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EU Project: “Think Twice: Media Literacy for Gen Z”

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

The Think Twice project was a two-year European initiative aimed at combating online disinformation by empowering young people aged 14 to 19. It brought together fact-checking organizations, media educators, and civil society partners to develop a co-creative, youth-centered approach.

The primary goal was to equip digital natives with the skills and tools needed to critically assess online content and build resilience against the spread of false information. The project's core output was a comprehensive media literacy toolkit, featuring professionally produced videos and teaching materials, complemented by content created by the young participants themselves.

KEY OBJEKTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The project's strategy was built on three main pillars:

- **Toolkit Development**
  Creating a multilingual package of professional explainer videos and flexible teaching resources.
- **Community-led Content**
  Engaging young people as co-creators of short, peer-to-peer fact-checking videos for social media.
- **Iterative Feedback Loops**
  Establishing structured workshops and "Community Calls" to continually refine content and methods based on direct input from young participants.

This participatory approach aimed to move beyond traditional top-down education by encouraging young people to become active creators and debunkers of misinformation.

One of the core ideas of the project and this white paper is: How to engage Gen Z to think twice? Many fact-checkers, such as Faktabaari, have summarized the necessary actions as STOP, THINK, CHECK, while the Think Twice project has encouraged even more action, communication, and engagement from youth through a bottom-up approach.

IMAGINE A YOUNG PERSON
TAKING THE DEBATE ON
BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM
INTO THEIR OWN HANDS.

WHAT WOULD THEY SAY?
WHAT CAN WE LEARN BY HELPING THEM FIND THEIR VOICE?

While this paper reflects on lessons learned for the future, it also raises a debate about what additional measures are needed in the age of generative AI - a technology that has made significant advances since the design and start of the project.

Since 2022, generative AI has gradually become accessible on the mobile devices of Gen Z, competing for their screen time. From an information disorder perspective, this adds an extra challenge, particularly regarding content authenticity, on top of social media platforms that already amplify content through opaque algorithms. Although the impact of generative AI on Gen Z requires further study, it is already clear that future media literacy approaches urgently need to include AI awareness and AI literacy - concepts touched upon in the EU AI Act but still lacking extensive educational content.

This dimension was not fully covered during the project, but some materials have been developed, and several initiatives addressing these skills will be referenced for the future. AI literacy cannot be neglected in any upcoming empowerment projects.

This white paper is primarily aimed at:

1. Educators and teachers
2. Fact-checkers and media literacy organizations
3. Youth workers and NGOs

Secondary audiences include media policy-makers, decision-makers, trainers, and facilitators.

MAIN FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The Think Twice project successfully demonstrated that a youth-centered, co-creative model is effective in media literacy. Key findings include:

Authenticity and Reach

Peer-produced content, while less polished than professional materials, proved highly authentic and engaging for young audiences on platforms like TikTo

Effectiveness of Hybrid Models

Combining professional content for foundational knowledge with peer-created videos for relatable examples created a powerful and comprehensive learning exper

Communication and Structure

Successful project implementation, especially with young people, requires a clear and flexible communication strategy, whether through school platforms, instant messaging, or face-to-face interaction.

Importance of Psychological Safety

Providing a safe environment for young participants is crucial. This includes careful moderation during workshops and of-fering support to prevent them from feeling overwhelmed by the scale of online disinfor

Incentives for Participation

For long-term projects, particularly outside of school contexts, some form of reward or incentive is often necessary to ensure consistent, high-quality participation from young creators.

Technology is not neutral

Human agency must be emphasized: Ethical considerations regarding digital content creation, especially given the power and lack of accountability of technology companies, social media platforms, and generative AI models, need to be clearly explained. The scale and speed of their impact represent an unprecedented challenge to human cognition. EU-level action and the promotion of human agency in using AI as a tool are essential.

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, we recommend that future media literacy initiatives targeting young audiences:

- **Prioritize a Hybrid Content Strategy**
  Use professional videos to establish core concepts and community-led videos to make them relevant and relatable.
- **Build Strong Feedback Loops**
  Involve young people directly in the project's development and iteration to ensure the content remains authentic and effective.
- **Focus on Mental Safety**
  Integrate practices that protect participants from the emotional burden of engaging with disinformation,
  such as content moderation and open discussion.
- **Leverage Existing Structures**
  Collaborate closely with educators and utilize established communication channels to seamlessly integrate media literacy into both formal and informal learning environments.
- **Address Challenges Posed by Generative AI**
  Incorporate recommendations such as those outlined in the upcoming EU DigComp 3.0 (due end of 2025) on the skills needed for lifelong learning, within protective EU regulatory frameworks.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

The rapid spread of misinformation on social media poses a serious challenge to democratic societies and informed citizen engagement. Recognizing the urgency of this issue, the European Union has prioritized media literacy in several policy frameworks. Key initiatives such as the European Democracy Action Plan, the Digital Services Act, and the Media and Audiovisual Action Plan emphasize the role of education and co-creation in countering disinformation and strengthening democratic resilience.

In line with these efforts, the Think Twice project was launched in 2023. It was designed to empower young people aged 14 to 19 with the tools to critically evaluate digital content and to recognize and challenge misinformation. The project brought together fact-checking organizations, media educators, and civil society actors from across Europe to develop innovative, youth-centered approaches.

With its focus on social media formats, co-creative methods and multilingual accessibility, Think Twice aligned with current EU strategies to promote civic engagement and democratic participation in a digital society. By embedding young people in the content creation process, the project addressed both educational needs and broader societal challenges in a fast-changing information environment independently to social media companies funding other literacy initiatives.

1.2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Think Twice project's key learnings, outcomes and recommendations are captured in this white paper, which offers practical guidance for other initiatives aiming to strengthen media literacy among young people. It serves both as a final reflection on the project's two-year journey and a blueprint for scaling its methods and resources in new contexts including especially generative AI.

The document is built around the learnings of the three main pillars of the project:

- **Media Literacy Toolkit**
  A comprehensive package of professionally produced explainer videos and teaching materials, including one-pagers, exercises, and work shop templates, designed for integration into both formal and informal education settings.
- **Community Videos**
  Short, social-media-optimized fact-checking videos created by young participants themselves, reflecting a peer-to-peer approach that resonates with Gen Z audiences.
- Community Conferences: Regular virtual editorial meetings and workshops (Community Calls) that provided spaces for collaboration, feedback, and the iterative refinement of content and methods.

This paper draws on a comprehensive evaluation and critical self-reflection of the project concept and summarizes the experiences and lessons learned by all project partners in preparing media literacy content for social media. It also includes examples of the produced materials, both professional and peer-created videos, and teaching resources, to illustrate how the methods were applied in practice.
By providing guidance for educators, NGOs, fact-checkers, and policy-makers to adapt and reuse this Think Twice toolkit, the project aims to support a broader scaling effect: enabling other organizations to reach wider audiences and embed media literacy practices into their own social media strategies. This sustainability-oriented approach ensures that the project's impact can continue beyond its initial funding period and can scale within other likeminded media literacy projects.

In essence, this white paper is not only a record of what was achieved, but also a practical roadmap for replicating and expanding media literacy work in a co-creative, youth-centered way. We also recommend future projects and campaigns to familiarize and commit to the EDMO Guidelines for Effective Media Literacy Initiatives, which the consortium members contributed to or supported within the parallel European Digital Media Observatory's (EDMO) Media Literacy cooperation 2024. That said, the original Think Twice project design in 2022 and its limited resources did not allow us to yet apply the EDMO guidelines in full.

1.3 TARGET AUDIENCE FOR THE WHITE PAPER

While the project primarily targeted Gen Z, this white paper is intended for a diverse group of stakeholders working at the intersection of media literacy, youth engagement, and education. It offers practical guidance and proven strategies for those interested in replicating or adapting the co-creative formats developed in Think Twice.

- **Educators and teachers**
  For classroom practitioners, the paper presents tested media literacy methods tailored to digital-native learners. It explains how professional video content and flexible teaching resources can be used to make abstract concepts tangible and relevant for students aged 14 - 19.
- **Fact-checkers and media literacy organizations**
  Organizations seeking to reach younger audiences will find concrete examples of how peer-produced content and social media-first strategies can increase reach and impact - especially on platforms like TikTok and Instagram.
- **Youth workers and NGOs**
  The paper offers insights into building inclusive and participatory learning environments beyond formal education. It highlights how Community Calls and hands-on workshops can support youth in becoming informed, confident media creators and debunkers.
- **Policy makers and decision makers**
  For those shaping national or EU-wide strategies, this paper provides evidence of how co-creation and multilingual design can align media literacy work with broader goals around democratic participation and digital citizenship.
- **Trainers and facilitators**
  Professionals delivering media literacy workshops will benefit from adaptable tools, workshop templates, and content formats that can be tailored to local needs and capacities.

By addressing these audiences, the white paper supports both formal and informal education contexts, helping to expand the reach and impact of media literacy initiatives across national and cultural borders.

