MEDIA LITERACY TOOLKIT

June, 2025

Tools, applications, and methodologies

IN THE NAME OF THE FAMILY, CROATIA DECIDE PROJECT

Co-funded by the European Union

Introduction

According to a widely accepted definition, media literacy includes the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages in various forms. The **Media Literacy Toolkit** is a collaborative outcome of the **Media Literacy Hackathon**, organized within the framework of the DECIDE project. This toolkit brings together a collection of innovative digital tools, applications, and methodologies designed to strengthen media literacy, support democratic participation, and combat disinformation in the digital age.

Over the course of a two-day online hackathon, 105 participants — including citizens, youth, media literacy experts, digital development professionals, and representatives of partner organizations — worked in interdisciplinary teams to tackle real-world challenges related to media and information literacy. Their task: to co-create practical and scalable solutions using a multidisciplinary and technology-driven approach, including the use of artificial intelligence (AI).

This toolkit captures the best ideas and outcomes of the event, offering educators, civil society actors, policymakers, and citizens a set of actionable tools and concepts that can be implemented, adapted, or further developed in different local and European contexts.

This Toolkit is a compilation of effective tools, applications, or methodologies that promote media literacy and combat disinformation using a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach. They are aimed at the end user, i.e. they are oriented towards coping and practical application by citizens in everyday life.

In an era in which citizens are surrounded and saturated with a large amount of information and the great power of media influence, in addition to checking the sources of information, citizens should master the skills of their critical analysis – citizens must become media literate – access and choose sources of information, critically reflect on the quality of the information offered, supplement and check it from other sources, and develop their digital competencies.

Through the proposed methodologies provided by the Toolkit, citizens are encouraged to check and critically analyze available media content and obtain accurate and comprehensive information, as an important basis, among other things, for democratic participation.

Objectives

The main objectives of the Media Literacy Toolkit are to:

Promote Media Literacy

In today's fast-paced information landscape, individuals are exposed to overwhelming amounts of content across multiple platforms. Media literacy — the ability to critically assess and interpret media messages — is essential for navigating this complexity. This toolkit provides practical tools and educational methodologies that empower users to:

- Distinguish between credible and manipulative sources,
- Understand how media influences perception and behavior, and
- Develop independent, critical thinking skills.
  Promoting media literacy is fundamental to nurturing informed, thoughtful, and resilient citizens.

Counter Disinformation

Disinformation and misinformation campaigns pose serious threats to democratic societies, especially during elections, crises, and public health emergencies. False narratives can erode trust in institutions, divide communities, and even incite violence. This toolkit includes solutions designed to:

- Detect misleading or harmful content using digital tools (including AI),
- Raise awareness about common disinformation techniques, and
- Provide actionable strategies to prevent its spread.
  Fighting disinformation is not just a technical challenge, but a civic responsibility.

Encourage Democratic Participation

A well-informed public is the cornerstone of a functioning democracy. When people have the tools to engage critically with media and information, they are more likely to participate in civic life — from voting and community action to policy debates. The solutions in this toolkit:

- Encourage constructive public discourse,
- Equip individuals to contribute meaningfully to democratic processes, and
- Bridge the gap between citizens and decision-makers.
  By fostering active, engaged citizenship, we strengthen democratic values at the local and European level.

Foster Innovation through Collaboration

Complex challenges such as media manipulation and digital polarization cannot be solved in isolation. That's why this hackathon brought together citizens, youth, technologists, educators, and media experts in interdisciplinary teams.
The toolkit reflects the value of:

- Diverse perspectives,
- Collaborative problem-solving, and
- Creative experimentation.
  Innovation thrives when different sectors and skillsets work together — and this toolkit is a testament to that process.

Support Scalability and Integration

For real impact, solutions need to move beyond the prototype stage and be adapted or scaled to real-world settings. Many of the tools and concepts developed during the hackathon were designed with implementation and integration in mind — particularly within the DECIDE platform.
This ensures that:

- Solutions can reach wider audiences,
- Be localized to specific communities, and
- Be further improved with user feedback.
  Scalability and integration are key to ensuring the long-term relevance and usefulness of the tools created.

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Hackathon Overview

The Media Literacy Hackathon, held online on June 11–12, 2025, was the fourth event in the DECIDE project series, hosted by In the Name of the Family. Designed as an interactive, interdisciplinary experience, the hackathon brought together over 130 participants each day from Croatia, Austria, and Lithuania, including citizens, youth, educators, digital experts, and media professionals.

This two-day event focused on exploring the challenges and opportunities of media literacy in the digital age — an era marked by the rapid spread of information, the influence of emerging technologies like AI, and the increasing visibility of disinformation and misinformation.

Structure and Format

The hackathon was built on two key pillars: inspiration and innovation. Day 1 focused on setting the stage: participants attended expert-led lectures on the foundations of media literacy, the psychology and tactics of disinformation, and the societal impacts of misinformation. Day 2 delved deeper into the role of artificial intelligence in media verification, presenting real-world tools and use cases for AI-assisted fact-checking and content evaluation. Each day concluded with interactive discussions and live Q&A sessions, during which participants actively engaged with the speakers and exchanged views, ideas, and experiences.

Keynote Speakers & Topics

- Prof. Igor Kanižaj (Catholic University of Croatia): Why is Media Literacy Important?
- Vlatka Polšak Palatinuš (Narod.hr): Disinformation and Fact-Checking: Between Truth and Control
- Dr. Luka Šikić (Catholic University of Croatia): The Cutting Edge of AI in Fact-Checking
- Assoc. Prof. Boris Havel (Faculty of Political Science): Case Study – Israel and Hamas: Is Mainstream Media a Side in the War?

