Bulgarian Youth Forum

We Unlock the Youth Potential!

Real or Fake -
Time to AwakE+

Booklet for Young People

Editor's Note

This booklet includes information and recommendations on media literacy, fake news and Internet safety. It has been created by the participants of the youth exchage "Real or Fake - Time to AwakE+" under Erasmus+ programme. It included young people from Bulgaria, Turkey, Germany, Spain, United Kingdom and Serbia.

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Media Literacy

WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY?

Media literacy is the ability to apply critical thinking to mass media, and the practices that go into action.

The category's that it can come from can be from social media, TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, so it's not just the internet which media literacy is important, perspective on these other categories is important.

WHAT CAN IT DO FOR US?

To improve our understanding, we did a debate with our Erasmus group. The topic was about media safety and its correlation with different age groups. One group was defending the young, the other the elderly, and the third group what the Media literacy group. They gave a new perspective about the importance of Media literacy and how we can develop ourselves as individuals and as a group as to how to improve our safety on the internet.

Here's what we learned.

Media Literacy

| ACCESS | ANALYZE | CREATE | REFLECT | ACT |

Above you can see a common strategy used to improve media literacy. Let's explain them step by step.

ACCESS

The first step is accessing different types of medias like social media platforms, websites, and newspapers. Also, if we are fluent in some other language, checking the international sources gives another perspective and can be very helpful.

ANALYSE

The next step is to analyse the sources and think critically. Don't fall for anything you read or see. Nowadays, it is super easy to fake news or to manipulate the public. The propaganda in the media is always looking to target the naive consumers, don't be one of them. Go through media objectively and do your own analysis.

CREATE

When spreading and creating your own opinion, it is important to apply the steps mentioned before. You will use all your experience to create your opinion. You are your thoughts.

REFLECT

After that it is important to reflect. Hearing others opinions and reacting to critics. It's important to listen to others and what they have to say. We are not always right.

ACT

In the last step, you should react and use all the previously gained knowledge to your advantage when scrolling online or going through hard paper.

OUR CONCLUSION

After attending this Erasmus project and learning all about Media literacy we are stronger in our bodies and minds as the picture below suggests. We learned a lot, and now we are aware of the fake news and the risks the internet brings with it. The time has come to spread the knowledge all around the globe. Spain, Serbia, Turkey, UK, Bulgaria and Germany are our starting points. Education has no borders. So doesn't friendship. Together we are on the path of becoming the future of a media literate society.

Fake News

WHAT IS FAKE NEWS?

HOW CAN WE RECOGNISE IT?

Misinformation is not a new phenomenon. The term "fake news" was first used in the 19th century, but the issue is much older. Internet and social media have changed how it's manufactured and shared. Prior to their rise, individuals tended to get their news from reputable news organizations whose journalists were bound by stringent ethical standards. With little oversight or editorial standards, Internet provided new avenues to create, share, and consume news and information. Many people today get their news from social media and other online sources, but determining which articles are true and which are not can be difficult.

CLASSIFICATION

Fake news is information that is incorrect or deceptive and manipulate the actual news. It generally falls into different types:

- **Disinformation**: Deliberately fake stories, in which the persons who publish them are aware that they are untrue yet nonetheless publish them. This could be done to influence public opinion or boost traffic to a certain website.

- **Misinformation**: Stories that have some truth but are generally incorrect. This could be because the writer didn't double-check all of their information or exaggerated key details to make a point.

- **Malinformation**: The deliberate publication of private information in order to harm a person, group or country.
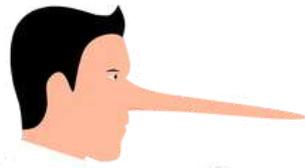
Fake News

TYPES OF FAKE NEWS

There are different types of fake news, depending on the motivation of those who create it. For example:

- **Clickbait**: Sensationalism sells, and outrageous or weird stories and distorted images drive clicks and shares online. Clickbait refers to stories deliberately designed to get more website visitors and increase advertising revenue for the website owners often at the expense of truth and accuracy.

