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MEDEA

DEVELOPING MEDIA LITERACY TO DEBUNK GENDER-RELATED MEDIA
MANIPULATION AND FAKE NEWS

GUIDELINES

HOW TO USE TO MEDIA LITERACY TOOLKIT

PROJECT N. 2024-1-LV01-KA210-ADU-000243248



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1. What is the Media Literacy Toolkit?

The Media Literacy Toolkit is a modern and innovative educational tool developed within the framework of the project "**MEDEA – Developing Media Literacy to debunk gender-related media manipulation and fake news.**" The MEDEA project aims to strengthen media literacy skills among trainers, educators, and journalists to counter disinformation and media manipulation related to technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

The **Media Literacy Toolkit** addresses several needs in the context of adult education and the fight against disinformation, particularly that related to technology-facilitated gender-based violence. In an era where fake news and media manipulation are increasingly widespread, it is crucial to equip trainers, educators, and journalists with the tools to develop critical thinking skills when it comes to information.

This toolkit supports professionals in recognizing and exposing media manipulation, promoting conscious media consumption, and raising awareness about the dangers of disinformation related to gender-based violence, thereby contributing to a culture of inclusion and respect.

Within the context of the MEDEA project, the toolkit aims to:

- **Combat disinformation** that downplays the severity of gender-based violence and perpetuates harmful stereotypes.
- **Educate and raise awareness** among adults, particularly trainers and journalists, on how to verify the accuracy of information and promote media literacy.
- **Provide practical methods and tools** for critical media analysis and fact-checking, with a specific focus on fake news related to gender-based violence.

These actions are aligned with the project's key priorities, such as improving media literacy skills and raising awareness against technology-facilitated gender-based violence.



2. Who is the Media Literacy Toolkit for?

The MEDEA **Media Literacy Toolkit** is designed for trainers, educators, journalists, media professionals, and anyone involved in education, awareness-raising, and media content creation—particularly in relation to technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

The toolkit is aimed at:

- **Trainers and educators:** working in educational settings, especially those teaching media literacy and raising awareness among adults and young people about the risks of disinformation.
- **Media professionals:** such as journalists and communicators, who are responsible for disseminating accurate information and addressing gender-based violence using respectful and professional language.
- **Organizations and activists:** committed to preventing and combating gender-based violence, and looking for tools to educate and train the public about disinformation related to this issue.
- **Media consumers:** that is, anyone who wants to improve their ability to analyze and decode media messages, develop skills to counter disinformation, and recognize cognitive biases.

Overall, the toolkit is intended for anyone who wishes to deepen and apply critical thinking in the evaluation of media content, contributing to the development of a more informed and conscious society regarding gender-based violence and disinformation.



3. What is the Structure ?

Module 1: Understanding Meta-Level Critical Thinking

This module introduces the concept of meta-level critical thinking, which consists of reflecting not only on what we think, but also on how we reach those conclusions. It examines cognitive biases and their influence on the perception of reality, and proposes strategies for teaching critical thinking to adults, with a particular focus on the media and gender violence.

Module 2: Fact-Checking Techniques and Information Verification

This module provides techniques and tools for verifying the truthfulness of news, including Google Reverse Image Search, InVID-WeVerify, and Snopes. It examines how fake news and misinformation influence the perception of gender-based violence and offers a practical approach for trainers to analyse and expose fake news.

Module 3: Recognising and Understanding TFGBV

This module explores the various forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, such as cyberstalking, doxxing and deepfake. It provides key definitions and up-to-date data to understand the scope of the phenomenon. The objective is to make participants aware of the digital mechanisms that amplify gender-based violence. The module promotes greater critical awareness of the online context.

Module 4: Prevention and Countering Strategies for TFGBV

The module provides tools and practical strategies to prevent and address online gender-based violence. It includes advice on digital security, victim support, responsible media use and fact-checking. It also explores the use of OSINT and the recognition of AI-generated content. The aim is to strengthen participants' resilience and digital skills.