2. PROBLEM AND MOTIVATION

2.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The rapid proliferation of disinformation online poses a significant challenge to democratic societies and informed citizen engagement. Young users, who primarily get their information through social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, are especially vulnerable due to limited critical media literacy skills and exposure to addictive algorithmic content. During the project's execution, families and teachers across Europe - particularly in countries such as Spain and later Finland - have pushed to ban cell phones in schools and reduce teenagers' exposure to such technologies. According to a Eurobarometer survey, over a quarter of European citizens regularly encounter fake news on a weekly basis. Specifically, a representative survey in Germany revealed that 76% of young people aged 16–24 encounter disinformation weekly, with 34% expressing low confidence in identifying fake news (Vodafone Stiftung, 2020). Furthermore, the 2025 Reuters Institute Digital News Report indicates that globally, 58% of users remain concerned about distinguishing truth from falsehood online, with this figure even higher among young users in certain countries.

The Think Twice project directly addressed this critical issue by enhancing media literacy among youth, aiming to build resilience against disinformation and empower young individuals to critically evaluate online content.

2.2 CURRENT LANDSCAPE

Depending on the EU country and its educational landscape, existing policies and practices in media literacy education predominantly rely on formal education settings, or are based on individual initiatives by a wide variety of actors operating independently. Both approaches cannot ensure that the dynamic nature of online misinformation is adequately addressed.

In parallel the technology platforms offer serious challenges. Due to their algorithmic design and viral formats, social media platforms have amplified the spread of misinformation. This dynamic illustrates the urgent need for effective educational responses tailored to these platforms (O'Connor, ISD Global, 2022). The Reuters Institute's Digital News Report (2025) highlights the increasing dependence on social

media for news consumption among young Europeans, with significant growth noted especially for platforms such as TikTok and YouTube, further underscoring the need for tailored educational interventions on these platforms.

Critical challenges identified include:

- **Media literacy gap**
  Young people struggle to differentiate credible information from misinformation online. Research by Stiftung Neue Verantwortung (2021) highlights poor digital news media literacy performance among citizens in Germany.
- **Traditional methods ineffectiveness**
  Conventional educational materials fail to engage Gen Z, who prefer short, visually appealing content. About one-third of European teenagers and young adults aged 14-24 can be classified as "Low Information Oriented", indicating low interest and engagement with traditional news sources (dpa project #UseTheNews).
- **Knowledge gaps**
  Practical resources specifically addressing disinformation strategies, critical reasoning skills, and manipulation techniques tailored explicitly for social media environments remain scarce.
- **Generative AI gradually changing the information landscape and the way we consume it.**
  From a fact-checking point of view, generative AI is not a reliable source of information, but it offers some opportunities for personal development as a tool to critical and curious humans.

2.3 PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

The Think Twice project introduces an innovative, youth-oriented solution by addressing young users directly through co-created content on platforms like TikTok. By developing media literacy lessons tailored explicitly for social media, the project directly engages Gen Z with peer-produced content, significantly enhancing engagement and effectiveness through fostering community and authenticity.

Key elements of the Think Twice video series include:

- **General advice on critical media reception**
  Videos offer practical guidance on verifying information, evaluating the credibility of experts, and distinguishing misinformation from disinformation and malinformation, leveraging proven methodologies such as lateral reading and civic online reasoning (Stanford University).
- **Patterns and techniques of disinformation**
  Employing the FLICC pattern (Fake experts, Logical fallacies, Impossible expectations, Cherry picking, Conspiracy theories) to proactively educate youth about common disinformation techniques.
- **Technical competencies**
  Tutorials demonstrate essential tools like reverse image searches, understanding TikTok's search engine, and comprehending social media algorithms to identify misinformation.
- **Psychological perspectives**
  Videos address why individuals become susceptible to conspiracy theories and emotional manipulation, providing strategies for discussing misinformation effectively.
- **Prebunking strategies**
  Proactively addressing prevalent disinformation narratives, especially around significant events such as the EU elections in 2024.
- **AI and emerging technologies**
  Offering critical guidance on the credibility and biases associated with artificial intelligence, including detecting AI-generated misinformation and what generative AI is and is not.

By directly engaging digital natives through validated peer-produced content, Think Twice proposed an approach on how to bridge gaps left by traditional media literacy methods. Its multilingual and international applicability positions the project as a crucial resource across Europe, aligned with objectives outlined already in the 2020 EU Democracy Action Plan.

Through its innovative approach, Think Twice fosters critical thinking, informed civic participation, and resilience against digital misinformation, addressing the urgent media literacy needs identified in recent European research and policy initiatives.

3. PROJECT OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED IMPACT

3.1 PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

Disinformation on the internet poses a serious threat. For example, claims that climate change is a hoax are considered one of the greatest risks to society as a whole (Climate promise & WEF).

The ongoing war in Ukraine also dramatically illustrates this issue, as it is not only a battle on the ground but also an information war. The scale is vast: the EUvsDisinfo database has already documented more than 19,000 cases of disinformation targeting Ukraine.

When the project began, generative AI was not as advanced as it is now in 2025. Videos created with AI are much harder to identify as fake than they were in 2023, when Think Twice started. AI-generated videos intended to spread disinformation for political purposes have become a global problem (i.e. deepfake videos during different elections around the world). With deepfake videos all around the social media people have been fooled and left wondering, what even is real (i.e. deepfake bunnies jumping on a trampoline).

The main goal of this project was and still is to empower Gen Z with critical media skills. The aim was to create an attractive, recognizable, and easy-to-understand format that is highly accessible to digital natives, who tend to prefer video content over written text. Research shows that most teenagers and young adults no longer view traditional journalistic outlets as their primary source of news. Local and regional media have been steadily losing their relevance among Millennials and Gen Z (Reuters). With the rise of deepfake videos, this project has tackled problems that were not as relevant in 2023.

The overall objective of this project was to combat the spread of false information and attempts to influence public opinion and debate by strengthening media literacy, widely recognized as the most effective way to build resilience against disinformation. Central to the project was the idea of creating a community of young creators to develop media literacy content. Civic engagement and participatory culture were therefore fundamental elements of our approach. We encouraged young citizens to respond to disinformation with counterspeech, helping to foster a culture of free and constructive debate.

3.2 SPECIFIC AIMS

The specific aim for the project was to develop a multilingual toolkit tailored precisely to teach Gen Z. This toolkit consists of media literacy video lessons uploaded to different social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube. In addition the toolkit has teaching materials aimed for schools and other educational institutions. In doing so, we addressed two target groups: schoolchildren and students who belong to the group of first-time voters - and teachers or other multipliers such as journalists who also can reach younger people.

A breakdown of aims and impacts:

- **Young participants:**
  - Gained a deeper understanding of how disinformation works, how it can affect them, and how to debunk it.
  - By creating videos for their peers, they also learned important lessons on relevant topics in a hands-on, engaging way.
- **Video Audience:**
  - Developed a basic understanding of disinformation and manipulation techniques.
- **Teachers:**
  - Felt empowered to integrate media literacy into their curricula and to act as multipliers within the educational community.

3.3 SCALING AND SUSTAINABILITY: HOW THE THINK TWICE OUTCOMES CAN BE ADOPTED BY OTHERS

To ensure the sustainability of the project, all partners made the materials and results freely available for non-commercial use by other national and international initiatives, both during the project period and beyond. This approach ensured that the project outcomes were scalable and could continue to be disseminated after the project's conclusion. To maximize outreach, we actively built strong networks with other initiatives focused on media literacy and civic engagement. Throughout the project, we offered partners the opportunity to co-organize additional events or to take part in them, providing a platform to present and share our project results.

From a more general project development, delivery and review perspective, we recommend the EDMO Guidelines for Effective Media Literacy Initiatives. **Consortium members contributed to these or supported them within the European Digital Media Observatory's (EDMO) Media Literacy cooperation 2024.**

For the development of video concepts, we partnered with a separate TFCN project, and we plan to continue this collaboration. The TFCN project also addressed an important lesson learned: Gen Z, having grown up in an increasingly commercialized social media environment dominated by influencer culture, requires that their incentive structures for contributing be carefully considered. Outside the school context, these incentives are often financial, though ethical considerations remain crucial. The TFCN project aims to reward Gen Z for providing high-quality input that includes ethical awareness.

4. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 FROM VISION TO PRACTICE: PREPARING THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

To make media literacy tangible and relatable for young people, Think Twice had to be more than a good idea on paper. In this phase, partner organizations translated the project's core concept into formats that worked in real classrooms, youth programs, and online spaces. This meant choosing relevant topics, adapting materials to local needs, and creating practical workflows that allowed both professional and peer-created content to take shape. The following sections show how this process was implemented in different settings - and what others can learn from it.

To bring media literacy to life on social media, the project relied on two complementary video formats: professionally produced explainer videos and short community videos created by the teenagers themselves. While the former offered clear background knowledge on complex topics, the latter aimed to debunk specific misinformation in a relatable peer-to-peer style. The following chapters detail how both formats were implemented across the different partner countries.

