, the more our data is collected by the platforms and websites we visit and used to learn about us. In turn, this means the content we view is more tailored to our personalities. **If we feed the system something, it will assume we want more in the future!**

This obviously comes with perks: when our online experiences are curated, we can interact with like-minded people, discover content in our fields of interest, even see ads and opportunities that match our needs and desires. But there are clear downsides too: algorithms may limit or influence the diversity of information we encounter online, and as such our understanding of the world may become skewed or narrowed. We may end up with a one-sided or overly simplified understanding of issues and events, in a way which does not reflect the complex reality, or become more vulnerable to scams and deceit online. When this happens, we experience what are known as **the 'filter bubble' and 'echo chamber' effects**.

In this chapter, we will explore how filter bubbles and echo chambers can shape our experience, both on- and offline. We will present both potential benefits and negative consequences of these phenomena, and propose ways for young people to 'burst' their own bubbles and get the most from their online experience.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Filter Bubbles:

Filter bubbles occur when users are suggested content based on previous internet search history and interactions. Over time they can isolate users from any viewpoints or interests different from their own. Long-term, this can limit people's understanding of complex topics or events and reduce empathy and dialogue between different groups.

Echo chambers:

Echo chambers are social spaces in which ideas, opinions and beliefs are reinforced by repetition within a closed group.

You may have heard of these two in the same context, but they are quite different! Filter bubbles are driven by technology as a result of our previous online activity (likes, comments, searches etc.). They can be counteracted (see more below), but are not explicitly chosen by a user.

Echo chambers are spaces that can occur both **on- and offline**, where all the views within a group seem to reflect your own. In the digital space, they can be the result of a filter bubble - if we are continually served similar content, we may gradually lose any diversity of opinion or experience in our browsing. It's just like an echo: your ideas are bouncing back at you!

The major search engines, social media platforms and/or entertainment services - including the likes of Facebook, Google, Twitter, YouTube, Netflix, TikTok and Amazon - use algorithms to curate our browsing. These algorithms select what each user will see based on data that we voluntarily give to these platforms, either by agreeing to Terms of Service or giving specific permissions to a website (think about all the times you've clicked "Accept Cookies" on a webpage!). This data reflects our interests, beliefs, behaviours, and hobbies, building a picture of 'who we are' and predicting what might keep us engaged further. It also includes things we might dislike or even hate, as we are likely to react to them. This means the content we are served is often closely tailored to our personalities, more than we even sometimes realise!

Closed groups or 'echo chambers' may occur when the individuals and groups we interact with, or the information we consume, continuously reinforces our existing viewpoints, biases, and prejudices. Most people have first-hand experience of this: whether in a WhatsApp group with our closest friends, a comments section on the profile of our favourite influencer, or even just sitting around the dinner table with our family!

Speaking to people who share similar interests can make our perspectives feel valid and relevant. But if you only engage with with people you already agree with, you may begin to view your opinions as 'facts' and demean anyone with different or opposing ideas. This can be problematic: if our opinions become entrenched, we may find it increasingly difficult to empathise with, or even simply listen to, people with a different stance on issues. When this happens, divisions can form between individuals or groups in society, and people may start to adopt an 'us versus them' mentality.

EXPLAINER ACTIVITY

Students are likely to encounter the filter bubble effect every time they visit a platform such as YouTube or TikTok, among others. These platforms use algorithms to recommend videos based on a user's previous 'watch history'. To demonstrate this, you could encourage students to look at the recommended videos on their YouTube homepage when logged into a personal account, versus when they browse the site as an 'anonymous' (i.e. logged out) user.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND CALLS TO ACTION

We may not always want to 'burst' our filter bubbles or step out of our echo chambers; after all, who doesn't enjoy the convenience of reading, watching, listening or discussing information that is precisely tailored to our personalities! At the same time, it can be useful to de-personalise our web experiences or speak to those we perceive as different, in order to explore the world from another angle. Here are some top tips you can share with your students to help them broaden their horizons on- and offline:

Remind yourself: what you see online is not random.

Algorithms are constantly providing us with content they *think* we want to see, or which are likely to keep us on the platform longer, based on our previous habits. Understanding that there is a process of selection can help mitigate the belief that what we see is a panoramic or comprehensive view of the wider world.

Clear your 'Cookies' from time to time.