- **Propaganda**: This refers to false or distorted stories written to mislead audiences and promote a political agenda or biased perspective.

- **Poor quality journalism**: Sometimes, journalists don't have time to check all their facts before publishing, leading to genuine mistakes becoming fake news. However, trusted new sources will correct errors in their stories and be transparent with readers when they've got things wrong.

- **Misleading headlines**: Sometimes a story may be broadly true, but a sensationalist or misleading headline is used to entice readers to click on it. This can lead to fake news – since usually only the headline and small snippets of the article are displayed on social media, where it can quickly spread.

- **Imposter content**: This is when genuine news sources are impersonated with false, made-up stories to deceive or mislead audiences.

- **Satire or parody**: Some fake news is published for entertainment value. For example, satirical stories use humor, irony, or exaggeration to joke about the news or famous people. These stories don't attempt to mislead audiences because they aren't meant to be taken seriously.

Fake News

EXAMPLES

• "Donald Trump sent his own plane to transport 200 stranded marines"
A fake news story is picked up by a major media talk show host.

• "FBI director received millions from Clinton Foundation, his brother's law firm does Clinton's taxes"
An unreliable and biased news site generates over 538,000 engagements on Facebook by using a fake headline.

• "Pope Francis shocks world, endorses Donald Trump for president"
Fake news site fools world media and generates 960,000 Facebook engagements.

• 'Ghost of Kyiv' killed in fighting, has shot down 40 Russian jets
The Ghost of Kyiv is a mythical figure and not real. A viral video showing the Ghost of Kyiv shooting down a Russian plane was viewed over 1.6 million times on Twitter. The video is actually from a video game simulator released in 2008.

• 3 Reasons Why You Should Stop Eating Peanut Butter Cups
Shared over 207,000 times on Facebook.

• Coronavirus Bioweapon – How China Stole Coronavirus From Canada And Weaponized It
One of a long list of fake Coronavirus news stories and articles.

• Evidence Surfaces That The FBI Planned And Executed January 6 Capitol Riot
Example of a common far-right conspiracy theory regarding the January 6 riots.

Fake News

HOW TO IDENTIFY FAKE NEWS

1. Check the source:

Check the web address for the page you're looking at. Sometimes, fake news sites may have spelling errors in the URL or use less conventional domain extensions, such as ".infonet" or ".offer". If you are unfamiliar with the site, look in the About Us section.

2. Check the author:

Research them to see if they are credible – for example, are they real, do they have a good reputation, are they writing about their specific area of expertise, and do they have a particular agenda? Consider what the writer's motivation might be.

3. Check other sources:

Are other reputable news or media outlets reporting on the story? Are credible sources cited within the story? Professional global news agencies have editorial guidelines and extensive resources for fact-checking, so if they are also reporting the story, that's a good sign.

4. Maintain a critical mindset:

A lot of fake news is cleverly written to provoke strong emotional reactions, such as fear or anger. Maintain a critical mindset by asking yourself – why has this story been written? Is it promoting a particular cause or agenda? Is it trying to make me click through to another website?

5. Check the facts:

Credible news stories will include plenty of facts – data, statistics, quotes from experts, and so on. If these are missing, question why. Reports with false information often contain incorrect dates or altered timelines, so it's a good idea to check when the article was published. Is it a current or old news story?

6. Check the comments:

Even if the article or video is legitimate, the comments below may not be. Often links or comments posted in response to content can be autogenerated by bots or people hired to put out misleading or confusing information.

7. Check your own biases:

We all have biases – could these be influencing the way you respond to the article? Social media can create echo chambers by suggesting stories that match your existing browsing habits, interests, and opinions. The more we read from diverse sources and perspectives, the more likely it is that we can draw accurate conclusions.