These talks highlighted not only the technical and academic dimensions of media literacy, but also the ethical and civic questions it raises — including the role of platforms, public trust, and how individuals can be empowered to navigate complex media environments.

Learning Highlights

Participants were introduced to:

- Definitions and key terms related to media literacy, disinformation, and misinformation,

- The impact of social media platforms and emerging technologies on information quality,
- The role of fact-checkers and the controversy around their perceived biases,
- Real examples of AI tools for automated disinformation detection and verification,
- Case-based learning on media framing and bias during conflict reporting,
- Additionally, relevant statistics were presented, such as:
    - 72.4% of parents in Croatia would enroll their children in a media education course (EU Kids Online, 2017)
    - Only 20% of Croatian adults have had the opportunity to formally learn how to analyze and critically evaluate media (IPSOS Omnibus, 2022)

Outcome: Ideation for Action

After the expert sessions, participants were divided into interdisciplinary teams and presented with real-world media literacy challenges. With the support of mentors and facilitators, teams began to develop concrete digital tools, apps, and methodologies to counter disinformation and foster responsible media use.

The hackathon culminated in:

- A series of team presentations of prototype ideas and concepts,
- Expert feedback from mentors and judges, including NGO representatives, technologists, and EU policymakers,
- The selection of the top 15 ideas, which are featured in this Toolkit and considered for further development and integration into the DECIDE platform.

Fact-Checkers

Although **fact-checkers** are an element that improves the quality of media content and can contribute to combating disinformation and the spread of misinformation, their practical application has shown many weaknesses. By focusing on combating fake news in the media space and on social networks, they themselves, according to the testimonies of participants and the conclusions of experts, have shown a strong dose of bias and an engaged approach, with the truth often remaining a neglected category. Therefore, citizens are advised not to take the information published on fact-checkers for granted. Fact-checkers' data is also often manipulative in itself, but also focused on ephemeral topics, and they also often view topics from just one angle. Citizens are advised to compare the sources of different fact-checkers and also, as in any other newspaper text, to pay attention to double-checking the same information in other sources, especially in studies that are based on scientific apparatus. Citizens can visit the websites: International Fact-Checking Network or European Digital Media Observatory.

Name of the Tool/Project: Fact-Check the Fact-Checkers

Short Description: An awareness-raising methodology and verification habit-building tool that encourages citizens to critically evaluate fact-checking platforms by themselves and to compare multiple sources before forming conclusions.

Purpose / Problem it Solves: While fact-checkers are often positioned as final arbiters of truth, their own biases, selectivity, and limited scope can undermine public trust. This initiative promotes a more nuanced understanding of fact-checking, urging users to question how "verified" information is produced and to approach all content — including fact-checks — with critical thinking.

Target Audience:

- General public
- Educators
- Media and communication students
- Civil society organizations
- News consumers and digital citizens

Key Features / Methodology:

- Educates users on **how to evaluate** fact-checking organizations

- Encourages **comparison between multiple fact-checkers** to spot bias or inconsistency
- Promotes the use of **scientific studies** and primary sources alongside media claims
- Suggests regular use of **independent networks** like:
  - International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN)
  - European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)
- Highlights the importance of **context, long-term patterns**, and source reliability
- Calls attention to the **ephemeral nature** of many fact-checked stories and the dangers of focusing only on trending topics

Technologies Used:

- Website or mobile resource hub that lists and compares fact-checkers
- Browser extension concept that alerts users when reading content reviewed by multiple fact-checkers
- Database linking scientific research to commonly fact-checked topics

Status:

Educational concept and methodology; suitable for integration into awareness campaigns, school curricula, or as a digital literacy module.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Develop educational content or a short e-learning module on fact-checking critical thinking
- Create a “Compare the Checkers” digital tool for the DECIDE platform
- Partner with media literacy educators and watchdog organizations for pilot use in schools and community groups
- Include this module in public awareness campaigns and civic education programs

The Right to Access Information

The postmodern context and the digital age of hyperproduction make it difficult for citizens to make complete and comprehensive judgments. Therefore, often in the desire to protect themselves from media manipulation, disinformation and misinformation, citizens fall under the influence of unverified and unreliable information on social networks, consume obscure sources and fall under the influence of "conspiracy theorists" and ideologues who offer "instant" solutions to complex issues of social reality. In this context, citizens are recommended to check before making complete judgments, and especially before publicly sharing, disseminating and commenting on certain contents, **by consulting other sources**, seeking, as they have every legal right, specific information from competent state and other institutions. **The right to access information** is not and should never be reserved only for the media, but should be available to every interested individual.

Name of the Tool/Project: Know Your Right: Access to Information for All

Short Description: A civic empowerment initiative that promotes the right of every citizen to access official and verifiable information from public institutions, encouraging informed decision-making beyond unreliable online content.

Purpose / Problem it Solves: In a digital environment overwhelmed by fragmented content and emotional narratives, citizens often resort to conspiracy theories or unreliable sources out of confusion or distrust. This project highlights that everyone — not just journalists — has a legal right to access accurate, official information, and it encourages active use of institutional channels to verify claims before sharing or reacting.