Cookies are the files that store your data every time you visit a website (when you 'Accept Cookies'). With permission, these can then be shared with other sites to help them recommend content or adverts you are likely to engage with, based on your previous search or watch history. Students can refuse or personalise the Cookies they allow on various websites to manage the effects of their personalised web.

Delete your browser history occasionally.

Depending on which search engine you use, the top results may be selected based, in part, on your browser history. This means you are likely to be served the same websites you have previously browsed, further distancing you from new perspectives and sources of information. Alternatively, you could try using an anonymous browser, such as DuckDuckGo.com - this protects users' privacy and does not personalise search results. Bonus point as deleting your browser history also clears the above mentioned cookies!

Embrace diversity and reject stereotypes!

By seeking out different interests and interactions, we can learn more about the world, and recognize there is more that connects us to other people than divides us. One easy way to begin doing this is to follow people and pages online that hold different perspectives to your own! Adopting a curious mind-set and finding out what other people think will help you resist lazy stereotypes and challenge yourself to understand ideas before establishing your own opinion.

Check your confirmation bias!

Confirmation bias leads us to seek out or agree with information that supports our pre-existing views. This is exactly what happens in an echo chamber. When interacting with others, reading or watching content, we should pause to think: *do I only agree with this, or am I only enjoying this, because it supports what I already believe?* To truly demonstrate critical thinking, we must be able to question *why* we agree with something.

Key Topic 3.

ACTIVITY

SAME STORY, DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

DURATION

30-45 minutes

EQUIPMENT

Computer with Microsoft PPT, interactive whiteboard or overhead projector, printed activity headlines for each group (see next page)

ACTIVITY INTRODUCTION

This activity is designed to simulate both the filter bubble and echo chamber effects, demonstrating the consequences of only receiving information from liked-minded sources. At the end of the activity, students should recognise the benefits of a varied media diet, whether traditional news or social media, and how exploring the many dimensions of an issue can help us form our own opinions.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

1. Separate the class into three smaller groups. Provide each group with a set of unique headlines (see next page) about the same topical issue. There should be no more than 5 headlines in a set, and each set should have a different perspective on the topic being discussed: a **positive bias**, **negative bias**, and **neutral** perspective.

2. In their groups, students should read the headlines and try to establish what happened in this story. They should extract as much information from the headline as possible, before reaching their conclusions on what happened.

3. After 5-10 minutes, each group should nominate a member to present their news story to the whole class. Start with the **positive group** and end with the **neutral group**. They should comment on:

a) Who is involved in this story?
b) What happened to them?
c) Is anyone to blame for this issue or event?
d) How does the group feel about this story and its subjects?

4. Once all the groups have presented their headlines, you can reveal that the first two groups were given biased content, and discuss in what ways these headlines were biased.

5. If you haven't done so before the activity, introduce the class to the concept of filter bubble.

6. Ask the class to consider: what might happen when we only receive our information from a limited number of sources, and/or if wider information that does not reflect our biases gets filtered out?

7. Discuss the concept of 'echo chambers', asking why it might be beneficial to read diverse sources of information and speak to people with different opinions, beliefs or interests to your own. Ask students to consider where they might have encountered echo chambers and filter bubbles in their own lives.

8. Finally, ask students to work in pairs or small groups to list ways in which they can 'burst' their filter bubbles or step out of their echo chambers. You can use the Key Takeaways lists from Section 2 in this chapter as prompts, providing them with some ideas to get started. After around ten minutes' discussion, collect feedback from each of the pairs or groups, before revealing the Key Takeaways slide.

ACTIVITY GUIDANCE

When choosing the headlines for this activity, you should select a topic they are unlikely to have strong opinions about already, otherwise the learning may be clouded by pre-existing bias. If you are struggling to find a good news story with diverse headlines and coverage, you can always invent your own.