Module 5: Understanding Media Construction and Bias

This module explores how the media constructs reality and how cognitive biases influence the representation of gender in media content. It also introduces the five fundamental concepts of media literacy, which allow us to understand the media dynamics and distortions that influence the perception of gender violence.

Module 6: Media Consumption and the Impact on the Perception of Reality

In this module, we look at the impact of algorithms and filter bubbles in social media, and how these mechanisms influence news consumption. We examine clickbait techniques and emotional manipulation, providing strategies for critical media consumption to avoid the distortion of reality regarding gender-based violence.



4. What skills does it promote ?

The MEDEA Toolkit fosters a set of transversal competencies essential for navigating today's digital and media landscape. Through active learning and reflection, it supports the development of:

- ✓ Critical thinking applied to media consumption and production
- ✓ Recognition of cognitive biases and media stereotypes
- ✓ Ability to critically analyse digital content and detect misinformation
- ✓ Awareness of how media narratives influence perceptions of gender-based violence
- ✓ Use of fact-checking and digital verification tools (e.g., image search, metadata analysis)
- ✓ Understanding the impact of gender-based technology-facilitated violence (GBTDV) on both learners and educators
- ✓ Ability to create safe and inclusive digital learning environments that protect vulnerable groups
- ✓ Empowerment of learners with digital literacy and self-protection strategies
- ✓ Promotion of ethical and respectful online behaviours to prevent digital abuse
- ✓ Capacity to advocate for institutional and policy-level responses to address online harassment in education settings



5. How to Use the Toolkit – Practical Guidelines for the Trainer

The MEDEA Media Literacy Toolkit is designed to be flexible, modular, and easily adaptable to different educational contexts. Trainers can use it in its entirety as a structured pathway or select individual modules or activities based on the learning objectives and the profile of the participants.

Modes of Use

Full Use

All six modules can be delivered in sequence, following the proposed order. This approach is ideal for:

- structured training courses (e.g., media literacy programmes, continuing education for journalists or social workers);
- educational activities with stable groups over time.

Selective Use

The trainer may choose one or more modules depending on the group's specific needs. For example:

- if the goal is to learn how to recognize disinformation → Module 2 (Fact-checking) is recommended;
- when working with journalists or digital educators → Module 3 (TFGBV) combined with Module 4 (Prevention) is useful;
- if focusing on media representation → Modules 5 and 6 are appropriate.

◆ Customization for different target groups is encouraged.



Target Groups

Suggested Adaptation

- Youth (16–25 years): More dynamic activities, use of social media, examples from TikTok or Instagram, guided discussions supported by visual stimuli.
- Adults: Reflective approach, real-life examples, group discussions, and valorisation of prior experiences.
- Journalists: Focus on verification tools, real-life distortion cases, reflection on language and ethics in journalism.
- Educators / Trainers: Methodological insights, suggestions for replicability, and focus on creating safe learning environments.

Contexts of Application

The Toolkit can be used in various educational settings:

- Formal education: Professional training courses, high schools, universities.
- Non-formal education: Workshops, public events, seminars for associations or youth centres.
- Peer education: Activities carried out in small groups, even without constant presence of a facilitator.

Required Materials

- Module handout or factsheet (provided in the Toolkit)
- Internet access (to watch videos, read articles, or use digital tools)
- Computer, projector, whiteboard or flipchart
- Printable materials: articles, case studies, exercise sheets
- Optional: post-its, coloured pens, brainstorming tools



6. How to Plan a Training Session

The MEDEA Toolkit is designed to be a versatile and adaptable tool. However, to achieve meaningful educational impact, it is essential to carefully plan each training session. Below is a detailed guide on how to structure a lesson using one or more modules from the Toolkit.

Phase 1 – Define the Objective and Choose the Module


Planning a session starts with defining the learning objective—what you want participants to learn, understand, or develop. Based on this objective, select the most appropriate module (or part of a module) from the six available in the Toolkit.

You can use the Toolkit either in full (delivering all six modules in sequence) or selectively, choosing only the most relevant parts according to the target group and the available time.