8. Check whether it's a joke:

Satirical websites are popular, and sometimes it is not always clear whether a story is just a joke or parody. Check the website to see if it's known for satire or creating funny stories.

9. Check images are authentic:

Images you see on social media could have been edited or manipulated. Possible signs include warping – where straight lines in the background now appear wavy – as well as strange shadows, jagged edges, or skin tone that looks too perfect. Bear in mind, too, that an image may be accurate but simply used in a misleading context. You can use tools such as Google's Reverse Image Search to check where an image originates from and whether it has been altered.

10. Use a fact-checking site:

Some of the best known include:

- Snopes
- PolitiFact
- Fact Check
- BBC Reality Check

Fake News

Fake news relies on believers reposting, retweeting, or otherwise sharing false information. If you're not sure whether an article is authentic or not, pause and think before you share. To help stay safe online, use an antivirus solution, which protects you from hackers, viruses, malware, and other online threats.

Sources:

- https://www.kaspersky.com/resource-center/preemptive-safety/how-to-identify-fake-news
- https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/reading/b1-reading/how-to-spot-fake-news
- https://prezi.com/view/0dn7tqrgWkKCwFIExADa/

Internet Security

WHAT IS INTERNET SECURITY?

Internet security is a branch of computer security, it includes browser security. Internet security relies on specific resources and standards for protecting data that gets sent through the internet. It also identifies a process to create rules and actions to take to protect against attacks over the internet.

For example: Hacking, stealing email addresses, stealing personal information such as bank, details credit card information, social media accounts and social security numbers, etc.
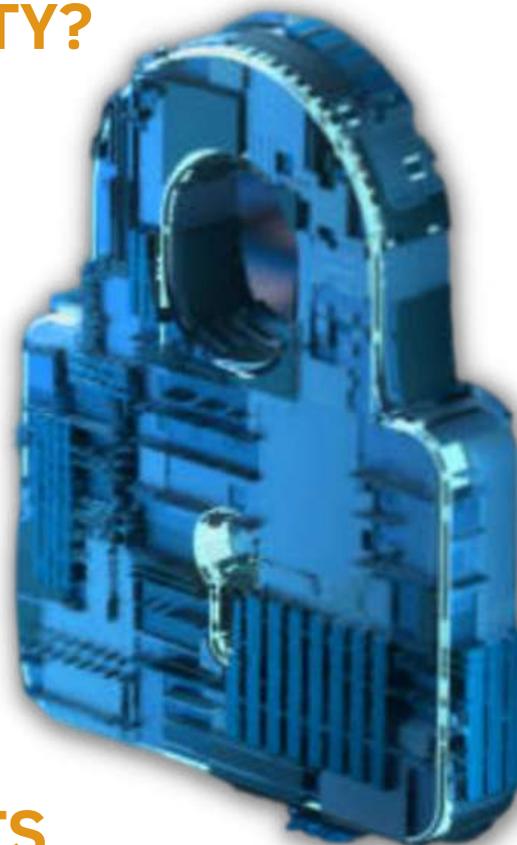
TYPES OF SECURITY THREATS

• Hacking: Where unauthorised users gain access to the comuture systems, email accounts or websites.

• Viruses and malicious software (known as malware) which can damage data or make systems vulnerable to other threats. Malware comes in several forms, including computer viruses, worms, trojans, and dishonest spyware.

• Identify theft: Occurs when someone steals your personal information and credentials to commit fraud. There are various forms to identity theft, but the most common is financial.

• Spam: is any kind of unwanted, unsolicited digital communication that gets sent out in blank. Spam mails in junkbox and also some spams are dangerous. If you click the link, hackers can steal your information.

• Phishing: Phishing scams are created by cybercriminals attempting to solicit private or sensitive information.

• Botnet: (Short for "robot network") is a network of computer infected by malware that are under the control of a single attacking party, known as the "bot-herders".

Internet Security

HOW TO PROTECT OURSELVES ONLINE?