4.2 VIDEO PRODUCTION STRATEGY

4.2.1 PROFESSIONAL EXPLAINER VIDEOS ("PRO-VIDEOS")

The purpose of the Pro-Videos was to provide a deeper background knowledge about the chosen topic. The videos were short in order for them to compete in fast paced environments such as TikTok or Instagram. That is why the amount of information had to be packed in compact explanatory driven videos with a capturing "hook" in the beginning and understandable examples of the chosen topic. The goal was to reach the target audience with content they trust.

Example video 1

Example video 2

In the beginning of the video production phase, partners needed to choose topics for their videos. The topics were first categorized in six different digital media literacy and disinformation related categories. A focus was on AI topics, as there was not much material available on this subject at the start of the project:

- General advice on critical media reception
- Patterns/strategies/techniques of disinformation
- Technical topics
- Psychological aspects
- Prebunking common disinformation narratives
- Artificial Intelligence (AI)

After the categories had been named, each partner suggested different topics under each category. The suggestions included topics such as:

 How statistics can be misleading (Faktabaari)

 FLICC pattern (dpa)

 How do social media algorithms work? (Faktabaari)

 AI and copyright (dpa)

 How to talk to people who believe in conspiracy theories (Verificat)

 Prebunking with different 2024 elections in mind (Faktabaari)

 Explaining AI biases (Verificat)

It was useful to discuss the topics beforehand with all of the partners to ensure that the themes wouldn't overlap. Every partner produced ten videos: five with the topic of their own choosing and five remakes of partners' videos - but including specific country related examples.

Partners approached production in various ways. For example, Faktabaari produced their videos following this process:

- Once the topic was chosen, a writer's room-style editorial brainstorming session took place, focusing on three main questions:
  - What do we want to say about the subject within limited time?
  - How can we hook the audience from the beginning?
  - How can we keep the video informative but also relatable?
- With the main focus points and answers to these questions written down, one person would draft the script. The script was then edited and fact-checked multiple times, even during the filming process.
- Filming was completed in one day per video. During filming, the script was adjusted to ensure the narration flowed smoothly. The tone of the narration had to be clear and calm.
- After filming, the video was edited. The most important aspect was the quick flow of the video. It was important that the video had a professional technical look with proper color grading and visual effects.

The equipment and software Faktabaari used:

- Phone 13 Pro Max as a camera
- Røde Wireless Go -microphone
- Basic ringlight
- Basic green screen
- MacBook Pro
- All video and sound editing, and VFX, was done on Final Cut Pro X
- Pictures were edited with Photoshop

While Faktabaari used this kind of setup, it is possible to produce professional looking videos easily even without such equipment.

Visually, the video had to be interesting, as on fast-paced mediums such as TikTok viewers often swipe on in the first seconds. The video format was vertical (9:16), the length was most of the time 60-90 seconds, all the videos had the same opening sequence and project logo. Some videos also had captions and translations (ie. Faktabaari's video with Swedish translation). The color scheme and typeface had to be consistent.

After all this was done, it was time to post the video. All partners posted the videos on TikTok, some on Instagram and Youtube as well. The videos had some of the same hashtags (#eufunded and #thinktwice). There is no reliable data basis to make assumptions about how hashtags and video captions affected views.

During the project, Faktabaari experimented with different approaches for the "hook" element in the beginning of the videos. It became clear that humorous, slightly provocative openings were the most effective in capturing the audience's attention. Additionally, various visual effects were tested. Videos with visually engaging and relevant backdrops received more likes, comments, and views compared to those with more generic, placeholder-like backgrounds.

Ultimately, the goal was to produce a professional-looking video on a meaningful topic, while using storytelling and visual elements to address the questions raised during the writing process.

4.2.2 COMMUNITY-CREATED VIDEOS

While the professional explainer videos (see 4.2.1) focused on delivering reliable background knowledge in a structured format, the community-created videos aimed to activate young people as creators and communicators of media literacy within their own peer networks.

These short videos were planned, filmed, and edited by the teenagers themselves – with the necessary guidance from project facilitators. Participants tackled viral false claims or explained media literacy concepts using the tone, aesthetics, and humor familiar to their peer group.

Purpose and Process

The aim was not just to teach media literacy but to let young people practice it in real time. Through selecting their own topics, fact-checking claims, and producing content on platforms like TikTok or Instagram, participants learned how to verify information and communicate it in an engaging, peer-to-peer format.
Technical workflows and editing tools followed the same basic structure as the professional videos, but creative decisions were made independently. In total, 30 videos were produced across all countries.

Distinctive Style

The key difference lay in the tone and approach:

- Authentic, first-person narration (often with two or more people in front of the camera)
- Use of memes, trending sounds, or humour
- Short and fast-paced, adapted to social media habits
- Designed for peer influence, not top-down education

Instead of explaining from an expert's point of view, these videos showed what fact-checking looks like from the inside: simple, spontaneous, and within reach of anyone. This made the format particularly relatable.

Impact and Learning

The reach of each video varied, but the learning impact on participants was consistently strong. Many reported gaining confidence in speaking publicly, checking claims critically, and expressing their views online. The videos also supported normalization of fact-checking among young audiences – especially when shared by schools, teachers, or peer networks.

Social Media Strategy

The community-created videos were designed specifically with the logic and dynamics of social media in mind. They followed a clear set of platform-optimized principles to ensure that content would not only be viewed by young audiences on TikTok and Instagram, but also used interactively.

The videos were produced in a vertical 9:16 format, perfectly adapted to the full-screen mobile experience. Each video was intentionally kept short, never exceeding 90 seconds, as longer formats tend to lose the attention of users on these fast-paced platforms.

The tone of the videos is deliberately informal, relatable, and authentic. Instead of adopting an authoritarian tone, the creators adress their peers directly, in a conversational and often playful manner. Humor, irony, and casual language make fact-checking feel more accessible than didactic.

Stylistically, the videos are dynamic, fast-paced, and visually engaging. They rely on peer-to-peer communication techniques, often using familiar social media tropes such as memes, pop culture references, trending sounds, and native editing styles. This approach ensures that the fact-checking content fits seamlessly into the existing content streams of TikTok and Instagram, making it more likely to be viewed, liked, shared, and saved.

The overarching goal of the strategy is to deliver reliable fact-checking without disrupting the expected user experience of these platforms. To achieve this, the videos balance the spontaneous, personal style typical of user-generated content with a subtle but recognizable common visual identity. This includes consistent use of captions, recognizable fonts, color schemes, and, where appropriate, branding elements like the Think Twice logo.

By carefully blending accuracy with entertainment and platform fluency, the social media strategy ensures that the educational purpose of the videos does not compromise their shareability or relevance within the attention economy of TikTok and Instagram.

Note: A manual translation of videos (pro and community videos) is not necessary. The platforms (TikTok, Instagram and Youtube) do offer automated translation in your chosen language.

4.2.3 COMMUNITY CALLS AND FEEDBACK LOOPS

To foster meaningful youth participation in the process of video production, the project implemented a series of Community Calls – online or hybrid meetings designed to empower participants, guide content creation, and provide space for exchange. These calls were a vital component of the project's co-creation strategy, helping to transform groups of individual participants into an engaged, collaborative community.

The Community Calls served multiple purposes: they were a space for brainstorming, peer feedback, technical guidance, and motivation. Crucially, they also helped establish an iterative feedback loop that allowed young creators to continuously refine their videos based on input from peers and project facilitators.

4.2.3.1 DIFFERENT WAYS TO IMPLEMENT COMMUNITY CALLS

The format and structure of the Community Calls varied depending on resources of the organisation and the time available. Some partners worked with youth groups in non-formal education, while others embedded the calls directly into school curricula.

School-Based Implementation (dpa)

One version of the project was conducted in close co-operation with a school class, with the media literacy activities fully integrated into the social studies curriculum. Two consecutive school lessons (90 minutes) were dedicated to the project, allowing students to work on fact-checking and video production during regular school hours.

The project lead participated remotely via video call, while the on-site teacher handled coordination, facilitated group work, and supported communication. This model allowed the project activities to become part of the students' learning routine, providing consistency and continuity.

The weekly Community Calls with the class served multiple functions:

- **Kick-off and Planning**
  Introducing tasks, discussing misinformation trends, selecting video topics.
- **Content Creation Support**
  Offering guidance on research, scripting, and technical aspects of video production. The students were trained in four workshops (two in basic fact-checking techniques, one AI detection methods, one video scripting and editing) in the beginning of the project to make sure they have all the theoretical knowledge.
- **Feedback and Review**
  Reviewing draft videos, providing constructive feedback, and discussing improvements.
- **Reflection and Outcome Review**
  After publishing, the class reviewed the performance of their videos (views, comments, reach) and discussed the impact.

The integration into the school's timetable ensured that the Community Calls were consistent, predictable, and easily accessible for students. The presence of the teacher played a crucial role in maintaining continuity and supporting the students' progress week by week.

Other Approaches: Youth Work and Non-Formal Education

Other project partners implemented Community Calls in non-formal settings, working with youth groups outside of schools. These calls were often less rigid in schedule and structure and tailored to the needs and availability of participants.