An example set of headlines could be about the youth climate strikes that took place around the world in 2019:

Positive Headlines:

- *Courageous kids stand up for their futures, doing the right thing for their planet.*
- *What superstars: children around the world bravely walk out of their classrooms to protest the destruction of the planet.*
- *Planet protectors! Young people showing adults how to do it, striking for the safety of their future.*

Negative headlines :

- *Selfish children ruin the school day for others by abandoning their lessons to attend unhelpful protests.*
- *Lazy kids use climate change protests as an excuse to skip school for the day.*
- *Parental panic! Selfish students scare their parents by running away from school to protest and not telling anyone.*

Neutral headlines :

- *Youth climate strikes take place across the world on July 14th.*
- *Over one million children globally attend protests over climate change.*
- *Kids all over the world become climate activists for the day!*

Before moving on to the next topic, you should ensure that students have understood the concepts of filter bubbles and echo chambers. Some useful questions could include:

- What might happen if we only get our information from sources that have the same opinion on a topic?
- What might happen if we only look at content that is targeted for us on social media? What skills and experiences might we be limiting?
- Where have you experienced the filter bubble effect online?
- What echo chambers are you a part of both on- and offline?
- What are some potential benefits and pitfalls of the 'personalised web'?
- What actions can we take to help ourselves and others step out of their echo chambers?

Key Topic 4.

DISINFORMATION, MISINFORMATION, CONSPIRACY THEORIES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students understand the nuances between dis- and misinformation.
- Students are aware of the potential consequences of dis- and misinformation to themselves and wider society.
- Students can recognize different types of dis- and misinformation.
- Students understand the mechanisms and functioning behind conspiracy theories.
- Students can list some key tools to counter mis- and disinformation online in their everyday life.

POTENTIAL STARTER ACTIVITY:

Play the 'whispering game', where one student is given a sentence by the teacher and it gets passed from student to student secretly in a circle - how much has it changed by the end? How many key details were lost? Finish the exercise by asking your students: "Have you ever encountered false information online? How did you know it was false?"

INTRODUCTION

In a fast-paced internet world, the ability to differentiate information from false stories, conspiracy theories and satire is an essential skill for young digital citizens.

In this chapter, students will be introduced to a wide variety of online content. They will focus on different key concepts (dis and mis-information, conspiracy theories) and the shape such content can take online (clickbait, deepfake etc.) in order to navigate the web with more awareness and deliberation.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Disinformation

Disinformation refers to any content that has been **deliberately created to deceive** people or give them an inaccurate understanding of an issue. It is often presented as being fact-based, but in reality is **intentionally false**.

Misinformation

Misinformation refers to the **accidental sharing of false information.** While there is no intention to harm, the negative consequences can be just as powerful. It can mislead friends and colleagues, increase confusion around a topic, create divisions between groups or communities, and in extreme cases put people in danger. This is very common when the information and its source are not questioned.

Mis- and disinformation in the digital world can take a variety of formats, such as:

- **Deepfake:** computer-generated videos of real people (often celebrities) doing, acting or saying things that never happened in reality. Deepfakes can be used to discredit someone or make fun of them, as well as to spread disinformation and sow division. You can find more information on how they work here.
- **Clickbait:** Eye-catching text or images designed to drive traffic to a website (by getting people to click on a link). It can also be used for phishing attacks, spreading malicious files or stealing user information. As seen in the media bias chapter, sensational content often gains more traction online and can help publishers to monetise their activity (e.g. more visitors to a site = better pitch to advertisers = more revenue). Clickbait will generally use catchy headlines such as “You won’t believe what…”, “I did the CRAZIEST thing when…”, “10 things you need to know about X…” or “why you should do Y…” to entice users, alongside misleading images or thumbnails. Whilst often harmless, they contribute to the overall erosion of trust in the quality of information online, making it hard to know what to believe. You can find examples of clickbait here.

FROM FALSE INFORMATION TO CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Unlike misinformation, which we can all fall prey to if we are not vigilant and deliberative online, disinformation is a conscious choice to share false information. It can range from simple internet "troll" posts to wider editorial lines, driven by a financial incentive (e.g. to earn revenue from the 'outrage economy' of sensational stories), political agenda (e.g. to influence public opinion around a party, policy or vote) or personal goal (e.g. to make a joke, cause chaos, out of boredom).

Another example of dis- and misinformation is gaining increasing prominence in public life: **conspiracy theories**. Whilst there is no outright definition, there are several key characteristics which teachers and students can use to help identify them. Conspiracy theories don't exist in a vacuum. They stem from various social phenomena including a growing distance (and distrust) between those in power and the rest of the population. It is essential to understand that dismissing them as ridiculous or stupid is rarely an effective course of action. Worse, it can even reinforce the position of the conspiracy believer, making them double-down on their viewpoint or entrenching an "us versus them" mentality.

