



Co-funded by  
the European Union

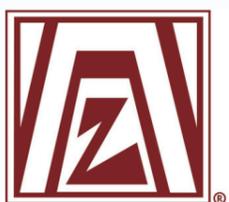
# MEDEA

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



**TRAINING  
TOOLKIT**

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



**ZONTA**  
CLUB OF  
JELGAVA



NOVOSADSKA  
NOVINARSKA  
ŠKOLA





Co-funded by  
the European Union



# SUMMARY

---

1. Module 1 - Understanding Meta-Level Critical Thinking
  2. Module 2 - Fact-Checking techniques and Information Verification
  3. Module 3 - Gender-Based Technology Driven Violence
  4. Module 4 - GBTDV - How to Prevent and Fight It
  5. Module 5 - Understanding media construction
  6. Module 6 - Media consumption and its impact on perception
- 

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

## Authors

© MARCH 2025 – Skill Up srl

This publication was carried out with the financial support of the European Commission under Erasmus + Project “Medea. Developing Media Literacy to debunk gender-related media manipulation and fake news”, n. 2024-1-LV01-KA210-ADU-00024324

## Attribution, share in the same condition



CC BY-SA: You are free to Share- copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format and Adapt – remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms under the following terms:

Attribution – you must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggest the licensor endorses you or your use

ShareAlike- If you remix, transform or build upon the material, you must distribute your contribution under the same license as the original

No additional restrictions – you may not apply legal terms.

# Module 1

## Understanding Meta-Level Critical Thinking

---

Skill Up



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



Co-funded by  
the European Union



# SUMMARY

---

1. INTRODUCTION TO Meta-Level Critical Thinking

2. LET'S LOOK AT THE NEWS

3. TRAINING MODULE

4. CONCLUSIONS

5. EVALUATION SURVEY

---





## MEDEA

# Understanding Meta-Level Critical Thinking

Meta-Level Critical Thinking is a fundamental skill in media literacy. Critical thinking, according to Paul and Elder, is based on eight fundamental elements that structure our way of reasoning. These elements are essential to developing an objective and conscious evaluation capacity, especially in the context of media literacy. Let's look at them in detail:

1. **Purpose:** Every thought process has a purpose. In the context of media literacy, our purpose might be to identify and counter misinformation or to understand the dynamics of bias in the media;
2. **Central Question:** Critical thinking revolves around a central question that guides the analysis. For example, a trainer might ask, "Is this news story reliable? What evidence supports this claim?"
3. **Information:** This refers to the data, evidence and facts we use to answer the question asked. As part of fact-checking, this information may come from academic sources, recognized fact-checkers and trusted news outlets.
4. **Concepts:** Every argument uses key concepts to structure thought. For example, the concept of "cognitive bias" helps us understand how our perception of information can be distorted.
5. **Assumptions:** These are the implicit premises on which our reasoning is based. For example, if we assume that "the mainstream media always lies," our ability to objectively evaluate information will be compromised.
6. **Inferences and interpretations:** These are the conclusions we draw from available data and information. A common mistake is to make hasty inferences without considering alternatives or checking the validity of sources.
7. **Point of View:** All reasoning occurs within a perspective. A trainer must be aware that the media reflect different points of view and that the analysis must take into account the plurality of perspectives.
8. **Implications and consequences:** Every thought has consequences. If a fake news is believed and spread, what are the social and political implications? Recognizing the consequences of your thoughts helps you make more informed decisions.



## Common Cognitive Biases and Their Influence on Perception

Cognitive biases are systematic distortions in the way we process information. They are mental shortcuts (heuristics) that help us make quick decisions, but they can lead to errors in judgment.

According to Kahneman, our brain uses two systems of thought: **System 1, fast and intuitive**, and **System 2, slow and rational**. Biases arise mainly from the use of System 1, which looks for mental shortcuts (heuristics) to simplify the processing of information, but sometimes leads to predictable errors.

One of the most common biases is **confirmation bias**, which leads people to seek out, interpret, and remember information that confirms their preexisting beliefs, while ignoring information that contradicts them. This bias is particularly problematic in the digital age, where social media algorithms amplify content that is consistent with the user's opinions, creating information bubbles.

The **availability heuristic** is another cognitive mechanism that influences perception. According to Kahneman, people judge the probability of an event based on the ease with which relevant examples come to mind. For example, rare but spectacular events, such as plane crashes or terrorist attacks, receive enormous media coverage, leading the public to overestimate their frequency.