Verificat

As an alternative to broader campaigns, a more intensive youth work model was explored at Verificat. In this approach, ten community meetings were organized to train a dozen students. The curriculum focused on hands-on skills in basic fact-checking, disinformation detection, writing verification reports and scripts, and producing videos.

This model of direct training with small groups of adolescents yields unique benefits. It allows for a deeper understanding of their specific concerns regarding disinformation and helps to refine their skills in combating it. Furthermore, it serves to introduce the importance of media and information literacy for their daily tasks, equipping them with the tools to become small-scale influencers for verification and media literacy within their immediate circles.

To put this training into practice, three participants began producing content. The idea was to verify viral claims circulating among Spanish youth, using an authentic and relatable youth-oriented style. Two of them produced one video each, and a third participant created eight.

However, the reception on social media was not as high as anticipated, only one of the videos managed to surpass 500 views on Instagram. This result became a key learning moment, prompting two final sessions with the youth community to analyze and improve the project's Instagram and TikTok channels. The goal of these sessions was to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the channels. This direct feedback was crucial for adapting the strategy to better deliver the intended message and effectively connect with the target audience.

Faktabaari

Faktabaari's Community Calls were implemented in schools, like the ones organized by dpa. The difference was that Faktabaari first held a workshop (see 7.4) for 60-90 minutes and then worked with the same teenagers to produce the videos during class. All of the videos were part of the course's curriculum, and the teens worked with their teacher as well as Faktabaari's experts.

Faktabaari's approach was to work with many different teenagers during multiple different courses. This was all implemented during highschools project weeks where students learn by doing rather than by reading (phenomenon-based learning). In this way multiple videos were made during the same day and many problems were tackled in a short time period. In order for this type of workflow to work well, the students need to have enough time to work on the videos. It's important for the class to have a wide timeframe.

4.2.3.2 COMMUNICATION WITH PARTICIPANTS

Establishing clear and reliable communication with young participants was a key success factor across all implementations. Since communication habits and organizational settings differed, each partner adapted their communication strategy to the needs of their respective target groups and local contexts.

Direct communication with teens/ teachers

dpa

In the school-based model, all communication between the project lead, the teacher, and the students was handled exclusively via the school's internal communication platform. This ensured seamless integration into students' everyday school routines and minimized the need for external apps or channels.

In contrast, the partners working in non-formal education settings used communication channels most familiar to young people in their local context. These included instant messaging platforms like WhatsApp, Discord, or Telegram, as well as email, phone calls, or direct messages on social media, depending on what worked best for the group.

Regardless of the setting, communication strategies included:

- **Clear deadlines**, often highlighted visually to ensure visibility even when messages were only skimmed.
- **Reminder messages** ahead of meetings or submission dates to help participants stay organized.
- **A consistent dial-in link** for video calls to simplify access.
- **Flexibility**, whereby participants can communicate personal matters (exams, homework, holidays), with adjustments made where possible.

While expectations regarding timely task completion were communicated clearly, the project emphasized a supportive atmosphere. Participants were encouraged to speak openly about any time conflicts or difficulties, ensuring that their involvement remained sustainable and rewarding.

Faktabaari

Since Faktabaari produced community videos in school settings, the communication happened mostly face-to-face. First the school principals were contacted, and they provided contact information of teachers they deemed interested. After teachers were contacted and meetings were arranged, the person in charge of workshops and community-videos went to the school to meet the teachers and the students. During this meeting, students were told what was the aim of the workshops and videos made after the workshops.

During the process, students were informed that they could contact Faktabaari via email or social media. Since the workshops were held at school, students also had the opportunity to meet Faktabaari's team in person. At the participating school, both teachers and students used private platforms for sharing materials, which Faktabaari could not access. Instead, students shared their videos either via AirDrop or by sending them through Google Drive. All submitted videos were then made available to teachers through a private YouTube playlist, which was later permanently closed.

Interestingly, some students sent direct messages to Faktabaari's TikTok account requesting their videos to be published. Only one group asked for their video not to be released. Both types of requests were fully respected.

Indirect Communication approach through teachers

As a case study, the partner organization Verificat managed communication by focusing on educators as the primary channel to reach students. This indirect strategy proved highly effective within the formal education system.

The core communication tool was the newsletter for Verificat's "Desfake" educational program, which was sent to a list of subscribed teachers and schools. This newsletter served as the main vehicle for distributing the project's video capsules and related educational resources.

To ensure easy access, the videos were hosted on the Desfake program's Instagram account and linked directly within the teaching materials. This strategy was reinforced through teacher training sessions, where Verificat's team explained how educators could implement the materials autonomously. This model ensures that communication flows through the teaching staff, who then deliver the content to students within a structured and safe classroom environment.

4.2.3.3 HOW TO BUILD A COMMUNITY

Building a functioning and supportive community among young participants was a key pillar of the project. This process went beyond organizing meetings or assigning tasks – it involved creating a space where participants felt ownership, connection, and a sense of shared purpose.

Regardless of whether the work happened in a school setting or in non-formal youth groups, several factors proved essential for turning a group of individuals into a collaborative community:

- **Shared Ownership**
  Participants were encouraged to take responsibility for their contributions by choosing their own topics, making creative decisions, and influencing the direction of the project. This sense of agency significantly strengthened engagement.
- **Celebrating Milestones**
  Whether it was publishing a video, reaching a certain number of views, or successfully debunking a viral claim, every achievement was acknowledged – sometimes informally in calls, sometimes with shout-outs in group chats or meetings.
- **Peer-to-Peer Support**
  Participants were encouraged to support each other – whether by giving feedback, sharing technical tips, or helping brainstorm video ideas. This shifted the dynamic from facilitator-led to community-driven.
- **Transparency and Feedback**
  The iterative nature of the project fostered open dialogue. Participants knew their feedback mattered - not just about videos, but also about how the project was run. This applied equally in school-based settings, where teachers mediated this process, and in youth-driven groups, where facilitators enabled peer discussions.
- **Visible Impact**
  Seeing how their content performed on social media, including real-world interactions like comments or shares, reinforced the relevance of their work and strengthened their connection to the community.

4.2.3.4 MONITORING LIST

To better understand which misinformation topics were circulating in different countries and to identify cross-border patterns, the project implemented a shared Monitoring List used collaboratively by all partners.

All partners contributed regularly to this list by recording the **three most common or impactful misinformation topics identified in their country each month**. These entries reflected what was currently trending, spreading, or causing concern within their respective media and social media environments.

The goal of the Monitoring List was twofold:

- **Comparative Insight**
  It provided an overview of which misinformation topics were relevant in each country and revealed whether certain narratives were limited to national contexts or spreading across borders.
- **Content Planning**
  The list informed both the creation of educational content and discussions within the Community Calls. It helped identify whether specific topics might be relevant for more than one country's audience and therefore worth addressing in videos or workshops on a broader level.

This collaborative approach made it possible to detect patterns such as:

- Region-specific hoaxes (e.g. national political narratives, local conspiracy theories).
- Misinformation that transcended borders (e.g. climate disinformation, conspiracy narratives about AI, or manipulated videos spreading across Europe).

The Monitoring List itself was maintained in a simple, shared document accessible to all partner organizations. Its structure was straightforward: **Country name, Date (month), Top 3 misinformation topics/trends.**

In addition to the monthly entries, the list served as a conversation starter during partner meetings. It provided valuable input for joint reflections on whether similar educational strategies or video content could be effective across different countries.

Beyond its practical function in the project, the Monitoring List also offered broader insights into how misinformation behaves in a European context – how it adapts culturally, linguistically, and socially, and where it transcends borders.

During the project, the EDMO fact-checking community started a parallel listing of trending topics by country, where future projects could learn from if repeated during new phase of EDMO to be seen (EDMO).

4.3 TEACHING MATERIAL

The teaching materials developed within the Think Twice project were structured around three key components: one-pagers, interactive exercises, and practical handouts. These resources were created following extensive collaboration among media literacy experts, educators, and students themselves, ensuring relevance, clarity, and usability in diverse educational contexts.

Each one-pager provided concise yet comprehensive information about critical media literacy concepts, including the evaluation of sources, biases in AI-generated content, and the detection of misinformation. For instance, the "Biases and AI" one-pager detailed how AI-generated biases perpetuate stereotypes, drawing attention to practical cases like the Midjourney experiment reported by "The Washington Post", where AI tools exhibited clear racial biases. Similarly, the one-pager on "Experts Evaluation" explained methods such as lateral reading, encouraging learners to cross-check information across multiple credible sources rather than relying solely on initial content visibility.

Interactive exercises included activities like "Compare Biases", where students assessed different AI-generated images to uncover embedded stereotypes. Another key exercise, "Do Not Copy Me!" involved students creating original artworks, subsequently demonstrating how AI could easily replicate or modify these creations, prompting reflections on intellectual property rights. Such activities provided practical, hands-on opportunities for students to internalize media literacy concepts actively and critically.