Target Audience:

- Citizens of all ages
- Youth and students
- Educators and librarians
- Civil society organizations
- Community journalists and activists

Key Features / Methodology:

- Promotes awareness of the **legal right to public information** (FOI laws, access to institutional data)
- Encourages use of **official portals, data repositories, and direct inquiries** to state institutions
- Counters the trend of overreliance on **social media narratives** or unverified influencers

- Advises **consulting multiple official and scientific sources** before forming or sharing opinions
- Emphasizes the role of **individual agency** in seeking information, not just the media's

Technologies Used:

- Potential development of a **public-facing info access portal** (aggregator of FOI resources per country)
- Educational microsite with guides: "How to request official information"
- Integration with DECIDE's citizen tools for sending info requests or checking source credibility

Status:

Structured awareness concept, with potential for development into civic education materials or digital rights campaigns.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Create short video explainers and downloadable guides on information rights
- Partner with legal and civic tech organizations to provide FOI request templates
- Localize resources per country (e.g., Croatia, Austria, Lithuania) within the DECIDE platform
- Incorporate into media literacy curricula or public training sessions for citizens and students

Who Is Writing?

A mistake that very often leads to the spread of disinformation is the fact that only the content is consulted, which is not only not checked in other sources, but very rarely enough attention is paid to who created the information, that is, the question of who writes is not asked. Journalists, as we learned at the workshops from long-time journalists and editors, are also people who have their own views that they incorporate into their own text in one way or another. One of the widely spread misconceptions is that journalists are always independent and objective observers and that as such they should not be questioned. Before making a judgment about media content, **it is necessary to inform oneself about the previous work of journalists**, especially when consulting and interpreting the content of more casual journalistic forms such as columns and comments. We should focus not only on the journalist's previous work, from which we can often read the repetition of certain positions and the impersonation of one's own values and worldviews, but also consider how the journalist's previous texts were reacted to - whether they were convicted of defamation in court, whether it turned out that some of the theses they had previously presented were unreliable, inaccurate and false, and whether the journalist is personally connected to certain political and social structures on whose behalf they write.

Name of the Tool/Project: Author Check: Who's Behind the Words?

Short Description: A methodology and awareness tool that urges readers to look beyond content and examine the identity, credibility, and affiliations of the journalists or authors who produce it.

Purpose / Problem it Solves: In the age of information overload, people often focus solely on the content of an article without questioning the author's history, bias, or affiliations. This lack of scrutiny increases the risk of spreading disinformation cloaked in persuasive or emotionally charged writing. This tool helps users develop habits to assess the **credibility and background of content creators** before accepting or sharing their work.

Target Audience:

- General news readers
- Students and educators
- Media and communication professionals
- Bloggers, influencers, and amateur content creators
- Civic activists and critical readers

Key Features / Methodology:

- Encourages users to **ask who is writing**, not just what is being written
- Recommends researching an author's **previous work, public affiliations, and history of accuracy**
- Advises caution with **opinion pieces, columns, and casual journalistic forms**
- Suggests checking whether the author has been involved in defamation cases or controversies
- Highlights the need to assess potential **conflicts of interest or political ties**
- Emphasizes patterns in an author's tone, framing, and ideological stance

Technologies Used:

- Concept for a **browser plugin or content verification widget** that links authors to their prior publications
- Search engine extensions to track authors' media appearances and citations
- Educational material in media literacy programs with real-life case studies

Status:

Conceptual methodology; suitable for integration into media education, journalism ethics discussions, or digital literacy platforms.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Develop a **prototype tool** or simple lookup database for journalist background checks
- Include author credibility checks as a **module within DECIDE's media literacy section**
- Create explainer content or lesson plans (e.g., "How to research a journalist")
- Collaborate with media watchdog organizations to develop ethical author review criteria

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Who Owns the Media?

Although fact-checkers are often talked about in the public sphere, another important element is often lost sight of, which is the **questioning of ownership of the media**, which, despite protective mechanisms, always determines to a greater or lesser extent the direction in which the narrative and editorial policy of a particular media outlet is shaped. In addition to who writes, it is important for readers to ask the question of who they write for. If, for example, the owners of the media are close to a political party or have an ownership stake in a company, it is necessary to pay particular attention to the bias of the texts when assessing the same phenomena, and even more so when assessing their opponents and rivals.

Name of the Tool/Project: Follow the Owner: Understanding Media Ownership Bias

Short Description: A public awareness strategy and digital literacy component that educates citizens to investigate the ownership structures of media outlets and how these relationships can shape editorial bias and content framing.

Purpose / Problem it Solves: Even when media content appears professional and factual, it may be influenced by ownership interests — political, corporate, or ideological. By failing to ask *who owns the media*, audiences risk absorbing biased narratives without recognizing the underlying motives. This initiative empowers readers to trace these hidden influences and make more informed judgments about content credibility.

Target Audience:

- General public
- University students and researchers
- Investigative journalists
- Civil society organizations
- Policy makers and media watchdogs

Key Features / Methodology:

- Encourages users to ask: **"Who owns this outlet?"** and **"What are their interests?"**
- Promotes **investigation of financial, political, or ideological affiliations** of media owners
- Teaches users to recognize how **ownership structures can influence editorial policy**
- Advises closer scrutiny when media outlets **report on political or business rivals** of their owners

- Provides case examples of ownership-related bias in reporting across different countries
- Complements questions like *"Who is writing?"* and *"Who are they writing for?"*

Technologies Used:

- Concept for an online **media ownership database or mapping tool**
- Plug-in or platform integration that reveals ownership data next to news articles
- Support materials like infographics, ownership trees, and case studies

Status:

Developed as an educational module and advocacy tool; ideal for inclusion in digital literacy programs, journalism curricula, and civic workshops.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Develop a **prototype platform or visual ownership mapping tool**
- Integrate into DECIDE as a **"Media Transparency Checker"** feature
- Partner with organizations tracking media ownership across Europe (e.g., Reporters Without Borders, Media Ownership Monitor)
- Create school- and university-level workshop kits with real examples from the local media

Media Literacy Education

Research conducted in Croatia has shown that more than half of citizens support initiatives to increase the presence of content that will educate children in schools about media literacy. Although it is necessary for the state authorities to pass specific legal amendments to implement this, real change comes from the bottom up. Citizens, and especially parents, are recommended to **educate their children from a young age and young people about comprehensive and structured content analysis, and to be especially careful not to expose them to content that they cannot critically process**. For example, it is particularly dangerous to allow children who are still developing cognitive and motor skills to access artificial intelligence tools too early. Children should be educated in a structured way to use artificial intelligence tools to enhance their own creativity, not to replace it.