While conspiracy theories come in all shapes and sizes, the vast majority contain some kernel of truth which is distorted beyond all available evidence - for example documented abuses by pharmaceutical companies, shady deals between big corporations or lies told by politicians used as evidence of a 'New World Order' run by the Illuminati. These tenuous links to real-world events and data make conspiracies appear plausible to their supporters, even when continual counter-evidence is provided to debunk the claims.

Some common characteristics of conspiracy theories include:

- **They provide believers with simple answers to complex questions,** such as "why do bad things happen to good people?" or "why is the world so unequal?". Taking a recent example from the COVID-19 pandemic, linking the "bad thing" (the virus) to a tangible action (e.g. avoiding those of Asian origin; destroying 5G telephone masts; boycotting vaccines) is a way to process a situation that left many people feeling helpless.
- **They promote a sense of superiority or 'enlightenment':** believers are framed as members of an elite group that has uncovered 'the real truth' about reality and will ultimately be seen as heroes, freedom fighters or saviours.
- **They create group affiliation:** the sense of community cannot be undermined, especially when 'mainstream' opinion is that your beliefs are absurd, illogical or insane. Conspiracy movements rely on solidarity and group-think, protecting their members from rejection through constant reinforcement. In many ways they are the ultimate echo chambers, where all dissenting ideas are dismissed or used to bolster the original conspiracy - counter evidence is often mocked or cast aside with terms like 'sheeple', implying people are being duped by so-called 'facts'.

This can also make it harder for conspiracists to renounce a belief, as they have become alienated from friends and family in the process and no longer have social structures outside the movement.

As such, conspiracies can be powerful tools to:

- Offer a common vision and cause
- Increase self-esteem
- Create belonging
- Mitigate uncertainty/anxiety about events
- Understand a complicated world
- Provide a sense of agency or control

... making them extremely resistant to change.

There are different levels of conspiracy, from those rooted in real events to purely invented narratives, but their impact remains just as strong. Some will claim to have found "THE truth" about the world and explain reality with a single theory, others will be more ambiguous and encourage followers to 'do their own research'- a recent example of the latter would be the electoral fraud narratives around the 2020 US Presidential Election, where an initial theory was driven by thousands of 'crowdsourced' truth-seekers, each adding a slightly new claim or supposed piece of evidence.

HOW TO DEAL WITH CONSPIRACY THEORIES?

Rule of thumb:

Always consider the possibility that your current beliefs are inaccurate or unfounded, and be willing to change - we will rarely get everything right the first time, but can and must be open to adapting as new information becomes available.

There is no shame in admitting we were wrong; in fact, this is an essential part of learning. Conspiracies will fit any new evidence to a pre-existing worldview, however much that evidence challenges or debunks its core claims - as such they cannot be proven false. The opposite should be true for the Scientific Method, where established theories and principles can be disproved or revised with new data.

To begin, we suggest highlighting a less contentious or shocking example (avoid discussing anti-vaxx or sensitive topics in the classroom): the flat-earth conspiracy can be a useful starting point (more information here), allowing you to discuss a theory with scientific evidence. You could also mention that propaganda is sometimes based on spreading conspiracies about a target group, and achieves results by preying on people's emotions and fears - a common example would be immigration, where foreign workers are blamed for economic downturn and job losses, despite all evidence to the contrary.

Discussing conspiracy theories is tricky: we are not as rational as we think, and neither are our students. Knowing how our biases and environment can influence us is the best first step in dealing with conspiracies, helping us to critique what we know and see.

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND CALLS TO ACTION

Expand your views and diversify your sources

Teachers should encourage students to use several sources for a more complete picture of a topic, representing different views. Questions such as "Who is the author?" "Which media outlet published the information?" "What have others said about this topic?" and "Why might this story be true/untrue" can help students identify whether a news article is reliable.

Fact checking is a response to the proliferation of false information

Identifying common traits of dis- and misinformation (e.g. misleading titles, absence of sources, photoshopped images) and examples (e.g. clickbait, deep fakes, conspiracy theories) is a key skill for young people. Websites such as https://onebravething.eu/share-wisely/ provides a fact-checking tool that teachers and students can easily use.