Phase 2 – Adapt the Content to Your Group

Every group has unique characteristics. It is important to contextualize content and activities to make them meaningful and accessible. Consider the following aspects:

- Age and educational level: Ensure that references, language, and tools are appropriate (e.g., news articles vs. social media posts).
- Prior experience: Assess whether participants are already familiar with the topics (e.g., media literacy, gender studies).
- Group dynamics: Observe whether the group is cohesive, needs more guidance, or is ready for autonomous activities.
- Sensitive issues: Some topics (like gender-based violence) may evoke personal or emotional experiences. Create a respectful and attentive atmosphere.

 Practical tip: Include guided discussions, leave room for participants to share experiences, and encourage the expression of diverse viewpoints.



Phase 3 – Prepare the Session: Materials, Activities, and Closure

Once you have selected and adapted the module to your group's needs, it is time to organize the session in a clear, balanced, and engaging way.

Organizing Materials

- Print or project the toolkit handouts
- Set up digital tools if needed (Google Reverse Image Search, InVID, podcasts...)
- Prepare the room: movable chairs, whiteboard, brainstorming supplies (post-its, markers)

Session Structure (90 min)

Introduction(10 min): Present learning objectives, use an opening question or visual/audio stimulus

Main activity (30–40 min) Individual or group work, exercises, simulations

Discussion & reflection (20–25 min) Group debrief, guided questions, plenary sharing

Conclusion (10–15 min) Summary, additional resources, short feedback or evaluation

Closing the Session

Do not overlook the final moment. A proper closure helps participants to:

- consolidate key concepts,
- articulate what they have learned,
- take autonomous action (e.g., fact-checking at home, sharing content with others).

You may use: a visual mind map, an open-ended closing question, a short self-assessment (written or oral), or a suggested follow-up task.



7. Methodological Approach and Educational Strategies

The MEDEA Toolkit adopts a pedagogical approach grounded in the principles of active learning, critical thinking, and inclusive education. Its goal is not only to transmit knowledge, but to foster awareness, stimulate reflection, and promote change in behaviours and attitudes toward media, disinformation, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

Active Learning and Constructivism

The methodological framework is inspired by the constructivist perspective on learning, according to which participants actively construct their knowledge through interaction with the environment, with others, and with content (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1990).

In the MEDEA Toolkit, activities are designed to directly engage participants through practical exercises, simulations, group work, and critical analysis. Active learning is supported through methods such as:

- Role-playing: Simulations of real media situations to understand communicative dynamics and decision-making processes (Freeman et al., 2014).
- Comparative source analysis: Comparing multiple sources on the same topic to develop fact-checking skills and identify biases.
- Collaborative debunking: Activities aimed at exposing fake news using digital tools (e.g., Google Reverse Image, InVID, Snopes).
- Participatory methods: Brainstorming, Think-Pair-Share, guiding questions, and Socratic discussions.

Critical Thinking and Metacognition

Critical thinking is understood as the ability to analyse, evaluate, and reconstruct cognitive and argumentative processes, recognising cognitive biases, logical fallacies, and rhetorical constructions (Paul & Elder, 2014).

The MEDEA Toolkit integrates the model of the Eight Elements of Thought (Paul & Elder, 2019):

1. Purpose
2. Central Question
3. Information
4. Concepts



7. Methodological Approach and Educational Strategies

5. Assumptions

6. Inferences and Interpretations

7. Points of View

8. Implications and Consequences

The conscious use of these elements within the training activities enables participants to develop metacognitive skills—the ability to reflect on their own thinking and learning processes.

inclusive Education

The MEDEA Toolkit is based on a pedagogical approach that is sensitive to cultural, linguistic, gender, and experiential diversity. Inclusion is understood not only as access, but as the valorisation of diverse perspectives, lived experiences, and forms of knowledge.