Name of the Tool/Project: Media Literacy Starts Early: Educating the Next Generation

Short Description:

A community-driven initiative that emphasizes the need for structured media literacy education for children and youth, with a focus on early critical thinking development and responsible use of digital and AI tools.

Purpose / Problem it Solves:

Despite strong public support for media literacy in schools, formal implementation remains slow. In the meantime, children are increasingly exposed to unfiltered content — including manipulative narratives and AI-generated material — without the tools to critically interpret it. This initiative empowers **parents, educators, and communities** to take action by providing structured learning pathways for youth media literacy from an early age.

Target Audience:

- Children and youth
- Parents and guardians
- Educators and school administrators
- Civil society organizations
- Policy makers and local authorities

Key Features / Methodology:

- Advocates for **bottom-up implementation** of media literacy at home and in local communities
- Encourages **parent-led education** in media awareness and responsible digital use
- Warns against premature and unsupervised use of **AI tools** by cognitively developing children
- Supports structured, age-appropriate guidance on how to use AI as a tool for **creativity**, not replacement
- Promotes inclusion of media literacy in school programs as an **elective or interdisciplinary component**
- Highlights national research (e.g., Croatian public support and data) to push for broader implementation

Technologies Used:

- Educational kits, story-based learning apps, and interactive guides for parents and teachers
- Optional AI tools designed specifically for safe, guided educational use by children
- Curricula templates for integration into existing classroom subjects

Status:

Public awareness and advocacy model; ready for deployment in schools, parent groups, and youth centers, with potential for expansion into national education policy.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Create open-source **media literacy lesson plans** for various age groups
- Partner with ministries of education and NGOs for pilot programs
- Launch **training sessions for parents and teachers** on how to guide media usage at home
- Integrate safe-use AI tutorials and creativity exercises into the DECIDE platform's youth education hub
- Push for national legal changes to embed media literacy in public education systems

Checking Several Valid Sources

Researchers who study the application of artificial intelligence from a communication and techno-scientific perspective systematically warn that artificial intelligence does not have the ability to create, but rather reproduce existing content. Citizens are advised to **pay attention to details** when consulting information, especially audio-visual content, and not to be led, like many media outlets, to seek sensationalist explanations, and **never to draw hasty conclusions unless they have checked the credibility of the content in multiple credible and valid sources**. Content creators who try to manipulate the public through the skillful use of artificial intelligence are not always so skilled, so citizens will often notice the patterns of creation present in artificial intelligence through closer observation, more detailed analysis of the content, and careful reading, and in this way protect themselves more effectively from manipulation.

Name of the Tool/Project: Cross-Check Culture: Verifying Before Believing

Short Description:

A verification-awareness initiative encouraging citizens to consult multiple credible sources — especially when encountering sensationalist or AI-generated content — before forming conclusions or sharing information.

Purpose / Problem it Solves:

The digital information landscape is increasingly populated by **AI-recycled content**, partial truths, and manipulated media. Many users, drawn to quick or emotional interpretations, fail to verify what they consume. This project cultivates a **habit of cross-checking**, helping users protect themselves from misinformation by seeking validation from diverse and independent sources.

Target Audience:

- General public
- Youth and students
- Educators and media trainers
- Online content consumers and sharers
- Citizen journalists and content creators

Key Features / Methodology:

- Educates users on how to **identify patterns typical of AI-generated content** (repetition, generic phrasing, emotional framing)
- Promotes the principle of **"verify before you amplify"** — especially for audio-visual content
- Warns against **media sensationalism** and encourages critical observation and slow interpretation
- Encourages consulting **scientific, institutional, and multi-perspective sources** before forming opinions
- Includes visual examples and **checklists for evaluating media credibility**

Technologies Used:

- Interactive tool or checklist to guide **step-by-step source validation**
- Microlearning modules on **recognizing synthetic media characteristics**
- Browser extension prototype that flags unverified or single-source claims

Status:

Ready for development as an educational tool, workshop module, or plug-in feature to support responsible information processing.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Create an **interactive learning module or mobile quiz**: “Can you spot AI-made content?”
- Integrate the checklist into the DECIDE platform’s citizen toolkit
- Develop a digital “Cross-Check Assistant” — a small tool to guide users through validating content in real time
- Launch community challenges or workshops to promote “slow media” practices and careful sourcing

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Taking into Account Different Viewing Angles

Sensitive topics such as war conflicts and human suffering evoke the strongest emotions in observers and encourage them to react more urgently and decisively. However, such content is precisely the best mechanism for cognitive war, i.e. targeted action by one or both conflicting parties, which, through the dissemination of unreliable, edited, and artificial intelligence-generated content, seek to win over the sensibilities of the world public for their own particular goals. Propaganda has been used for centuries throughout history as a mechanism for controlling the masses. In this context, citizens are recommended **to pay special attention and consult sources that come from different angles and from different sides**. Citizens must be aware that in delicate issues there is propaganda activity from all conflicting parties and that in order to make comprehensive judgments, it is necessary not only to look for shreds of truth by reading propaganda pamphlets from the conflicting parties, but also to thoroughly educate themselves about the background of the conflict – the history, culture, and religious rules of the conflicting parties. The truth about a particular problem and phenomenon, and especially about conflicts, never lies in just one news item, recording, or document; it is more layered and requires deeper understanding and analysis.

