A light blue illustration of a classroom or workshop. Several young people are seated at desks, working on laptops. In the background, there are whiteboards with various diagrams and icons, including a clock, a smartphone, a box, and a lightbulb. One whiteboard on the right has the text 'Costs 6/rmb' and '30/002'.

Disinformation Lab: A Critical Thinking Toolkit Through Creating Fake News

An interactive non-formal education method for young people that teaches how to recognize disinformation, strengthens critical thinking, and is supported by the EU Erasmus+ program.



Funded by
the European Union

Introduction to Disinformation Lab

Method

Critical Thinking Workshop ("Disinformation Lab") – a non-formal education method developed within the Erasmus+ project "**Democracy – That's Me!**", funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ programme

A Powerful Method

Participants not only analyze information, but also **create disinformation themselves**, understanding manipulation techniques from the inside

Main Idea

Young participants develop media literacy and critical thinking skills through **experiential learning**

Result

Practical understanding of how information manipulation works and why people believe it

Goals and Target Group

Method goal

- Strengthen critical thinking skills
- Improve media literacy
- Help recognize manipulation techniques
- Understand how disinformation spreads
- Build resistance to fake news
- Developed with support from the EU Erasmus+ program

Target group

- Young people aged **14-29**
- Students, learners, and youth groups
- Community members
- People active on social media



Expected Results



Understand the differences

Distinguish between misinformation (false, but not intended to harm), disinformation (intended to harm), and malinformation (true information that is used in a harmful way)



Strengthen resilience

Become more resilient to fake news and better understand personal vulnerability to manipulation



Recognize forms

Identify different forms of information disorder and the tactics used for manipulation



Critical evaluation

Develop critical thinking skills and be able to question the credibility of information

Methodology and Practical Information



Experiential learning

Learning by doing and practical application



Gamification

Game elements motivate and engage participants



Teamwork

Groups collaborate and share ideas



Reflection

Conversations and discussions summarize the experience

Duration

120-180 min (2-3 hours)

Required materials

- Laptop, projector, internet
- Padlet / Facebook / shared platforms
- <https://www.getbadnews.com>
- Markers, paper, visuals
- EU funding support may be available through the Erasmus+ programme

Work Practice Structure



Step 1: Introduction to information disorder

Key concepts: misinformation, disinformation, malinformation

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Step 2: 7 types of disinformation

Satire, misleading content, imposter content, fabricated content, false context, manipulated content



Step 3: Practice game

<https://www.getbadnews.com> – understand how fake news spreads

Supported by the European Union through the Erasmus+ program.

Practical Task and Analysis



Step 4: Practical task

Teams create 2 examples of disinformation content in different ways



Step 5: Presentation

Present all created content and analyze the techniques used



Step 6: Reflection

Was it easy? Why? What does this say about real disinformation?



Step 7: Connection to reality

Real examples and organized disinformation campaigns

i Main activity: Participants create fake posts, headlines, images, memes, or short stories, which are shared in Padlet, a Facebook group, or a shared document. This activity is implemented with support from the **Erasmus+ programme**, the European Union's funding programme for education, training, youth, and sport.



How Disinformation Works

Choose polarizing topics

Controversial issues attract more attention and encourage sharing

Mix truth with lies

Some real information gives credibility to the false parts

Hide the manipulation

Appear to be a neutral source while actually serving a hidden agenda

Use "useful idiots"

People who share without checking help spread disinformation

Deny everything

Rejecting the evidence when the lie is exposed helps preserve the source's reputation

Think long term

Consistent campaigns can gradually change opinions over time

Facilitator Role and Inclusion

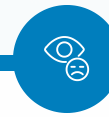


Facilitator functions

- Clearly explain concepts
- Lead discussions
- Encourage creativity
- Ensure a safe environment
- Challenge participants' assumptions
- Guide reflection

Inclusion methods

- Adaptable to different knowledge levels
- Visual and interactive tools
- Teamwork
- Opportunities for creative expression



Critical thinking exercise

Participants analyze different content types: memes (satire), gaming videos (context manipulation), AI-generated content (fabrication)



Key questions

Which content would you trust and why? How can you distinguish real information from manipulation?

Evaluation and Expanding the Discussion



What did you learn?

New concepts and insights about disinformation



What surprised you?

Unexpected discoveries about your own assumptions



Has your perspective changed?

Changes in how you evaluate information



Do you feel more resilient?

Confidence in your ability to recognize fake news

Additional discussion questions

Do you trust journalists more than influencers? Why?

What does critical thinking mean to you?

Why do people believe fake news?

Does too much information help or harm critical thinking?

Recommended videos for discussion:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZmrIkRDMsU> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heXp2tyDI6k>. This activity is supported by EU funding through the Erasmus+ program.