The proposed activities are flexible and adaptable to different educational settings and target groups (e.g., youth, adults, social workers, journalists), with careful attention to cognitive, communicative, and motivational barriers. Inclusive strategies adopted include:

- Use of accessible, non-discriminatory language
- Small group exercises to encourage participation
- Multimodal activities (visual, verbal, written, digital)
- Consideration of learning pace and individual processing time

Creating a Safe Space

Addressing topics such as disinformation, gender stereotypes, and online violence requires building a protected and welcoming learning environment. A safe space is one where participants feel free to express themselves, protected from judgment, and where dissent can emerge constructively (Arao & Clemens, 2013).

Key elements for creating a safe space include:

- Shared definition of interaction rules (respect, active listening, confidentiality)
- Option to “pass” or abstain from emotionally intense activities
- Careful mediation of conflicts and disagreements
- Validation of participants’ expressed emotions
- Recognition of the trainer’s role as a facilitator, not a judge

As bell hooks (1994) emphasized, emancipatory education can only occur within a relational environment that allows hierarchies to be questioned and new meanings to be constructed collectively. In this sense, trainers must be equipped to handle both cognitive and emotional discomfort, recognising them as integral parts of the transformative learning process.



8. Recommended materials and approaches for the Modules

FOR MODULES 1 and 2:

Practical Exercises and Simulations:

Trainers are encouraged to propose practical exercises and simulations, such as role-playing, which allow participants to apply fact-checking and critical analysis techniques in concrete contexts. For example, participants could be asked to recreate scenarios in which they are faced with a news item about gender-based violence and must determine whether the news is authentic or manipulated.

Another helpful exercise is rewriting sensationalist headlines and articles, in which participants, using the ethical approaches learned in the toolkit, are asked to rewrite headlines that minimize or justify gender-based violence in a more balanced and respectful way.

Fact-Checking Tools:

- **Google Reverse Image Search:** This tool enables trainers and participants to verify the origin of an image, identifying whether it has been manipulated or if it originates from an unreliable source. It helps expose falsified photos that could be spread in the media or on social networks to manipulate public opinion on gender-based violence.
- **InVID-WeVerify:** A fundamental platform for video verification, helpful in analysing the metadata of video content and determining whether the video is authentic or has been manipulated. This tool helps trainers teach how to recognise and expose manipulated videos that deal with cases of gender-based violence.
- **Snopes and PolitiFact:** Two of the leading fact-checking platforms that allow trainers to verify the news and identify fake news, which often distorts the reality of gender-based violence. Using these tools helps educate participants on the importance of verifying sources before disseminating any information.

Interactive Methods for Active Learning:

- **Socratic Questions:** This approach stimulates deep and critical reflection. Trainers can use Socratic questions to encourage participants to question their beliefs and opinions about the media and gender-based violence, promoting independent thinking. The questions help participants explore their assumptions, encouraging a more careful and in-depth analysis of media content.
- **Comparative Analysis of Sources:** Participants will learn to compare different sources of information on the same topic, to highlight any differences in tone, detail, and omissions. This exercise enables them to develop a greater ability to discern which sources are more reliable and credible, which is crucial in the fight against disinformation.
- **Debunking Fake News:** Debunking is the activity of exposing fake news. Trainers will guide participants in analysing suspicious articles, images, or videos, helping them to use verification tools to identify false or manipulated information. This practical approach will help raise awareness of the damage that fake news causes to the perception of gender-based violence.



8. Recommended materials and approaches for the Modules

FOR MODULES 3 and 4:

Introduction:

Trainers are encouraged to start with statistical data to ensure the topicality of the research. Stories in the format of short videos help to explain the idea. All forms of the GBTDV are used to understand the terms. Practical exercises and simulations should be integrated into the program to enable participants to understand the different forms of violence better. For example, participants could be asked to recreate scenarios in which they are faced with a news item about TDGBV and to add scenarios on how they would respond to the topic (e.g., reporting the spam account and blocking the person).

Podcasts & Audio Resources

- The Digital Human” – Explores ethical dilemmas in digital interactions and online abuse.
- ”TED Talks: Fighting Online Harassment” – Experts discuss strategies to combat GBTDV.
- ”UNESCO’s Digital Rights Series” – Features interviews with educators and policy-makers on online safety.