Handouts supported these exercises by offering structured reflection tools, such as the "What Can I Do? – Metacognition Scale," guiding students through thoughtful evaluation of their learning experiences and reinforcing critical thinking skills.

The materials target students from middle and high school, with clear guidelines for educators on how to effectively integrate these resources into existing curricula. The design was intentionally flexible, allowing seamless adaptation into various educational settings, from formal classroom lessons to informal workshops. Teachers were encouraged to select relevant modules matching their curricular goals and students' skill levels.

To facilitate integration into existing programs, the materials included comprehensive teacher guides with practical tips and clear learning objectives. Drawing from the experience of project partner Verificat in Catalonia, a region where schools are increasingly restricting direct use

of mobile phones, the project's materials offer a direct solution to this pedagogical challenge. The downloadable format of the video capsules and resources provides a key advantage: they create a safe, curated, and controlled environment for learning. This allows for critical discussion of online topics without exposing students to the risks of unmonitored exploration of social media platforms.

The materials follow the "5E" (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, Evaluate) pedagogical model, a structured approach that guides the learning process and promotes metacognitive reflection. This emphasis on adaptability encourages educators to modify examples or adjust the focus to align with the specific needs of their student group, fostering dialogue around digital issues directly relevant to young learners' online experiences.

Recognizing the rapidly evolving digital landscape, provisions were made for continuous updating of the teaching resources. Regular feedback loops involving educators and students were established, enabling the iterative refinement of content. Furthermore, partnerships with digital literacy and AI ethics experts ensured that the materials remained current and reflective of the latest trends, technological advancements, and pedagogical practices in media literacy education.

4.4 WORKSHOPS

Workshops were an important part of this project, as they provided the possibility to meet face to face. The workshops were meant for creators and multipliers such as teachers within this community. Workshops could be held online, on the premises of school, or elsewhere.

For example, Faktabaari held twelve workshops, eight for high-schoolers and four for teachers. The context of these workshops varied from country to country, but the main topics were aligned with those of Think Twice.

As for the subjects of the workshops, here are some examples:

- Social media algorithms and how they work
  (Faktabaari, workshop for 50 16-year olds)
- Dis-, mis- and malinformation in social media
  (Faktabaari, multiple workshops for 16 to 18-year olds)
- Content and disinformation faced by young people in social media
  (Faktabaari, multiple workshops for teachers)

- How to detect AI generated content
  (dpa, trainers adapted the level of difficulty according to the knowledge of the workshop groups)
- Disinformation and Hate speech
  (Verificat, multiple workshops for 14 to 17-year olds and teachers)
- How to spot AI generated content and how to use AI with a positive purpose (Verificat, multiple workshops for 14 to 17-year olds and teachers)
- 4 questions to verify what you read
  (Verificat, multiple workshops for 14 to 17- years olds and teachers)

With videos published in social media, one can never be sure if the video has really reached and influenced the target audience. In workshops, direct impact is visible.

Faktabaari held all of their workshops on school premises. An email was sent to multiple schools with the intention to connect with a teacher whose subject could be connected to Think Twice. These subjects were e.g. philosophy, English language and educational counseling (course). Some principals wanted to have workshops for all of their teachers.

As mentioned, the partners conducted the workshops in various formats, typically lasting between 1 to 2 hours. The topics were selected with the target audience in mind. For young people, the content was tailored to ensure they could relate to examples from their daily lives, such as their online presence. For teachers, the focus was on helping them better understand what young people encounter on social media and through generative AI, what kind of content influences them, and how teachers could support their students in developing a deeper understanding of social media and digital media literacy.

Faktabaari's workshops featured a mix of presentations introducing the topic, group discussions, videos, and occasionally other activities such as quizzes (e.g., presentation link). Incorporating a variety of activities within the session was crucial for keeping the workshop engaging and motivating. Group discussions and encouragement for participants to ask questions were also essential, as workshops with a monologue-style format often fail to capture the attention of young people.

The approach taken by dpa in the workshops focused on teaching small groups of students and their teachers the fundamental techniques of fact-checking. During the 1.5-hour seminar, the trainers first introduced these techniques briefly in theory and then reinforced them with real-world examples from the fact-checking team. Since many of the young participants already had a strong instinct for spotting misinformation, the trainers emphasized honing and amplifying that intuition.

General techniques such as the three questions of fact-checking or reverse image search were often already familiar. For this reason, the training team brought along enough examples to focus on content created with AI. There was always enough time in the workshops for the young people and teachers to ask questions and for a discussion to develop between the members of the fact-checking team and the participants.

The workshops were conducted as part of journalism-focused youth events that brought together school classes from the same region. These events provided a structured and engaging environment in which students could explore media topics beyond their regular curriculum. Within this setting, dpa's fact-checking team held interactive seminars designed for groups of around 15 to 30 students. Each session was held in person by members of the dpa fact-checking team and took place in classrooms or seminar rooms on site, equipped with the necessary technical setup, such as projectors or smartboards, for live demonstrations of verification tools and practical examples.

Verificat's Contribution: A Multi-Pronged Approach to Youth Workshops

Verificat adapted its established educational program "Desfake" to offer several distinct models for engaging youth in media literacy. The core mission of this work in Catalonia is to foster critical thinking among students and teachers to combat disinformation. The following models demonstrate different strategies for outreach, engagement, and skill development that other organizations can adapt.

1. **The School Workshop Model**
   This model focuses on delivering targeted, in-person workshops directly within secondary schools. It serves as a foundational approach for reaching students in their established learning environments.
   - **Target Audience:** Secondary school students (ages 14-17).
   - **Project Implementation:** A total of five distinct workshops were delivered as part of the project, each covering different facets of media literacy.
   - **Reach:** The initiative successfully reached over 80 students.

2. **The Intensive Co-Creation Model**
   For deeper engagement, Verificat piloted an intensive youth work model centered on co-creation and direct collaboration with a smaller, dedicated group.
   - **Structure:** This "Community" workshop involved a small group of students over a series of ten meetings.
   - **Focus:** The training went beyond theory, providing in-depth skills in fact-checking, video production, and content creation.
   - **Key Lesson:** This model utilizes an essential feedback loop. The content created by participants was published, and its real-world performance was then analyzed by the group to adapt and improve the project's overall social media strategy. This demonstrates to be a valuable method for agile and youth-informed project development.

3. **The Large-Scale Event Model**
   To maximize reach and engage a younger demographic, Verificat participated in large-scale, single-day educational events.
   - **Collaboration:** This model's success relies on partnerships, exemplified by a collaboration with EduCAC (the Catalan Audiovisual Council's education program) for an event on May 10, 2024.
   - **Scale:** On a single day, five simultaneous workshops were held at five universities, reaching approximately 600 students.
   - **Audience Adaptation:** This approach was tailored for a younger audience (ages 7-11), showcasing a different mode of content delivery than the teen-focused programs.

4. **Capstone Initiative: Fostering Application through Awards**
   To encourage the practical application of learned skills, the educational activities are connected to a capstone initiative, the "Desfake Award."
   - **Purpose:** The award recognizes and promotes the talent of students and teachers who demonstrate a commitment to critical thinking.
   - **Function:** It serves as a powerful motivator, challenging students to move from learning to doing. This initiative, built around the core message "Think before you share: don't be a bot," is a key part of Verificat's mission to empower a new generation to navigate the digital era responsibly.

4.5 RISK AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

4.5.1 HANDLING CHALLENGES

Without offering some form of reward, it's often difficult to secure consistent participation from young people in longer-term projects. Taking part requires a real investment of time and energy, so it makes sense to provide compensation - whether through financial means or alternatives like vouchers.

At dpa, the team chose a different approach: the project was embedded directly into a civics class at school. This setup provided a fixed time frame and ensured that teachers were closely involved in overseeing the process. The added incentive of receiving a grade at the end gave students an extra push to stay on task and take the project seriously.

That said, it's not uncommon for some participants to underestimate the importance of meeting deadlines and staying engaged. It's essential to communicate that the success of the project depends on everyone doing their part. If problems arise, the first step should always be to address them collaboratively – identify what's getting in the way and look for solutions together.

However, if a participant repeatedly fails to contribute despite multiple reminders, it may be necessary to end their involvement in the project. While it's important to recognize that teenagers often juggle many responsibilities and pressures, project leaders are not in the role of educators. They also have to consider the overall progress and goals of the project, and sometimes that means letting someone go.

4.5.2 ENSURING EDITORIAL QUALITY

To maintain high editorial quality, young participants receive continuous support from project staff. At Think Twice, there is a system where each claim is identified in collaboration with a seasoned fact-checking editor. This tandem approach makes sure the selected topic is actually verifiable and not an opinion or unprovable theory.

From beginning to end, the teens aren't left to figure things out alone. Members of the project team work closely with them during the research phase, reviewing and discussing their findings together. The draft script is then developed and polished side by side with the teen until it meets the editorial criteria required by the hosting organization.

4.5.3 SAFETY: HOW TO MAKE SURE TEENS STAY SAFE ON OUR PLATFORM

When teenagers get involved in fact-checking projects that are shared with the public, it's important to take steps to protect them. Editorial support helps make sure the content is accurate and suitable for the audience, which can prevent misunderstandings or unwanted attention.