Name of the Tool/Project: Multiple Angles, Deeper Truth: Navigating Conflicts in the Media

Short Description:

An educational module and reflective practice that teaches citizens to analyze sensitive topics — such as war and humanitarian crises — through a multi-perspective lens, recognizing propaganda and emotional manipulation across all sides.

Purpose / Problem it Solves:

Highly emotional and polarizing events are often exploited for **cognitive warfare** — where AI-generated or heavily curated narratives are used to sway public opinion. Many citizens react based on first impressions or one-sided accounts. This initiative develops critical resilience by encouraging deeper investigation, historical understanding, and **comparative source analysis** to avoid falling into propaganda traps.

Target Audience:

- General public
- Youth and students
- Journalists and content curators

- Teachers of history, media, or civic education
- Civil society engaged in conflict response or advocacy

Key Features / Methodology:

- Educates users on the **emotional framing of conflict media** and the role of propaganda
- Emphasizes the importance of consulting **sources from multiple sides** in a conflict
- Promotes research into the **historical, cultural, and religious context** behind contested narratives
- Teaches that the **truth in conflict is layered**, often requiring long-form reading and contextual learning
- Offers guidance for avoiding snap judgments based on emotionally charged visuals or single reports
- Introduces the concept of **cognitive warfare** as a digital-age extension of traditional propaganda

Technologies Used:

- Interactive storytelling or role-reversal simulations showing opposing narratives
- Conflict mapping tools that visually present diverging media perspectives
- Annotated resource collections offering contrasting articles on the same topic

Status:

Educational methodology with potential for integration into conflict analysis workshops, media literacy training, and DECIDE's educational modules.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Develop a **"dual-perspective reader"** that shows how the same event is portrayed by different outlets
- Integrate into civic education classes or journalism schools as a case-based toolkit
- Build a curated archive of high-contrast reporting on global conflicts for training purposes
- Create downloadable guides on **how to decode emotionally manipulative media**

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence tools can be used for targeted education, especially in the context of, for example, finding units of relevant scientific and professional literature through which one can educate about a particular problem that requires in-depth analysis and understanding. **Artificial intelligence tools should by no means be used as the ultimate source, but as an aid in solving** not only this, but all previously foreseen guidelines.

Name of the Tool/Project: AI as Assistant, Not Authority

Short Description:

A media literacy principle and digital education approach that positions artificial intelligence tools as helpful companions in research and learning — not as ultimate sources of truth or judgment.

Purpose / Problem it Solves:

AI technologies are increasingly used to summarize, interpret, and even generate media content. While these tools can enhance access to information and support critical exploration, they also carry risks of bias, misinformation, and oversimplification. This initiative guides users in understanding **when and how to responsibly use AI**, especially in research and content evaluation, without over-relying on its outputs.

Target Audience:

- Students and researchers
- Educators
- Content creators
- General public
- Digital literacy trainers

Key Features / Methodology:

- Promotes AI as a tool for **locating and organizing** relevant academic and expert sources
- Warns against using AI as a **final authority** on facts or complex topics
- Encourages comparison of AI-generated summaries with **original sources and peer-reviewed research**
- Teaches critical reflection on **AI's limitations**, including hallucination, outdated data, and inherent biases

- Supports integration of AI tools in **guided educational settings** for deeper learning and analysis

Technologies Used:

- Academic search engines and AI-enhanced literature databases (e.g., Semantic Scholar, Elicit)
- AI writing assistants with **responsible usage guidelines**
- Tutorials and toolkits for structured educational AI use (e.g., “AI for researchers 101”)

Status:

Guiding principle and practical module concept for digital literacy and education; suitable for immediate integration into DECIDE’s platform and workshops.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Develop a **user guide on ethical AI usage in research and learning**
- Create a checklist for validating AI-generated outputs against source material
- Launch training sessions or toolkits for educators on **how to teach with (and about) AI tools**
- Include AI literacy content in broader DECIDE modules focused on fact-checking and critical thinking

Analysis of Problems on Online Platforms

One tool that would certainly contribute to combating disinformation would be the **creation of an online platform** on which, following the example of the scientific community, **citizens themselves could publish analyses of individual problems**, following a certain set of structured rules and after the texts had been double-reviewed. Online databases would thus enable citizens to have direct influence on the creation of content in which they have lost trust due to the alienation of the media and the ubiquitous manipulations. The creation of more such platforms and the potential specialization of platforms that would publish autonomous research without any form of censorship would enable citizens to be more comprehensively informed and to make judgments based on a much more structured framework than the classic media, which have a number of credibility problems.

Name of the Tool/Project: Civic Review Hub: Citizen-Led Problem Analysis Platform

Short Description:

A proposed online platform that empowers citizens to publish structured, peer-reviewed analyses of current issues — modeled after academic publishing — as an alternative to mainstream media narratives.

Purpose / Problem it Solves:

With declining trust in traditional media and widespread manipulation, many citizens feel alienated from the information landscape. This project offers an alternative: a **transparent, participatory space** where individuals can contribute research and analysis following **clear standards**, reviewed by peers. It democratizes knowledge creation and encourages **rigorous, independent thinking**.