Think critically

Challenging the content you read and forming your own opinions helps limit the risk of manipulation or group-think. Remember, belonging to a community should never mean you have to think, believe or act the same as everyone else - that is a cult!

Report disinformation online

Encourage students not to be swept up by viral conspiracies or scandals based on false information, however entertaining they are on social media. Instead, they can become investigators and help educate their peers or relatives about the facts of a story, using a range of credible sources. Many platforms now have functions to report misleading content, which they can also use to avoid amplifying it further.

Act with compassion to others

As discussed above, mocking or condemning someone for their conspiracist beliefs often has the reverse effect, making them more defensive and resistant to dialogue. Consider why a person might find this theory compelling, ask them open questions about their beliefs and evidence. Above all, try to approach conversation with an aim to *listen* rather than *persuade*, at least in the first instance - when people feel respected they are more likely to hear opposing views and possibly, over time, shift their opinion.

Key Topic 4.

ACTIVITY

SPOT THE FAKE!

DURATION

1 hour *(flexible)*

EQUIPMENT

Computer with Microsoft PPT, interactive whiteboard or overhead projector, printed exemples of disinformation/ misinformation and conspiracy theories

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTION

1. **Prepare examples of disinformation/ misinformation (including clickbaits, deepfakes etc.) and conspiracy theories**
   (Examples : disinformation - misinformation (debunked) - deepfake - clickbait - conspiracy theory)
   a. Split the class into groups of 4 or 5, each group should have one example to study. Ask your students:
   - *Do you think this information is trustworthy? Why/why not?*

   b. Indicators to identify whether a news story is fake should include:
   - A suspicious URL with an unusual ending, e.g. biz.org
   - Highly emotional or exaggerated language making unrealistic claims
   - No clear, reliable source of the information being commented on (citations, footnotes)
   - Presents breaking 'news' that has not been reported by other credible news publications
   - Edited/misattributed photos or images
   - Links to other unlikely sounding stories
   - Frequent spelling and punctuation errors

2. Regroup the class. Have your students present their conclusions.
3. Lead the discussion with your students:
   - *Who is the source of this information?*
   - *Have you heard of them before?*
   - *What makes you suspicious about whether or not to trust this content?*

4. What details do you notice about this content's appearance?Display the definitions of dis- and misinformation as well as conspiracy theories, clickbaits and deepfakes. Encourage your students to share examples of these they could have encountered online. Lead a discussion and consider the following questions:
   a. *Have you heard of these concepts before?*
   b. *Have you seen them while browsing online?*
   c. *Why do you think someone produced this content?*
   d. *Have you spread any of these? If so, why?*
   e. *What effect did they want to have on their audience? How does it attempt to produce this effect?*
   f. *What consequences might it have on people if it was shared widely?*
5. Question the impact of dis- and misinformation on your country's society and individuals
   a. Suggest local examples (associations, media etc.) that fact-check, fight for information etc.
   b. Ask your students: What would you do to stop the spread of dis and misinformation based on what you learned?
6. You could end the activity by asking your students to list three pieces of advice they would give a friend or family member to help them identify and tackle false information online.

Key Topic 5.

HATE SPEECH AND DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students must be able to distinguish between rights and duties on the Internet.
- Students should be able to identify and deconstruct hateful content on the internet.
- Students must be able to respond to hateful content in a constructive way.
- Students should be able to use social networks consciously and creatively.

INTRODUCTION

Internet –and social media- has significantly increased the number of interactions between individuals. With opinions and ideas floating around online, hateful content and abuses (hacking, harassment…) have proliferated. This chapter aims at discussing hate speech and empowers students to identify and respond to hate speech online in a constructive way to develop their digital citizenship. The activity in this chapter will help students to identify healthy online practices.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Hate speech

Hate speech refers to expressions of hatred that may take the form of a phrase, text, sound, or image that expresses rejection and hatred of others. Those who witness it may be encouraged to take a side – and sometimes to express that hatred again with similar or higher levels of violence as a result of pressure from the group. This is what is known as inciting hatred.

The spread of hate discourses is one of the unfortunate consequences of other concepts presented in this booklet. For example, **cognitive biases or echo chambers** can group individuals into fueling their anger towards a group of individuals.