One important step is to look at the topics teens want to work on and think about who might react to them. If a topic seems likely to end up in an online space full of trolls or aggressive comments, it might be better to steer the young person away from it – just to be safe.

There are also simple ways to protect their privacy. For example, they can use avatars or share game recordings where their face isn't shown (like fact-checks in Minecraft). Training on how to deal with online criticism and how to protect personal information can also help teens feel more confident and secure online.

It's important to have clear contact points so teens know who they can turn to if they feel uncomfortable or need support. They should always know that they can contact the project manager or another member of staff from the responsible organisation. Turning off comments – or at least moderating them – can also prevent harmful responses. And having a plan ready in case of public backlash makes it easier to react quickly if something does go wrong.

Choosing topics that are constructive and based on clear facts also reduces the chance of negative reactions. With all these measures in place, teens can learn and take part in a meaningful way, without being exposed to unnecessary risks.

Sometimes, a video or post might still need to be taken down. Not because it's factually wrong, but because the feedback is too negative, offensive, or hurtful. The facts may be solid, but protecting the teen who created the content comes first. Every organization can decide for itself whether to keep or remove such content – and that's completely okay. It's just part of the process.

4.5.4 (MENTAL) SAFETY FOR THE TEENS DURING THE WORKSHOPS

Safeguarding the mental well-being of participants was a central consideration during the fact-checking workshops. While learning how misinformation works can be empowering, it can also be overwhelming – especially for teenagers who may be confronted for the first time with the scale, persistence, and sometimes disturbing nature of false narratives online.

The workshops were designed to ensure that participants could engage critically with misinformation **without feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or emotionally burdened.** One of the first steps was to create psychological safety by clearly framing the workshop's purpose: this was about understanding manipulation techniques - not about exposing participants to harmful content unnecessarily.

Facilitators carefully selected examples of misinformation that were age-appropriate and relevant, while avoiding topics that were excessively graphic, emotionally distressing, or rooted in hate speech, conspiracy theories, or polarizing disinformation that could cause discomfort or fear.

Creating a mentally safe environment relied on several key strategies:

- **Content moderation**
  Only examples that served a clear educational purpose and were safe for the age group were used.
- **Clear expectations**
  At the start of each workshop, participants were informed that some misinformation can be unsettling but that the session was a controlled, safe space to learn about how it works.
- **Right to step back**
  Participants were encouraged to voice concerns at any time and could opt out of specific tasks or discussions if they felt uncomfortable.
- **Emotional check-ins**
  Facilitators monitored the group's emotional reactions and created space for questions, pauses, and open conversation whenever needed.
- **Support presence**
  In school-based workshops, teachers were present as additional support. In other contexts, facilitators acted as accessible points of contact throughout the session.

Another key part of mental safety was how misinformation was framed. The focus was always on the techniques and mechanisms – **not on the individuals who believe or spread it.** This helped avoid judgmental dynamics within the group and reduced the risk of participants feeling disillusioned or helpless in the face of widespread falsehoods.

In addition, workshops included discussions about **digital resilience** – helping participants understand that encountering misinformation is normal, and that developing skills to spot it is a powerful, positive response. This empowerment-oriented framing was crucial in maintaining motivation and preventing feelings of helplessness or cynicism.

In summary, the workshops balanced factual learning with psychological safety. The goal was to give participants the confidence and tools to navigate a complicated digital world - while ensuring that no one left the session feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or emotionally drained.

5. PROJECT FINDINGS & INSIGHT

This chapter synthesises the evidence gathered from the Think Twice project's implementation across all participating countries and formats. The findings draw directly from reported experiences and outcomes, reflecting both the achievements and the challenges encountered.

5.1 PROFESSIONAL EXPLAINER VIDEOS

The professional videos effectively conveyed structured, factual information on complex topics such as disinformation, artificial intelligence, and verification techniques. Partners reported that the concise, accessible style supported comprehension and engagement, particularly when content was adapted to the norms of the platforms used. Across countries, these videos contributed to raising awareness and providing reference materials for educators and young audiences alike.

However, audience engagement on social media varied between topics and platforms. Achieving consistently high performance proved difficult, particularly for accounts with a smaller pre-existing follower base. In some cases, limited time resources constrained production capacity.

5.2 COMMUNITY-CREATED VIDEOS

Peer-produced videos offered authenticity and relatability, giving young participants the opportunity to apply fact-checking methods and creative storytelling in formats familiar to their peers. The process encouraged skill development in critical thinking, content creation, and digital communication. While reach and engagement varied between contexts, partners noted the motivational effect of publishing youth-created content and the value of linking these outputs to broader educational activities.

Challenges included the need for sustained participant engagement over time and the complexity of coordinating production in informal settings. Not all outputs achieved the same level of visibility, and in some contexts, social media reception was modest despite the effort invested. The impact of video-creating AI-tools need to be evaluated for future projects.

5.3 COMMUNITY CALLS AND FEEDBACK LOOPS

The Community Calls brought together young participants to discuss selected topics, prepare fact-checks, and plan video content. These sessions allowed participants to exchange ideas, receive guidance, and coordinate their contributions. They also offered a setting for refining planned content before production. The format encouraged active involvement and supported the development of research, verification, and presentation skills.

In some cases, maintaining regular attendance required additional coordination, especially when activities took place outside formal school settings. Scheduling sessions that suited all participants could be challenging, and progress sometimes slowed down when availability was limited.

5.4 CROSS-CUTTING INSIGHTS

What worked well

- Combining professional and peer-created content balanced credibility with relatability.
- Embedding activities within schools or formal education structures facilitated consistent participation and integration into curricula.
- External partnerships with educational institutions and public bodies enhanced reach and legitimacy.
- Flexible adaptation of content and delivery methods allowed the project to address diverse audiences and settings.

What proved challenging

- Variability in social media engagement required continuous adjustment of content strategies.
- Maintaining participation over longer periods was more difficult without formal integration into timetables or incentives.
- Limited time and staffing resources occasionally restricted the scale or pace of activities.
- Dependence on teacher engagement meant that variations in school policies and priorities could influence implementation.
- The distribution of Think Twice videos on social media was erratic and lacked any clear pattern. In contrast, Faktabaari observed impressive outreach figures for video content produced by platforms like TikTok during the Finnish elections. This example highlighted the power of these platforms in determining which types of media literacy content they choose to amplify.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 FAKTABAARI

Effectiveness and Impact

For the project, TikTok was the main social media platform Faktabaari wanted to focus on, as it is a growing platform and according to surveys one of the biggest source of newslike content for Gen Z. Faktabaari had already started producing content on TikTok before the start of Think Twice, and had gained a small audience by doing so. After the start of the project, Faktabaari has gained hundreds of new followers, while gaining experience in creating short videos that work on TikTok.

Before Think Twice, Faktabaari had already made 37 videos for our TikTok channel, as well as some short teaching videos on YouTube. With this in mind, there was solid ground to work on. Faktabaari's style of creating videos consisted of a so-called "writers room", where people would meet and throw ideas around. With this style and prior knowledge, Faktabaari was able to create our Think Twice videos relatively smoothly. At the end of the Think Twice project, Fakabaari had over 25,000 views on pro-videos (on TikTok).

Faktabaari's team consists of many teachers of different age groups as well as journalists and media experts. Thanks to these diverse educational backgrounds it was possible to create professional video content and teaching materials that were presented at conferences for teachers in Finland.

With many teachers on Fakabaari's team it was also quite easy to find suitable teens and teachers for the workshops. This was the part where Fakatabaari really was able to apply all knowledge gained. Working face to face with young people and teachers, it was possible to achieve meaningful encounters and conversations. For Fakabaari, the workshops were the best way to work with young people.

As a segue from the workshops, the community videos were a great experience. With the knowledge gained from the teens, it's easy to keep on working on the same topics with similar approaches. Many of the teens were keen on having their videos released, which seemed like a great motivational point. The final outreach apparently determined by highly personalized algorithms of social media platforms was apparently not linked to quality of the video.

Quality of Work

Even though only one person was in charge of producing videos and sometimes only one person held a workshop, Faktabaari still had multiple people preparing the videos and workshops. This way it was possible to make sure that our content was up to date and critically reviewed. Faktabaari had an educational team consisting of eight people who reviewed every aspect of our materials and tested them. In conclusion, many different views and review rounds ensured high quality.

Teaching materials were presented at Faktabaari's stand at the biggest educational fairs in Finland (EDUCA and ITK) and the material received a lot of praise from teachers, as the materials were easy to implement straight to lesson plans. With a previously released AI Guide for Teachers and Digital Information Literacy Guide, the teaching materials of this project proved to be synergistic.