Target Audience:

- Concerned citizens
- Grassroots researchers and analysts
- Civil society groups
- Educators and students
- Journalists and media reform advocates

Key Features / Methodology:

- Provides a **user-driven publishing platform** with structured submission guidelines

- Implements **double-review procedures** inspired by academic peer review
- Encourages publication of **evidence-based, autonomous content** on current issues
- Supports thematic specialization (e.g., media bias, AI ethics, misinformation cases)
- Aims to create a **decentralized knowledge network** free from editorial censorship or influence
- Fosters **community learning and content accountability**

Technologies Used:

- Online publishing and moderation platform with peer-review architecture
- Version control and transparency logs for each analysis
- Searchable database with filters by topic, region, and credibility score

Status:

Concept-stage project ready for development as a prototype platform or pilot initiative in collaboration with civic tech organizations.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Design a **lightweight MVP (minimum viable product)** with structured submission and review workflow
- Recruit early users from universities, NGOs, and citizen research communities
- Partner with DECIDE to integrate a **"Community Research" portal**
- Develop trust mechanisms and content moderation safeguards to maintain quality and integrity
- Launch pilot cases with limited themes (e.g., media ownership, digital rights, political advertising)

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Evaluating the Credibility of Content

In addition to an online platform that could publish analyses of content and individual problems according to the scientific community's standards, it is also recommended to launch an online platform and/or a social media page where all members could **assess the credibility of the content that has been published**. This type of assessment of credibility would contribute to the democratization of media texts and would encourage content creators to write more based on verified and credible facts and data.

Name of the Tool/Project: CredScore: Community-Powered Credibility Ratings

Short Description:

An interactive platform or social media extension where users can collaboratively assess the credibility of published content, helping to democratize media evaluation and promote accountability among content creators.

Purpose / Problem it Solves:

While media consumers increasingly recognize misinformation, they often lack **interactive ways to challenge or flag** questionable content. By enabling users to collectively rate and comment on the **credibility, sourcing, and transparency** of published texts, this initiative empowers the public to participate in a **more democratic media ecosystem**, encouraging content creators to prioritize accuracy and factual integrity.

Target Audience:

- General public
- Digital communities and discussion forums
- Content creators and independent journalists
- Fact-checkers and media monitors
- Students and educators

Key Features / Methodology:

- Allows users to assign **credibility ratings** (e.g., factual accuracy, source transparency, bias level)
- Includes explanation fields for users to **cite sources or concerns** backing their ratings
- Aggregates community input into **content credibility profiles**

- Rewards **constructive feedback and informed evaluations** through reputation or moderation systems
- Encourages a **culture of reflective media consumption** and public accountability
- Optional integration with social media to flag content in users' feeds

Technologies Used:

- User-generated credibility scoring system (crowdsourced ratings)
- Moderated comment/review system with trust metrics
- API integration for major social media platforms and browser extensions

Status:

Conceptual design; can be developed as a standalone platform or integrated into existing DECIDE tools or fact-checking initiatives.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Develop a **prototype mobile or web platform** for content rating
- Partner with existing news verification and civic tech organizations
- Pilot community use with a limited set of topics (e.g., health, elections, AI-related news)
- Create a DECIDE-hosted **"Credibility Dashboard"** for citizens to track and evaluate articles collaboratively
- Launch campaigns encouraging ethical and responsible content creation supported by transparent public feedback

Co-funded by the European Union

Flagging Disinformation

The problem of misinformation is widespread precisely because of the great influence of social networks. Although users of social networks have the option of blocking content and profiles that spread disinformation and hate speech, there should be the possibility of introducing a special **form of reaction, a label, which would indicate in an easily noticeable way that it is disinformation**.

Name of the Tool/Project: DisinfoTag: Visual Flagging of Disinformation Online

Short Description:

A user-driven flagging system designed to clearly mark disinformation on social platforms or media-sharing websites, helping other users identify and question misleading content at a glance.

Purpose / Problem it Solves:

Social media platforms remain primary vectors for misinformation, and while users can block or report harmful content, those mechanisms are often **reactive and hidden**. This project proposes a **proactive, visible disinformation labeling system**, empowering the community to signal questionable content and reduce its impact before it spreads further.

Target Audience:

- Social media users
- Platform developers and moderators
- Digital rights activists
- Educators and youth workers
- Content creators and watchdog groups

Key Features / Methodology:

- Enables users to **flag content** suspected of disinformation using a **distinctive visual marker or "DisinfoTag"**
- Labels can appear on content in feeds, groups, or messages as a **first-layer warning**
- Option to include **community explanation or link to fact-checked rebuttals**
- Designed as a **non-censorship tool** — it does not remove content but adds context and caution
- Encourages **digital responsibility and informed sharing habits**

Technologies Used:

- Browser extension or mobile plug-in for tagging and warning overlays
- Potential integration with social platforms via API (where permitted)
- Shared crowdsourced tagging database (linked with credibility assessments and fact-checkers)

Status:

Design-stage concept with clear implementation pathway via browser tools or as a feature on civic platforms like DECIDE.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Develop a **beta version of a DisinfoTag browser extension**
- Create a **guideline for tagging responsibly** and avoiding abuse or misuse
- Work with platforms and civic tech NGOs to test use cases and reporting feedback
- Incorporate into DECIDE's user toolkit as a feature for evaluating and flagging misinformation collaboratively
- Explore connections with existing initiatives like EDMO or IFCN to align tagging with verified sources

Co-funded by the European Union

Conducting Campaigns and Raising Awareness

The ideal of full media literacy requires from its end user not only education, but also internalization, that is, the understanding that the consumption of poor-quality media content directly undermines the stability of the order of liberal-democratic societies. In this context, it is recommended to **conduct awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of democratic decision-making and democratic participation** of all citizens, which can be partially achieved both by implementing the previous guidelines and by conducting such educational campaigns. Raising awareness of the importance of each member of the community for the overall well-being of society as a community is a key form that can improve the state of media literacy.