• Change passwords regularly and use strong ones. Choose something that will not be easily cracked or decoded. Unfortunately, even now, people still use passwords like "12345678" or "password." Avoid them, and also don't use your dog's name or your kids' birthdays.

• Use security and antivirus programs, update your VPN regularly. They can protect the computer from spyware.

• Look for encryption. This means is if you usually browse different pages on the Internet it is recommended that you pay attention to their security. The URL must start with "https". Only have a security protocol that ensures that the website is completely secure.

• Double check or read up about websites companies and online information. If you find something questionable research different sources.

• Think before you click the link. Some links are dangerous and not legit. If you don't trust the websites, if you think the link isn't trustful, you shouldn't click.

• Don't download anything from a website or content provider whom you don't trust.

• Back up your data regularly.

• Avoid sharing personal information. To keep it safe, never share identifying details, like your full name, address, or financial information. Because cybercriminals use it as they want.

Interviews in Gabrovo

METHOD

We interviewed 26 people on the streets of Gabrovo to find out their knowledge about Internet security and fake news. All of them were on different age and had different experiences when it comes to using media to get information, which resulted in different point of views. We asked the inhabitants of Gabrovo on the street some questions. Everyone was friendly and motivated to help us finding out what people of this small city think about media, fake news and internet security.

THE QUESTIONS WE ASKED TO PEOPLE

1: What do you know about fake news?

2: Do you know how to recognise fake news?

3: Do you know how to protect your personal data on the internet?

4: What do you know about scams, and do you know how to recognise them?

5: Do you share anything online about news?

6: How do you think the problem with fake media could be resolved?

7: What do you think the biggest problem and risk of media?

8: How do you think it influences the mind of people?

9: Have you been affected by fake e-mail links?

Interviews in Gabrovo

THE ANSWERS WE GOT FROM PEOPLE

- Some said that they believe everything they see on social media. Others said that they don't trust anything they see on social media.

- Some said that to prevent dangers of social media, they just don't use social media.

- Elder people said that they only get informed within newspapers.

- Some said that they watch TV news.

- Generally, they mentioned that they check the reliability of the news by their research in Internet.

- People would rather trust positive than negative news, and often doubt the negative ones.

- One of the locals had an opinion that fake news should be reported.

- A few people have never seen a scam or fake news, or at least they haven't recognised them.

- Young people think that they are not getting enough education on the topic.

- A couple of people said that they can recognise fake news most of the time, but don't know how to protect themselves from them.

Interviews in Gabrovo

OUR ANALYSIS

After assessing the interviews taken by all groups, we can conclude education and media literacy are some of the most important factors in regard to spotting and avoiding scams and fake news.

We can say that all the people were open-minded to tell us their point of view about fake news, media security and scams. How they answered the questions depends on their own knowledge and education and their interest in media. Also, the age of the interviewed people influenced their opinion about the topic. While conducting the interviews, we noticed that younger people were more reluctant to being recorded and the elderly agreed easier, confirming the point that while education on this topic might not be enough for all generations. The younger side is more knowledgeable when it comes to risks of using the Internet, but still needs more education about the topic.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

During this week, while participating in the "Real or Fake – Time to AwakE+" youth exchange, we've learned about some topics, and we would like to share this information with everyone.

FAKE NEWS

As we have learned, fake news is misleading information presented as factual. They can be classified as misinformation (wrong information, sometimes a mistake), disinformation (to deceive, on purpose), malinformation (to hurt someone).

Fake news has been around for several centuries, it's a new word for an old concept. We have looked at several examples, both modern and ancient. We have also written our own examples of fake news and compared them with real ones. We have also talked about personal experiences with fake news and the situation in each country.

Summary

PHOTO-CHECKING

Photos and videos are often the most important evidence of an event. But in many cases people use old, manipulated or completely fabricated images to trick people into believing what they see.