> "THE EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS PRODUCED BY FAKTABAARI ENABLE A FUN AND EASY-TO-USE WAY TO TEACH AND ADDRESS CRITICAL LITERACY, MIS- AND DISINFORMATION, AND DIGITAL SECURITY SKILLS. THE MATERIALS ARE SUITABLE FOR MANY LESSONS, E.G. PHILOSOPHY, ETHICS, SOCIAL STUDIES, FINNISH."
>
> Highschool Teacher

Collaboration and Communication

Collaborating with teachers and principals was necessary for this project. Especially with workshops and community videos in mind, working with schools was clearly the most important part for Faktabaari. Gladly, everything went smoothly: schedules matched, teachers and students were receptive and gave some positive and critical feedback.

Faktabaari sends out a monthly digital newsletter to over 2,000 subscribers – many of them teachers. On these newsletters there is an education centered part with multiple points on Think Twice project in the past.

Reflection

During this project we have gained a better understanding of TikTok as a platform. Working on TikTok is a consumer oriented approach, as TikTok is one of the most popular social media platforms at the moment. Faktabaari will continue to produce content there. The number of subscribers on Faktabaari's channel grew a lot during the project.

Faktabaari had previously made videos on Youtube and TikTok, such as a video about digital information literacy and about recognizing mis-, mal- and disinformation online. With these previously made videos, new videos for Think Twice and the teaching materials, Faktabaari has been able to reach teachers and Gen Z.
Working with different schools on workshops and community videos has given Faktabaari more partners to work with in the future. Faktabaari's aim is to reach out to teachers even more with educational materials, and with this project it was possible to develop Faktabaari's materials further and gain more contacts of people in the educational field.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Strong understanding of the Finnish curriculum and its weaknesses
- Large pool of experts of education working on the materials
- Technical understanding of making videos

WEAKNESSES

- Small number of followers on TikTok beforehand → large impact difficult to achieve without dependent partnership to the social media platform
- Limited time resources
- Limited initial experience with teenage learners

OPPORTUNITIES

- Possibility to work with same schools in the future
- Gain understanding of TikTok as a platform
- Potential to scale or adapt materials for broader educational use
- Faktabaari prior focus on AI enabled to adapt to an emerging technology

THREATS

- Possible unvalidated critique such as smear campaigns
- Shifting project priorities

6.2 VERIFICAT

Effectiveness and Impact

The project's effectiveness was measured through a multi-channel dissemination strategy that yielded significant, quantifiable impact.

- **Digital Outreach and Engagement**
  A primary focus was on creating and disseminating platform-native content. In collaboration with its educational brand Desfake, Verificat produced a series of ten dynamic videos for Instagram based on the project's teaching materials. This innovative format, new to the organization, proved highly effective:
  - The video series achieved a total of **26,873 views**.
  - It reached **over 15,000 distinct accounts**.
  - The content was saved by users on 51 occasions, a metric that indicates a strong interest in its value and utility.
- **Direct Marketing and Communication**
  To promote the educational materials, particularly the capsule on Artificial Intelligence, a direct email campaign was launched.
  - The campaign targeted a database of over **4,000 families and educational centers** across Spain.
  - It achieved an average **open rate of 41.1%**, more than double the industry benchmark of 20%, demonstrating high relevance and interest among the target audience.
- **Workshop Implementation**
  The project successfully implemented a multi-pronged workshop model. This included **five targeted workshops in schools for over 80 students** (ages 14-17) and a large-scale event for approximately **600 younger students** (ages 7-11), showcasing the ability to adapt content for different age groups and scales, and a community event involving **100 students** (ages 14-17) to celebrate and recognize the work done in classrooms to foster media literacy and critically address disinformation.
- **Media Impact**
  A press release promoting the AI teaching materials was sent to over 200 media outlets. This effort resulted in significant media impact, including an **in-depth feature story in "El País"**, one of Spain's leading newspapers, which used the project's work as a basis for a report on technology in education.

Quality of Work

The quality of work is reflected in the project's ability to not only meet but exceed its stated goals, as well as in the quality of the materials produced.

- **Exceeding Deliverable Goals**
  The project surpassed several key deliverable targets. The goal was to produce five original teaching materials and two translations; the team ultimately **created six original materials and adapted two from project partners.** Similarly, the goal of four workshops was exceeded.
- **High-Quality, Collaborative Content**
  The teaching materials developed included adaptations of high-quality content from project partners dpa and Faktabaari. This demonstrates a commitment to leveraging the network's collective expertise to provide the best possible resources.
- **Innovation in Content Formats**
  The creation of a dynamic video series for Instagram represented an internal innovation for Verificat. The positive reception affirmed the quality and relevance of this new approach to communicating complex media literacy topics to a youth audience.

Collaboration and Communication

Collaboration and communication were central to the project's implementation and success.

- **Intra-Project Collaboration**
  The project's spirit of European cooperation was put into practice through the adaptation of teaching materials from dpa and Faktabaari. This ensured that a diverse range of topics was covered and that the network's expertise was shared effectively.
- **Local Strategic Partnerships**
  The large-scale workshop event was made possible through a crucial collaboration with the **Department of Education of the Catalan Government**. This partnership was instrumental in reaching a large and younger audience.
- **Community recognition event**
  Organized in collaboration with the CCCB (Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona) to celebrate and acknowledge the work done in classrooms to strengthen media literacy and critically address disinformation.
- **Multi-Channel External Communication**
  The dissemination strategy was coordinated across multiple channels, including targeted media relations, a high-performance email marketing campaign, and a tailored social media video series, ensuring the project's results reached a broad and diverse audience.

Reflection

The project provided several key lessons for future media literacy initiatives:

1. **The Value of a Multi-Pronged Model**
   The experience underscored that a "one-size-fits-all" approach is insufficient. The combination of targeted in-school workshops, intensive co-creation groups, and large-scale collaborative events allowed the project to cater to different needs and maximize both depth of engagement and breadth of reach.
2. **The Importance of Platform-Native Content**
   The success of the Instagram video series highlights the need to move beyond traditional formats. Creating content that is designed for the platforms where young people are active is crucial for capturing their attention and delivering value.
3. **Partnerships as Impact Multipliers**
   Both internal collaboration with Think Twice partners and external partnerships with local entities as the Catalan Department of Education were fundamental. These collaborations enriched the project's content and were essential for amplifying its reach and impact.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Leveraging the existing "Desfake" platform provided immediate credibility and access to an established network of schools and teachers.
- Ability to deploy a variety of workshop formats (in-school, large-scale, co-creation) to suit different goals

WEAKNESSES

- Maintaining consistent branding across a wide array of diverse activities and sub-brands presents an ongoing challenge.
- Achieving consistent, high-impact engagement on social media can be difficult, as audience reception can vary significantly between different content formats.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Scaling successful models: The proven workshop and digital communication models can be scaled to other regions in Spain.
- Deepening strategic partnerships: The successful collaboration with the Catalan Department of Education and the CCCB provides a foundation for future joint initiatives with public and educational bodies.

THREATS

- Audience fatigue: Keeping youth engaged on social media requires constant innovation to overcome content saturation and platform fatigue.
- Long-term financial sustainability: Securing long-term funding to maintain and scale such initiatives beyond it's lifecycle remains a persistent challenge for the sector.

6.3 DPA

Effectiveness and Impact

The students and teachers who participated all benefited from taking part in the project. Interacting with the professional fact-checkers from dpa's fact-checking team gave them a sense of security, as they were able to ask all their questions at any time. All of the young people who participated in the community calls and workshops reported that they were better able to recognize misinformation afterward. They also indicated that they wanted to use their knowledge with their closest circle of friends and family.

"I DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE HOW EASY IT CAN BE TO CHECK A VIDEO OR PHOTO."

Community Call-Participant

Beyond individual learning, the project also had a broader impact through its dissemination. The professional videos and teaching materials reached more than 100,000 people via press releases, newsletters, and social media. dpa's TikTok and Instagram posts alone reached over 20,000 users, while press coverage and newsletters extended visibility to teachers, journalists, and youth organizations across Europe. Topics regarding media literacy for younger people attract a lot of attention from media clients in Germany and the DACH region. However, it is usually impossible to objectively measure how the information about this project's offering was used further.

"I FEEL MUCH MORE CONFIDENT NOW ABOUT SPOTTING FAKE NEWS ONLINE."

Community Call-Participant

In order to explore the true potential of the teaching materials and videos, qualitative evaluations of the data would need to be carried out. Since the teaching materials are available for free download on various third-party platforms, it is unfortunately not possible to conduct a qualitative survey of teachers who use the materials in their lessons. For the future, a planned feedback round could be considered in order to gather suggestions for improvements to future teaching materials.

Quality of work

Collaboration and Communication

On a consortium level, dpa coordinated the communication of the project effectively through newsletters (reaching 17,500+ contacts per send-out) and project updates that engaged thousands of multipliers. The kickoff press release became the most-clicked in dpa's history, demonstrating significant external interest.

Distributing the toolkits to various established platforms that are already known for the quality of their teaching materials has increased the potential for teachers and other multipliers to find the offering. We also rely on word-of-mouth advertising from teachers who have successfully used the teaching materials.