Conspiracy theories and misinformation, as seen in the previous chapter, will also aggravate prejudices or negative opinions one may have about certain people by providing «arguments » to justify and confirm these opinions. This type of content, based on **stereotypes** and **misconceptions** can lead to overgeneralizations, a feeling of paranoia and, in worse cases, to real violence.

Reporting content, moderating online platforms and digital citizenship education are all keys to fighting against hate speech.

Digital citizenship

Behaviors and responses, exchanges and interactions online come with a certain amount of responsibility and etiquette – too often individuals abuse the anonymity a screen offers to abuse and interact in offensive ways they wouldn't in real life. Students need to know that they have rights, duties, and most importantly that they can act on the Internet.

A digital citizen is one that has developed a range of competences set out in this booklet: we believe that young people should be able to create, consume, assess information, respond to dis-and misinformation, understand filter bubbles and echo chambers (as well as their impact), share, play and socialise, consume, as well as investigate, communicate, learn and work safely and positively online and have the tools to do so.

A good digital citizen knows his rights, his duties and treats others with respect. It may include respectful communication, respecting privacy and consent of others, keeping an open mind, giving helpful information, giving constructive feedback, defending others online, reporting abuse and hate, acting positively, campaigning…

Eventually, it is good to remember that the law prohibits the dissemination of information:

- of a defamatory, insulting, obscene, offensive, violent or pornographic nature
- likely to undermine the respect of the human person and its dignity or to incite racist, xenophobic or political violence
- to present in a favorable light any act qualified as a crime or an infraction

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND CALLS TO ACTION

Read and listen to other points of view than your own: this will help students avoid assumptions and stereotypes about other groups and understand where the other group's opinion comes from.

Avoid responding to polemics: rather, students should be encouraged to pause and reflect before liking/commenting/sharing on their social media.

Report hate speech online: instead of responding, you can report posts on social media which contain hate speech.

Participate: get organised on the web and create a blog, a site, a vlog, a YouTube channel, etc. The ultimate objective of this training is to ensure that young people take ownership of the web in order to make it a terrain for individual and collective affirmation, but also for reflection, debate and participation.

Know your rights (...and duties): know the laws that protect and regulate freedom of the press and freedom of expression in your country (knowledge of rights on online platforms/general terms and conditions).

Key Topic 5.

ACTIVITY

TABLE OF GOOD ONLINE PRACTICES

DURATION
30 minutes

EQUIPMENT
A computer, PowerPoint, wallpaper or white wall, video projector or optional board (if no computer or board): Printed documents

ACTIVITY INTRODUCTION

The exercise consists of a table to be filled in by the participants, and a list of several possible behaviors on the internet. Participants will be asked to classify these practices/behaviors into what they think are good or bad practices.

In addition, dialogue and argumentation are essential for this activity: they are therefore asked to justify their choice.

This activity encourages positive and respectful digital citizenship while developing students' argumentation skills.

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

1. Divide students into two or three groups and present the table of good practices on the board or with the help of a video projector (it can also be done on paper).

2. Submit one by one the below examples of proposals to be ranked by the participants:
   - Reporting a hateful or violent comment under a publication
   - Accepting anyone in your friend list
   - Blocking a user on a social network
   - Debating with an insulting person in a video commentary
   - Giving your address or personal information
   - Posting a photo of your friends without asking them
   - Using the same password for all social networks

3. Each answer will have to be argued by the groups and open a mini-debate based on the following reflections: Freedom of expression, moderation of hateful content, conspiracy, defamation, etc.

4. At this end of this activity, you can open the discussion with a few questions:
   - Who decides the limits of freedom of expression?
   - What is an opinion?
   - Can an opinion be free of verified facts?
   - What does it mean to be a digital citizen?

CREATING A WEB MAGAZINE

Trying to create your own web magazine can be confusing at first. Although young people are used to the internet and social media, they rarely have the opportunity to produce and publish original content. What's more, few of them read magazines and newspapers or understand the specifics of this medium. So by helping your students design a web magazine, you are enabling them to access a new form of expression.

The purpose of this chapter is to guide you through the various steps leading to the production of a web magazine. You can create your own exercises if you wish, or simply follow the exercises provided in the appendix. A few (2 to 4) lessons focusing on the design of a web magazine is an excellent starting point for getting students to create their own media (a school magazine, podcast, etc.).