Fact-Checking Tools:

- Deepfake Detection (<https://sensity.ai/deepfake-detection>) -one can drag and drop your files and get a deepfake media verification

Videos & Documentaries, e.g.:

- The Social Dilemma” (Netflix) – Examines how digital platforms contribute to online harassment and abuse.
- ”Revenge Porn: A Survivor’s Story” (BBC) – A case study on the impact of non-consensual image sharing.

Online Safety Tools & Demos:

- Snopes (www.snopes.com) – Debunks viral misinformation
- FactCheck.org (www.factcheck.org) – Verifies political claims
- Block Party (X Safety App) – Helps learners manage online harassment.
- Digital Security Training (Amnesty International) – A free resource on digital self-defense
- Google Reverse Image Search – Helps verify manipulated or deepfake images

Socratic Questions:

The approach will promote Active Learning by transforming the seminar from a passive lecture into an interactive dialogue. This keeps participants actively engaged. Moreover, GBTDV scenarios are rarely black and white. Socratic questions allow trainers to guide participants through the ambiguities and nuances of real-world business challenges.

Role-Playing and Simulations:

Participants assume specific roles (e.g., CEO, Head of Innovation, customer, competitor) and act out scenarios related to GBTDV. Simulations can be computer-based or tabletop exercises. Participants ”live” the challenges, make decisions, and experience the consequences in a safe environment. Benefits for GBTDV: Develops empathy, negotiation skills, strategic thinking, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Excellent for illustrating the human element of business transformation.

Think-Pair-Share:

The approach is implemented in a way that a trainer poses a question or problem. Participants individually think and jot down their ideas, and then they discuss their thoughts with a partner. Pairs share their combined ideas with the larger group. Low-stakes way to get everyone thinking and participating. Reduces anxiety for those hesitant to speak first in a large group. Benefits for GBTDV: Encourages individual reflection before group discussion, generates a broader range of ideas, and helps clarify understanding.



8. Recommended materials and approaches for the Modules

FOR MODULES 5 and 6:

Discussion note:

Discussion is the most important segment of these modules. Trainers are encouraged to create an open and welcoming atmosphere where participants feel free to share their opinions and experiences. It is essential to emphasize that there are no wrong answers – every opinion matters and contributes to a broader and more comprehensive conclusion at the end of the session.

Practical exercises and simulations:

Trainers are encouraged to develop practical exercises that allow participants to explore how media has evolved and how cognitive distortions shape media consumption today.

Historical media timeline: Participants collaboratively create a visual timeline tracing the evolution of media, from oral storytelling and cave paintings to digital platforms. Each group focuses on a specific era and discusses the impact of media on society at that time.

Perspective role-play: Participants adopt the roles of media consumers from different historical periods (e.g., a citizen during the printing revolution, a radio listener, a modern social media user) and compare their media access, trust, and consumption habits.

Cognitive biases and emotional triggers: Participants analyze their own biases and try to target emotional triggers among media headlines and text

Interactive methods for active learning:

Role-playing exercises: Assign participants both historical and contemporary roles to highlight changes in media trust and critical analysis over time.

Socratic discussion: Use questions like "How has the evolution of media changed our concept of being informed?" and "How do cognitive distortions influence the way we process modern media?"

Comparative source analysis: Participants analyze how different media outlets, both past and present, frame similar events, allowing them to detect shifts in bias and presentation formats.

Debunking misleading narratives: Participants work on fact-checking articles or social media posts to uncover cognitive distortions and recognize manipulative techniques in information delivery.

Multimedia resources:

Books:

On the Evolution of Media Understanding Media Change, Carlos A. Scolari

Media Control, Noam Chomsky

Understanding Media and How They Work, Renee Hobbs

Video:

Always company campaign:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joRjb5WOmbM>

New York Magazine:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTvGSstKd5Y>



9.Evaluation Form

This evaluation form is designed to gather your feedback on today’s training experience. Your answers are essential for improving the quality of future activities based on the MEDEA Toolkit.