Name of the Tool/Project: Think Before You Share: Media Literacy Awareness Campaigns

Short Description:

A public education initiative designed to promote awareness of media literacy as a democratic responsibility, encouraging citizens to recognize the societal consequences of consuming and spreading poor-quality information.

Purpose / Problem it Solves:

Education alone is not enough — lasting media literacy requires **internalization**, where individuals understand how their media behaviors affect the broader health of liberal-democratic societies. This initiative uses targeted campaigns to awaken civic responsibility, **connect everyday media habits with democratic participation**, and inspire communities to adopt critical media practices.

Target Audience:

- General public
- Youth and first-time voters
- Local communities and civic groups
- Public sector institutions
- Media consumers at all literacy levels

Key Features / Methodology:

- Launches visually engaging, emotionally resonant campaigns to **link media literacy with democratic health**

- Highlights how **individual behaviors (e.g., sharing fake news)** impact trust, institutions, and societal stability
- Promotes community-wide discussions and **public education events**
- Encourages participation through **pledges, public challenges, and creative content sharing**
- Can be tied to elections, local decision-making initiatives, or school-based citizenship education

Technologies Used:

- Social media campaign toolkits
- Print and video materials for schools, libraries, and public spaces
- Interactive civic literacy tools (e.g., quizzes, simulations, testimonial videos)
- Campaign landing pages integrated with other tools in the DECIDE platform

Status:

Immediately deployable; adaptable for different countries, communities, and campaign contexts — ideal for use as a companion initiative to more technical or educational tools.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Develop a series of **ready-to-use campaign templates** (slogans, visuals, stories) for partners across the EU
- Launch the campaign across DECIDE partner countries with local customization
- Partner with schools, municipalities, and NGOs to **coordinate real-world actions** tied to campaign goals
- Include campaign resources in the Toolkit as downloadable materials for replication and scaling

Uncovering Artificially Created Content

In addition to creating deepfake and other fake content, artificial intelligence tools can also be used as a mechanism to combat them because they can very validly recognize content created by artificial intelligence. Citizens need to be **educated on how to use artificial intelligence to recognize artificially created content**.

Name of the Tool/Project: Spot the Synthetic: Detecting AI-Generated Content

Short Description:

A digital literacy tool and educational module that teaches citizens how to identify and verify content created using artificial intelligence — including deepfakes, auto-generated texts, and manipulated images.

Purpose / Problem it Solves:

AI-generated content is increasingly used to spread misinformation in convincing, hard-to-detect formats. From fake news articles to synthetic videos, these tools are being weaponized — yet AI can also be part of the solution. This project empowers citizens to use AI responsibly to **recognize, expose, and verify artificial content**, strengthening individual defenses against digital manipulation.

Target Audience:

- General public
- Youth and digital learners
- Educators and media trainers
- Journalists and fact-checkers
- Civic organizations and watchdog groups

Key Features / Methodology:

- Trains users to detect **common patterns and flaws in AI-generated content** (e.g., visual artifacts, uniformity in text)
- Introduces free and open-source **AI detection tools** (e.g., deepfake detectors, metadata analyzers)
- Explains the difference between human and AI-generated writing or speech patterns
- Encourages the use of AI **as a support tool** for validation, not just as a generator

- Promotes caution when interpreting highly polished but unauthenticated media content

Technologies Used:

- Deepfake detection tools (e.g., Deepware, Hive, Reality Defender)
- Reverse image/video search engines
- AI writing detectors (e.g., GPTZero, ZeroGPT, Turnitin AI checkers)
- Metadata analysis plug-ins for images and videos

Status:

High-priority educational module; ready for incorporation into media literacy training programs and for integration into the DECIDE platform as a public resource.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Develop **step-by-step guides** for using AI detection tools
- Launch workshops or short courses: *"Is This Real?"* for schools and citizens
- Integrate detection features and explainer videos into DECIDE's media literacy section
- Create downloadable classroom resources and infographics: *"5 Signs of AI-Generated Media"*
- Collaborate with developers to improve multilingual detection capabilities

Critical Thinking Workshops

Building critical thinking is key to recognizing manipulative content, hidden advertising, disinformation and misinformation. Therefore, citizens, and especially the younger generations, should be enabled **to participate in critical thinking training workshops** where texts and content will be presented that will have to be interpreted within a given deadline. Through such training, citizens will be empowered to recognize the layers of narratives and will be enabled to distinguish information more clearly, which is useful on the one hand in mastering media literacy, but also in other spheres of individual life and democratic participation. Such education should be carried out through schools and civil society organizations.

Name of the Tool/Project: Think Critically: Media Literacy Workshops for All Ages

Short Description:

A practical workshop model designed to train citizens — especially youth — in critical thinking techniques to deconstruct media content, recognize manipulation, and develop independent judgment.

Purpose / Problem it Solves:

Media manipulation thrives when audiences consume content passively. Without strong critical thinking skills, individuals are more likely to fall for disinformation, emotionally charged narratives, and subtle forms of persuasion. These workshops offer **hands-on training** in how to read between the lines, **challenge assumptions**, and form evidence-based conclusions — skills that extend beyond media literacy into education, civic life, and democracy.