Another common bias is **anchoring bias**, which causes people to overweight the first piece of information they receive (the "anchor") when making subsequent judgments. For example, if a newspaper headline presents information in a sensational way, the reader may be influenced in their interpretation of the content, even if the article provides more balanced details.

Finally, the **halo effect** demonstrates how a single characteristic can influence the overall perception of a person, a brand or a news item. If a journalist is considered credible on a topic, the public may automatically attribute authority to him or her on other topics, without verifying his or her real expertise.

These biases not only influence the way we consume information, but also the way we produce and disseminate it. For this reason, developing critical thinking is essential to reduce the impact of cognitive distortions and promote a more conscious approach to information.



Co-funded by  
the European Union



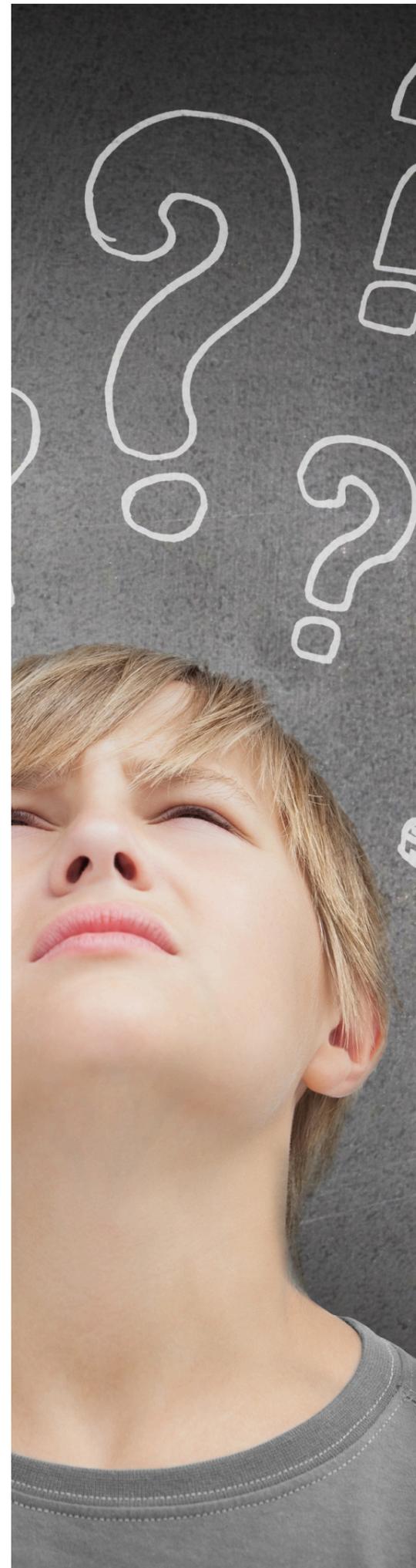
# Critical Thinking and Deconstructing Gender Stereotypes in the Media

Deconstruction is a fundamental process to combat inequalities and gender violence, allowing to dismantle rigid and distorted representations of men and women. These stereotypes, often rooted in media content, deeply influence collective and individual perception, contributing to the normalization of violence and the creation of power inequalities.

**Critical thinking** is key to recognizing and deconstructing these stereotypes. It is not just about recognizing distortions, but actively reflecting on how the media uses them to construct narratives that limit the way we see men, women, and gender violence. Through critical thinking, we can analyze the media with greater awareness and dismantle gender stereotypes.

## How Does Deconstruction Work?

- 1. Identifying Stereotypes:** The first step is to recognize how gender stereotypes are presented in the media (e.g., women as weak and passive or men as aggressive and dominant).
- 2. Analyzing the Representation of Gender Roles:** Once stereotypes have been identified, the next step is to examine how they influence our perception and understanding of reality, as in the case of gender violence, which is often downplayed in the media.
- 3. Debunking Preconceived Notions:** Critical thinking pushes us to question pre-existing ideas and seek more just and inclusive alternatives, promoting a more balanced worldview.
- 4. Promoting New Narratives:** In addition to criticizing existing stereotypes, critical thinking also helps us create new, more inclusive representations, where women and men are not confined to rigid roles, and gender-based violence is treated with the seriousness it deserves.