FIRST, GET THE CREATIVE JUICES FLOWING

Imagine sitting with a blank sheet of paper in front of you. You have to write an article, but you are completely out of ideas… **Creative writing** exercises are a great way to get started! Setting your objective aside for a moment to stimulate your imagination and creativity, often increases your productivity.

Before embarking on the production of a web magazine, give your students time to improvise and come up with silly and funny content. "There is no such thing as a bad idea" and "Mistakes are your friends" - these are the main rules of creative writing.

- The first set of exercises consists of quick and easy warm-ups, which will give your students the opportunity to play with words and create short stories (you will find some examples in the appendix). Try out different configurations: individual work, playing in pairs, group improvisation.
- The second part consists of an activity, entitled "What's the story?". To do this activity, prepare a few sample tabloid headlines with pictures - the sillier, the better. Then, divide the class into small groups (one group per headline) and give them 10 to 15 minutes to come up with their own story, based on the headline. Once they have finished, ask each group to read their article. Discuss with them how they worked and developed their story, then ask them to rate their teamwork.

KEY PRINCIPLES

The editorial board is the heart of a newspaper, and group decision-making is part of day-to-day work. However, each member has their own specialty, for which they are responsible.

Before you begin, make sure your students know what kind of magazine they want to create. To help them decide, ask them these questions (as a class or in groups):

- Who will read your web magazine? Who is your audience? What will the title be?
- Is your magazine a specialist magazine? Does it cover a specific area? Entertainment? Local news?
- How will you structure your future web magazine? Suggest that they take inspiration from existing print or web magazines to determine their layout (visual identity, sections, newspaper-style, etc.)
- What will be the content of your sections? (Articles, interviews, visual stories…)

Help your students to gather ideas and write their answers on the board so that everyone in the group can see them. Don't worry if it all takes time, a little patience is needed to develop a cohesive vision of a magazine!

Once the group has made its decisions, you can suggest more individual work for your students. Try the ***"What type of creator are you?"*** activity to help them better understand their role on the «editorial board». Have your students read each of the short descriptions outlining a creator archetype, and then invite them to discuss in pairs the roles that suit them best. Finally, gather their ideas for content, based on their individual preferences and interests.

PART 2: THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Once this work is done, you are (almost) ready to design the first issue of the web magazine. Your students still need to ask themselves questions in order to divide up the tasks and put the content in order:

- What are you going to present as text, audio (for example, a short podcast) or video?
- What will the theme of the issue be? What topic do you want to focus on?
- What order will your topics be in and why?
- Assign topics - who will do what (you can work in small teams)?
- What will be the different sections of your magazine? (For example, news, "young people's point of view", contemporary media, box set reviews, etc.).

Again, help your students to gather their ideas and formulate their decisions. Encourage them to make a list of all their topics and assign them to specific people/teams. Now you can start creating your web magazine!

One last tip: It is often easier to organize your thoughts when you can visualise them. Canva is very helpful in this regard. Canva is a free graphic design platform that lets you create your content easily using a variety of visual templates. The software will also help you find the right images or sounds to illustrate your articles or your interviews, and then edit them intuitively.

In particular, the tools of this platform can help you:

- Choose a magazine template suited to your content
- Add, change, edit or delete text and pages (you can choose from a variety of fonts and colours)
- Add photos, sounds, videos, and links to other websites.

For a detailed tutorial, refer to the Canva guide provided in the appendix.

ReNews

Bringing fresh eyes
to media literacy

Project ReNews is an educational project funded by the Erasmus + Programme of the European Union aiming at improving Media, Information and Literacy (MIL) skills. ReNews promotes media literacy through innovative programmes that directly involve the new generation of citizens. By providing students (aged 14-18) with all the necessary tools to better detect and denounce disinformation and hate speech on social networks, we intend to empower European students to build their critical minds.

Project ReNews is a partnership between **Groupe SOS Solidarités (France)**, a NGO specialised in the prevention of radicalisation and media literacy; **The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD)**, an independent, non-profit organisation dedicated to safeguarding human rights and reversing the rising tide of polarisation, extremism and disinformation worldwide; **Civis Polonus (Poland)**, a foundation active in the field of civic education among the youth; **Mouvement Up (France)**, a social entreprise specialised in media education and **TINK (Turkey)**, Turkey's first Technology upper secondary school.

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