How to identify them:
- Find obvious errors
- Look out for the details
- Pay attention to surfaces, which are typically straight but look uneven
- Look for bad edges. Too sharp or too rough
- Look for signs of pixelation
- Examine the shadows and lighting
- Check EXIF and geolocation data

FACT-CHECKING

When we see something presented as a fact online, there are some simple steps to check, if it is probably actually true. We want to give four tips: Cross-check if other sources, like newspapers, also report about it; trust sources more if they have a good reputation and record for being accurate, like high quality newspapers; posts on social media by normal users are not a good source, even if there are many about the same thing; there are websites who specialize in fact-checking, often they can be used for verification. These tips help with navigating the internet.

DATA PRIVACY, PROTECTION AND SECURITY

Unauthorized access to personal data and their use by unauthorized persons and organizations are perceived as one of the prominent problems in today's world. It is important to raise awareness about it.

Some of the most important problems regarding privacy are: Unauthorized or unlawful collection of data, use of data in a way that is not suitable for the purpose of collection, transfer of data to others without the knowledge of the person, combining data with other data, not being deleted at the end of the period, used for marketing and sales purposes, not knowing what kind of data is kept about us, our inability to correct mistakes.

And Cyberbullying can be done using digital technologies with a repetitive behavior aimed at intimidating, angering or embarrassing our data target individuals.

Tips for users:
- Do not trust all emails: Carefully read the address that sent the e-mail.
- Never share your very personal data online.
- Use a security software: Using reliable security software on both your mobile devices and computers will protect you against malware and viruses.
- Use different passwords: Try to use a different password on each platform you log in to. Do not create passwords that are easy to guess or contain personal information. In addition to using strong passwords, increase the security of your devices by using methods such as fingerprint and eye scanning.
- Review your app accesses: Review what mobile apps you use and if they want to access data on your device.

Summary

SCAMS

As we already know, scam is a trick that is most often used for stealing money. It is important to be vigilant and not to rush. We can avoid scams by looking for more detailed information about the company and be observant about the email. Also don't forget about the lock icons which can show us the email is insecure. Block spam and do not provide personal information such as passwords and bank account.

IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA LITERACY

We found that media literacy is a key competence in our modern world, especially for navigating the online world. It is needed e.g., for identifying fake news. Without media literacy, people fall for conspiracy theories and can lose trust in democratic institutions. Education about media literacy should be an important part of school and in adult education.

LEARNINGS FROM THE CULTURAL EXCHANGE

We are participants from 6 different countries. We discussed fake news and scams in our countries. We compared the level of awareness of people in our countries on this issue. We think that we should create more awareness all over the world on this issue.

Summary

GETTING TO KNOW GABROVO

Gabrovo is the capital of Gabrovo province, the region where we stayed and where the youth exchange activities took place. We had the opportunity to explore the city, meet some locals and even the local authorities at the town hall.

The authorities told us about some local projects organized by the youth centre, and also asked us about our project and experience.

Overall, the society is informed about fake news and mostly knows how to recognize them. Locals were generally kind and open to talk to us, even though not everyone wanted to be recorded. Chatting to them helped us to learn about the local approach to Internet and news.

FINAL CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we would like to thank the European Commission for the opportunity to participate in this cultural exchange. We have certainly enriched our knowledge on the topic of Fake News and more. We would also like to thank you for the opportunity to meet new people and different views. It was something new and different for us, and we are glad that we had the opportunity to immerse ourselves in the differences of each country and find out more about their culture. The development of the project fully met our expectations, which we are really fascinated by.

We think that we managed to connect with each other and create an invaluable memory with which we enriched our knowledge in a very innovative way.

Final notes

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Final notes

"REAL OR FAKE - TIME TO AWAKE+"

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PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Bulgarian Youth Forum, Bulgaria
Local Democracy Center Association, Serbia
Associacio ALBA, Spain
Cağdas Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği, Turkey
Perpetuum Mobility e. V., Germany
Horn Development Association Community Interest Company HDA, UK

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