# LET'S LOOK AT THE NEWS

Type of media- Topic

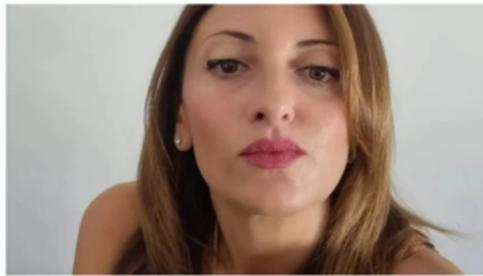
## La Repubblica (IT)

Lucia Simeone, secretary to the MEP  
Martusciello, arrested in Caserta

L'INCHIESTA

Arrestata a Caserta Lucia Simeone, segretaria dell'eurodeputato di FI Martusciello

di Dario del Porto e Alessio Gemma



**Il movente passionale** - Una storia d'amore molto travagliata, quella tra i due ragazzi, fatta di incomprensioni, feroci litigate, minacce e abbandoni e ritorni di fiamma. Il motivo dell'assassinio starebbe proprio in questa difficile relazione. Gli inquirenti stanno cercando di definire i motivi precisi della lite ma, al momento, sembra che il delitto sia scaturito mercoledì sera durante l'ennesima discussione, nel corso della quale la ragazza forse avrebbe ribadito al ragazzo di volerlo lasciare. A quel punto il raptus: lui le avrebbe afferrato la testa e sbattuta contro un muretto, poi le avrebbe messo le mani al collo e infine la coltellata mortale sul lato destro del collo.

The motive: passion - A very troubled love story, that between the two young people, made up of misunderstandings, fierce arguments, threats and abandonments and back-patting. The motive for the murder would appear to be this difficult relationship. The investigators are trying to establish the exact reasons for the argument but, at the moment, it seems that the crime occurred on Wednesday evening during yet another argument, during which the girl had probably told the boy that she wanted to leave him. Then the outburst: he allegedly grabbed her head and slammed it against a wall, then put his hands around her neck and finally stabbed her on the right side of the neck, killing her.

## Emmanuel Macron: quanto guadagna, chi è la moglie (24 anni più grande), la carriera politica e vita privata

domenica 9 giugno 2024, 22:26 - Ultimo agg. 22:31



Emmanuel Macron: how much does he earn, who is his wife (24 years his senior), his political career and private life

- 1 Emmanuel Macron, chi è il presidente francese che ha sciolto il Parlamento: età, vita privata, carriera politica, la presidenza
- 2 Emmanuel Macron, chi è
- 3 Ingresso in politica e la fondazione di En Marche!
- 4 Presidenza e politiche

'It was easy to love her because she was a beautiful, friendly and prosperous Emilian woman, as only women from Emilia can be.

Great in the kitchen and great in bed. The best that Emilia can offer a woman'

## Un'operazione della Rai con una fiction Hanno riesumato Nilde Iotti

GIORGIO CARBONE

Nilde Iotti morì giusto vent'anni fa. E il cordoglio fu unanime. L'amarono molti compagni di partito, naturalmente. Perché da oltre mezzo secolo, dall'epoca del suo legame con Palmiro Togliatti era una bandiera del Pci. Ma l'amavano anche esponenti di altre idee perché nei molti lustri da presiden-

tessa della Camera, fu saggia e imparziale come pochi prima e dopo di lei. Era facile amarla perché era una bella emiliana simpatica e prosperosa come solo sanno esserlo le donne emiliane. Grande in cucina e grande a letto. Il massimo che in Emilia si chiede a una donna. Per amarla del tutto, certo, uno doveva dimenticarsi (...)

segue → a pagina 26

## Il Giornale (IT)

Don't throw a 4inch stiletto (on the forehead) between man and wife

### La posta del cuore

SOCIETÀ

Tra moglie e marito non mettere il tacco 12 sulla fronte

Per sfoghi, consigli e persino per pessimi esempi, scrivetelemi all'indirizzo: postadelcuore@ilgiornale.it