Please complete the questionnaire honestly and anonymously.

 Completion time: approximately 5 minutes.

☒ Select only one answer for each question, unless otherwise indicated.

 You can add personal comments in the optional sections.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Modulo n°_____ / Session title: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Facilitator: _____

Instructions for Completion

1. Session Objectives

Did you understand the learning objectives of the session?

☐ Not at all ☐ A little ☐ Fairly ☐ Very much ☐ Completely

2. Content and Materials

Were the contents clear, relevant, and well structured?

☐ Not at all ☐ A little ☐ Fairly ☐ Very much ☐ Completely

Were the materials used (exercises, videos, digital tools, handouts) useful?

☐ Not at all ☐ A little ☐ Fairly ☐ Very much ☐ Completely

3. Participation and Method

Did you feel engaged during the activities?

☐ Not at all ☐ A little ☐ Fairly ☐ Very much ☐ Completely

Did the interactive methods (group work, discussions, exercises) help you reflect more deeply?

☐ Not at all ☐ A little ☐ Fairly ☐ Very much ☐ Completely



9. Evaluation Form

4. Skills Acquired

Critical thinking:
☐no progress ☐ little ☐fair ☐much ☐fully

Recognising fake news and manipulation:
☐no progress ☐ little ☐fair ☐much ☐fully

Understanding online gender-based violence:
☐no progress ☐ little ☐fair ☐much ☐fully

Using verification tools:
☐no progress ☐ little ☐fair ☐much ☐fully


Reflecting on bias and stereotypes:
☐no progress ☐ little ☐fair ☐much ☐fully


5. Environment and Atmosphere


Did you feel heard and respected?
☐not at all ☐ a little ☐ fairly ☐ very much ☐ completely

Was there space to express your opinion?
☐not at all ☐ a little ☐ fairly ☐ very much ☐ completely

6. Final comments: (optional)

 What was the most meaningful moment of the session for you?.....

 What could we improve?
.....

 Any other comments or suggestions:
.....



10. Educational Sustainability and Replicability

Sustainability is a core principle of the MEDEA Toolkit, understood not only as the continued use of the materials over time, but as the capacity to foster lasting change in the educational, social, and professional contexts in which it is applied. The concept is structured around three dimensions: continued use, contextual adaptability, and autonomous replicability.

Continued Use Beyond the Project

The MEDEA Toolkit is designed to remain functional even after the end of European funding. This is made possible by:

- a modular structure that allows for either partial or complete use of its contents;
- the adoption of free and accessible tools (e.g., Google Reverse Image Search, InVID, open access video platforms);
- the use of transferable educational methodologies, which can be easily integrated into existing training programmes.

These elements enable trainers to use the Toolkit without relying on external technical support or additional resources.

Adaptability to Local Contexts

One of the Toolkit's strengths is its flexibility: content can be adjusted based on the target group, available time, socio-cultural context, and specific learning goals. The worksheets, activities, and methods are designed for:

- youth and adults,
- social workers, teachers, and journalists,
- formal, non-formal, and informal educational settings.

This adaptability fosters inclusion and strengthens the connection between educational content and the real-life experiences of participants.

Replicability and Skill Multiplication

Replicability refers to the ability of new trainers, schools, associations, and public institutions to reuse the Toolkit independently. To support this process, MEDEA:

- provides ready-to-use materials with clear instructions for activity delivery;
- encourages peer education as a method for disseminating acquired competencies;
- includes a dedicated trainer's guide with practical advice on adaptation and implementation.

In this perspective, the Toolkit is conceived as a “living” tool, open to experimentation, updates, and the co-creation of new educational practices.

Towards Systemic Impact

The transformative potential of the MEDEA Toolkit lies in its ability to generate cultural change beginning in local educational settings. By integrating it into: school curricula; active citizenship programmes; professional development pathways,; community-based or policy-oriented initiatives, the Toolkit can contribute to building a more informed, resilient, and critically engaged society in response to media dynamics and digital violence.



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