Reflection

The project has shown that young people can truly understand what it means to debunk misinformation when they do it themselves – with guidance from professionals. It became apparent that they often already have a valid gut feeling and are able to recognize AI-generated content well in many cases. When asked how they recognize AI-generated content, they often had no answer at first. During the discussions it became clear that this gut feeling needs to be trained with theory and more examples. The workshop leader worked with real examples from dpa's fact-checking team to show the teens that disinformation is not something unrelated to their life, but is unfortunately something in the middle of our society and present in their social media feeds.

The students needed some time to develop trust and to open up during the workshops, but once they felt comfortable, they talked about the experiences that they had made with their friends and relatives regarding disinformation. Like all the other situations where the fact checking team got in contact with the target groups (students and teachers), the workshop leaders gained valuable insights of the existing media literacy knowledge. This helped to evaluate and adapt the teaching material.

In the vast majority of cases, the young people were significantly better at recognizing AI-generated content than teachers. The students who attended the workshops were familiar with the latest AI tools and were aware that there is more and more misinformation and fake content on the internet. Many had already had short units on media literacy in various subjects in school. However, this was only the case if their teachers were committed enough and considered the topic important enough to familiarize themselves with it. For this reason, the teaching material developed in this project, especially the AI-centered toolkits, has great potential to be used by teachers in German schools.

The feedback we keep getting is that teachers don't have time to read up extensively on a topic. That's why they need a detailed roadmap with precise instructions on how to structure their lessons.

The community approach of the project has also proven successful. Compared to approaches used in other media literacy projects with similar content, the approach of producing community videos with a school class has proven to be very effective on several levels. Having a fixed framework for production, which also included grading, brought out the necessary seriousness in the young people. Since the project management and the school class collaborated online, it took some time to get used to the unusual situation. However, during the community calls, which served as weekly conferences during class, the learning effect was clear and any questions that arose could be clarified with the whole class. The teacher's educational approach of turning the final viewing of the videos into a cinema experience with the whole class, even including popcorn, proved to be a positive experience for the young people.

In addition to the valuable insights into the spread of media literacy among students and teachers in Germany, we have also realized that not only do fact-checks on current topics - such as those in community videos on social media - work well, but also that more in-depth professional videos provide significant added value for users. This potential should be exploited even more in the future to explain the mechanisms behind the spread of disinformation to a wider audience.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Strong integration into formal education.
- Wide dissemination through dpa's networks
- High-quality materials with professional oversight

WEAKNESSES

- Limited flexibility for informal settings.
- Dependence on teacher engagement.
- Some delays in feedback during peak times.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Scaling to more schools nationally and internationally.
- Adapting toolkit for NGOs and youth groups.

THREATS

- Variability in school policies and curricula.
- Possible saturation of student interest in longer projects.

6.4 SOME EVALUATION IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

- This project was unique in its approach of working within some of the most popular social media platforms while maintaining complete independence from them. This allowed for a truly objective, fact-based observation and experimentation. However, the downside of not having formal ties to social media platforms was that the content lacked enhanced visibility that platforms can provide.
- A key recommendation is the development of a model in which an EU-level regulator supports recognized professional media education bodies to produce and circulate truly independent, fact-based content more widely. Currently, platforms have little incentive to promote independent, critical content – content that could, but does not necessarily have to, challenge the functioning of their algorithmic systems.
- The EDMO (European Digital Media Observatory) media literacy group, of which Think Twice consortium members are also a part, could serve as the authoritative body to establish standards for public interest content on platforms. Future elections could provide an ideal context to pilot such initiatives.
- Much of the development and scaling of European media literacy efforts depends heavily on a coordinated EU regulatory approach and a deep commitment to protecting individual freedom of speech - while also preventing the amplification of bots. This underscores the urgent need to scale up media literacy efforts within both formal and informal education. Very few individuals can resist the addictive power of sophisticated marketing algorithms on their own. The most significant impact will come from equipping Gen Z with the basic skills and curiosity to navigate AI-driven challenges, starting within the education system. Non-profit organizations and public interest institutions, such as public broadcasters, can play a crucial role in complementing efforts to clean up the increasingly polluted information space. This must happen before we can develop solutions for a more trust-based internet.
- Independent, critical media and information literacy initiatives are at risk of being misinterpreted as censorship. In reality, they defend human agency and raise awareness about the troubled information ecosystem and its incentive models. As individuals are increasingly exposed to inauthentic and inaccurate content, much of it generated by AI, there is a pressing need to strengthen these initiatives to safeguard the public from manipulation.

6.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Acknowledge, don't ignore**
  Even if school regulations restrict direct use of social media apps and generative AI, it is fundamental not to ignore them. Students are exposed to them regardless, and our responsibility is to provide guidance for developing a critical and conscious mindset to understand the persuasiveness and addictiveness enabled by sophisticated algorithms built for primarily commercial use.
- **Guide, don't expose**
  It is recommendable to offer significant learning experiences related to the students' digital world instead of exposing them to the risks of exploring these platforms alone and unsupervised. Educational institutions – formal and informal – should provide safe spaces for Gen Z to discuss their online reality.
- **Use curated examples**
  A highly effective method is to work with real, curated, and contextualized examples (like the ones in our video capsules) and to analyze them together as a class. For instance, a guided observation of a specific TikTok interface or video is far more valuable than an open-ended search task.
- **Foster a gradual transition**
  The overall strategy should be a progressive shift from control and supervision in the early years towards critical and reflective accompaniment during adolescence.
- **Develop a sustainable relationship with generative AI as a tool – not as a source of information**
  The tool can support a critical and curious learner in many useful ways. An unreliable one source of information can replace critical choices needed when digesting many sources offered by e.g. search engines that were still prevailing until 2024.
- **Stress the importance of accountability**
  Encourage Gen Z to evaluate the accountability of their different social media and generative AI models compared to the reporting mostly done by independent media and researchers. Favor more accountable and transparent service providers.

7. CONCLUSION & OUTLOOK

Think Twice showed how media literacy can work when young people are not just the audience but part of the process. By combining professional input with youth-created content, the project reached its audience where it mattered most – online and in their own language.

What remains after the project ends

The full toolkit – explainer videos, teaching materials, workshop concepts, and community video formats – remains freely available for schools, NGOs, educators, and youth workers. The content is adaptable and designed for long-term use beyond the project timeline.

How this project contributes to long-term literacy initiatives

By focusing on co-creation and peer-led learning, Think Twice supports a shift towards participatory media literacy. It adds practical formats to broader EU efforts and offers tested tools that can strengthen civic engagement and resilience against disinformation. This White paper opens perspectives for continuative projects and encourages to reflect on how to engage the Gen Z to stop and Think Twice.

Future collaborations (e.g. TFCN Europe)

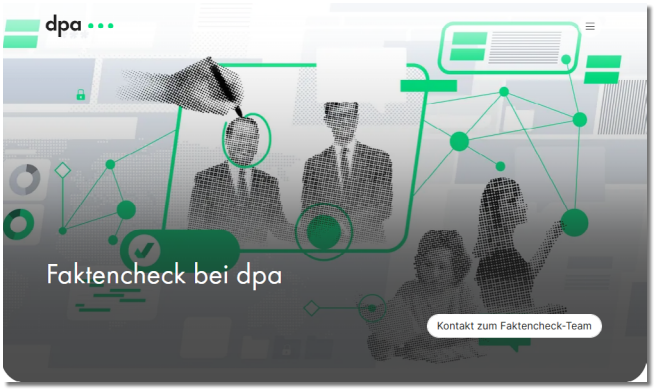
The project creates a strong foundation for further cooperation within European networks like TFCN (Teen Fact-Checking Network) Europe. It opens up opportunities to scale, update, and regionalize the formats, and to continue working across countries on shared digital challenges.

The materials are ready – use them!

Whether you're a teacher, a youth organization, a policymaker, or a content creator, the Think Twice toolkit offers formats that work. Adapt, share, and build on what's there. Let's not reinvent the wheel – let's make it roll faster while adapting it to AI developments.

APPENDICES

More info from the Think Twice project website



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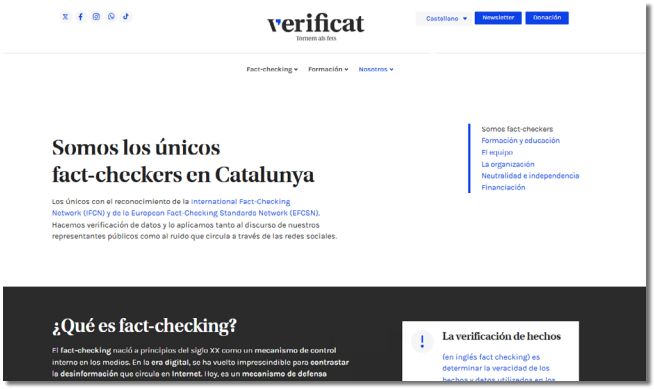

verificat

[Upcoming EU reference for AI literacy in life-long learning – DigComp 3.0.]

EDMO guidelines for effective media literacy initiatives - a reference for new bigger media literacy programs.

Funded by the European Union