Valeria Braghieri

SOCIETÀ I cuoricini su cui l'orologiaio deve sincronizzarsi

ATTUALITÀ Harry, Meghan e le regine del focolare



Dear Doctor, my name is Alfonso D., I'm 38 years old and I work as a vacuum cleaner salesman. For almost a year now I've been living with Ada, who's a bit younger than me and works, as you say, in a 'canaro' (she was born in Rome and often uses dialect words, some of them vulgar to be honest), a shop where they wash dogs. She is very beautiful and sexy, a girl full of energy but also aggressive, something I like in bed but... She is also violent and today she really went too far. I even had to go to the emergency room because she threw a high-heeled shoe at me and it hit me on the head. I was bleeding a lot. There's a lot of talk about violence against women, and it's all true, I know, I read the papers too... but my story is completely the opposite. In our relationship I'm the one who takes the initiative, who 'chases her'. At first everything was fine, but one day, after an argument in a restaurant, she slapped me... at the time I justified it, but now... the months go by and she's more and more nervous. The disagreements have increased and Ada almost always hits me, throws something at me or threatens me: this, I've noticed, has also extended to intimate moments, in bed, when we make love, she tries to hurt me, she bites me, she pulls my hair, the other night she wanted to tie me up but I told her no. Then there was the episode that pushed me to write to you, the wound caused by a 12 cm high heel... I tried to talk to Ada's mum, but she minimises it, she says 'don't put your oar in'. I'm not feeling well anymore, I'm starting to be afraid, but I like her too much physically; what should I do? Thank you! I await your advice! Yours sincerely, Alfonso D.



Not all meat is the same

# Module 1 - Recognizing Cognitive Distortions and Biases in the Perception of Gender-Based Violence

## TRAINING MODULE

Objectives	<p><b>Develop critical thinking:</b> Teach how to critically evaluate how cognitive biases (such as confirmation bias and anchoring bias) influence the perception of gender-based violence in the media.</p> <p><b>Identify bias in the media:</b> analyse newspaper articles and social media comments that deal with gender-based violence, to understand how news and comments can be distorted by prejudice.</p> <p><b>Dismantle gender stereotypes:</b> work on deconstructing stereotypes related to gender-based violence that emerge in the media, through critical thinking.</p>
Group	<p>group of 10-12</p> <p>Start the session with an <b>open discussion:</b> Ask participants what ‘critical thinking’ means to them and why they think it’s important to analyse the information we consume every day. Encourage responses and get the group thinking about the importance of a conscious approach to news.</p> <p>Give a <b>brief introduction</b> to misinformation: Explain what misinformation is and how it can influence our perception of reality. Emphasise that, especially for sensitive issues such as gender-based violence, incorrect or manipulated information can distort our understanding of the facts.</p>
Introduction to the topic	<p><b>Link the topic</b> to critical thinking: Introduce the concept of cognitive distortions, explaining how these ‘mental filters’ influence our judgements and perceptions, often without us realising it. Point out that critical thinking helps us recognise these errors and evaluate information objectively.</p> <p><b>Stimulate reflection</b> on the media: Ask if the participants have ever come across news that seemed true at first glance, but which, once analysed, appeared distorted or manipulated. This will help participants connect critical thinking with everyday life and the news they consume.</p> <p><b>Conclude the</b> introduction by explaining the objectives of the exercise: explain that during the session participants will learn to verify information and better understand how fake news, especially that about gender violence, can influence our view of reality. Let them know that the aim is to develop practical skills to unmask distortions in the media.</p>
Materials and Tools	<p><b>Articles and comments on social media:</b> Select newspaper articles or social media posts that deal with cases of gender-based violence, with misleading titles or comments that blame the victim.</p> <p><b>Tools for critical analysis:</b> Provide guidance on how to recognise cognitive biases and how to analyse media content (such as confirmation bias, the halo effect and anchoring bias).</p>
What you need	<p>Computer or smartphone with internet connection</p>



# Module 1- Understanding Meta-Level Critical Thinking - Training Module

Time 1 hour

---

## Questions

**What does 'critical thinking' mean to you?**

How do you think critical thinking can help us better understand the information we read or see in the media?

**Have you ever come across a piece of news that seemed true at first glance, but then seemed false or manipulated to you?**

What made you change your mind about the veracity of that news?

**Do you think the media treats gender-based violence fairly and accurately?**

How might media headlines or language distort perceptions of gender-based violence?

**What does 'confirmation bias' mean and how can it influence our opinion of an event or piece of news?**

Can you give an example of how confirmation bias manifests itself in everyday life or in the media?

**Have you ever read an article that made a victim of violence seem responsible for the situation?**

How do you think cognitive biases influence the way we judge the victim or the aggressor in these cases?

---

## Extra Questions

**What can we do to develop critical thinking and become more aware consumers of media?**

**How can we learn to recognise cognitive biases and unmask them when we read the news?**

**How can we use critical thinking to help others recognise gender-based violence in the media?**

**What would you say to a friend who shares a distorted or manipulated news story about a case of gender-based violence?**

---

## important points

**1. Create a safe and respectful environment:** welcome different opinions and manage conflicts with respect

**2. Stimulate critical thinking:** use open questions and ask people to expand or explain their thinking

**3. Use concrete and realistic examples:** using real cases helps participants to better understand the dynamics and to make connections with everyday reality.

**4. Recognise and Manage Cognitive Biases:** Make sure participants understand the main cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias and anchoring bias, and how they influence our perception of events, particularly in relation to gender-based violence.

**5. Highlight the Importance of Language in the Media:** Emphasise how the language used in the media can have a significant impact on our perception of facts, particularly when it comes to gender-based violence.

**6. Promote the Deconstruction of Gender Stereotypes:** Use the module as an opportunity to discuss how gender stereotypes are constructed and perpetuated by the media.

**7. Encourage fact-checking** and verification of sources

**8. Favour group work:** this allows for more intimate discussion and the possibility to express one's opinions more freely.

**9. Provide continuous feedback:** this is useful for progress, stimulating reflection and improvement

---

## Tips

A brief evaluation survey could be useful to understand how much the participants have learnt and how their approach to critical thinking has evolved during the exercise.

---



# TO SUM IT UP

## UNDERSTANDING META-LEVEL CRITICAL THINKING AND FACT-CHECKING TECHNIQUES AND INFORMATION VERIFICATION

### TOPIC OVERVIEW

In the age of digital information, where information overload, disinformation and fake news influence public opinion, it is essential to equip teachers, trainers and journalists with concrete tools to critically evaluate information and transmit source verification skills.

Critical thinking and fact-checking are essential skills for teachers, trainers and journalists, allowing them to evaluate the reliability of information and recognize manipulations and cognitive biases.

### KEY POINT 1

- Eight Key Elements of Critical Thinking
- Purpose, central question, information, concepts, assumptions, inferences, points of view: Analyze different perspectives, implications..
- reason in a structured way and question the information received.

### KEY POINT 2

#### COGNITIVE BIAS

- Cognitive biases are systematic distortions in the way we think that influence how we collect, analyse and interpret information. These mental shortcuts, which we use to make quick decisions, often lead us to misjudgements and unfounded beliefs.

### KEY POINT 3

Deconstruction involves:

- \*Identifying and analysing messages that reinforce gender stereotypes.
- \*Promoting fair and realistic representation of all genders.
- \*Dispelling myths and misrepresentations

### KEY POINT 4

- Standard protocol for fact-checking and critical thinking education
- Define the problem, analyze sources, verify content, use fact-checking tools, reflect on bias and implications, document and communicate the results.





# ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

## NOTES

Per approfondimenti, potete consultare i documenti che abbiamo usato:

- Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2019). *Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Professional and Personal Life*. Pearson Education.
- Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Gigerenzer, G. (2014). *Risk Savvy: How to Make Good Decisions*. Viking.
- Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux

## BRAINSTORM

Ideas to stimulate discussion

### **Distortions in the Media**

Create a list of misleading headlines about cases of gender-based violence.

How might these headlines distort the perception of the event?

### **Gender Stereotypes**

Identify common gender stereotypes in the media.

How can we dismantle them and promote a more balanced representation?

### **Fighting Fake News**

Discuss strategies for recognising and combatting fake news, especially those concerning gender violence.

### **Critical Thinking in Young People**

How can we teach critical thinking to young people to help them recognise media manipulation?

## ADDITIONAL MULTIMEDIA

### **The Hidden Brain Podcast**

A podcast that explores how our brain works and how cognitive biases influence our daily decisions, including social, political and media perceptions.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/hidden-brain/>





Co-funded by  
the European Union

# MEDEA

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



If you or someone you  
know have been victims  
of technology-facilitated  
gender based violence,  
know that you can find  
support and report it:

-  
-  
-

You are not alone.

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



**ZONTA**  
CLUB OF  
JELGAVA



NOVOSADSKA  
NOVINARSKA  
ŠKOLA