Target Audience:

- Youth and secondary school students
- University students
- Educators and civic trainers
- General public and lifelong learners
- Civil society organizations and community centers

Key Features / Methodology:

- Interactive sessions where participants **analyze real media content** (articles, videos, posts) under time pressure

- Exercises on **identifying logical fallacies**, emotional manipulation, and subtle bias
- Emphasis on breaking down complex texts into **narrative layers and intent**
- Includes debates, simulations, and group reflections to **internalize critical habits**
- Builds resilience against **false narratives and ideological manipulation**

Technologies Used:

- Online and in-person workshop toolkits
- Digital exercises and real-time content analysis apps
- Adaptable templates for schools and CSOs to run their own training sessions
- Interactive learning platforms (e.g., Miro, Kahoot, Google Forms for live analysis)

Status:

Workshop model ready for rollout through schools, NGOs, and community programs; suitable for inclusion in DECIDE as a training module.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Develop a **modular training program** (e.g., 60-minute, 2-hour, or multi-day formats)
- Partner with educators to implement workshops in schools and libraries
- Create **train-the-trainer kits** for local facilitators and youth leaders
- Integrate with DECIDE platform's learning hub for broad access and sharing
- Collect participant feedback to continuously improve workshop design

Activities for the Youngest

It is necessary to create **digital educational quizzes and implement other activities appropriate for children** that will help direct their interest in developing critical thinking and media literacy, in which, based on storytelling methods, children will be taught to recognize fake news and learn to distinguish between layers of narrative. Responsibilities range from parents who need to be informed and teach their children from an early age about the difference between the media world and the real world, good habits on the Internet, to institutions and local communities that can organize workshops, design games, print content such as picture books, etc.

Name of the Tool/Project: Smart Starts: Media Literacy for the Youngest

Short Description:

An interactive program of digital and offline activities tailored for children, using storytelling, games, and playful learning to introduce core media literacy concepts such as identifying fake news and understanding media vs. reality.

Purpose / Problem it Solves:

Early exposure to digital media — often unfiltered and manipulative — can shape how children understand the world. Without guidance, they are vulnerable to misinformation and unable to differentiate between entertainment, advertising, and factual content. This initiative provides **safe, structured, and age-appropriate tools** to build **critical awareness from an early age**, encouraging families, schools, and communities to take shared responsibility in the process.

Target Audience:

- Children aged 5–12
- Parents and caregivers
- Primary school educators
- Librarians and community leaders
- Local institutions and youth centers

Key Features / Methodology:

- Uses **storytelling-based learning** to teach children how to recognize misleading content

- Includes **digital quizzes**, interactive games, and puzzles focused on spotting fake news
- Promotes development of **narrative literacy** and media discernment through fun formats
- Encourages **parent-child conversations** about internet safety and truthfulness in media
- Recommends creating and distributing **picture books, coloring pages, and workshop kits**
- Supports collaboration with schools, kindergartens, and community spaces

Technologies Used:

- Mobile apps and browser games for interactive learning
- Printable resources for teachers and caregivers (e.g., activity books, flashcards)
- Video stories and animated explainers with simplified concepts
- AI-assisted storytelling tools (under adult supervision)

Status:

Educational framework ready for development into physical and digital resources; ideal for school partnerships, local initiatives, and inclusion in the DECIDE platform's youth outreach section.

Next Steps / Integration Potential:

- Develop and pilot a **"Detective for the Day" game app** where kids identify fake headlines
- Create a **storybook series** introducing characters who explore the truth behind media content
- Partner with child psychologists and educators to ensure developmentally appropriate content
- Roll out in kindergartens, early school years, and family literacy programs
- Integrate a "Kids' Corner" on the DECIDE platform with downloadable and interactive content

#	Tool / Project Name	Focus Area	Primary Target Audience
1	**Fact-Check the Fact-Checkers**	Critical evaluation of fact-checkers and their bias	General public, students, educators
2	**Know Your Right: Access to Information for All**	Promoting use of legal rights to verify info via official sources	Citizens, youth, civil society
3	**Author Check: Who's Behind the Words?**	Evaluating credibility and bias of content creators	Media consumers, researchers, students
4	**Follow the Owner: Understanding Media Ownership Bias**	Investigating media ownership and its impact on narratives	Public, journalists, watchdogs
5	**Media Literacy Starts Early: Educating the Next Generation**	Family- and school-based education on digital media and AI	Parents, educators, children
6	**Cross-Check Culture: Verifying Before Believing**	Encouraging comparison of multiple reliable sources	Students, digital readers, citizens
7	**Multiple Angles, Deeper Truth: Navigating Conflicts in Media**	Analyzing conflicting narratives with empathy and contextual depth	General public, educators, activists
8	**AI as Assistant, Not Authority**	Teaching responsible and supportive use of AI tools in learning	Researchers, students, general public
9	**Civic Review Hub: Citizen Led problem Analysis Platform**	Citizen-led, peer-reviewed analysis of public issues	Grassroots researchers, NGOs, educators
10	**CredScore: Community-Powered Credibility Ratings**	Crowd-assessing media content credibility	Online users, educators, content creators
11	**DisinfoTag: Visual Flagging of Disinformation Online**	User-generated tagging of questionable content	Social media users, civic platforms
12	**Think Before You Share: Media Literacy Awarness Campaigns**	Media literacy awareness campaigns linked to democracy and civic duty	Citizens, schools, civil society
13	**Spot the Synthetic: Detecting AI-Generated Content**	Training citizens to identify AI-made media	Digital users, journalists, youth
14	**Think Critically: Media Literacy Workshops for All Ages**	Hands-on workshops for identifying bias, manipulation, and disinformation	Youth, educators, lifelong learners
15	**Smart Starts: Media Literacy for the Youngest**	Child-friendly tools using games, storytelling, and parent engagement	Children (5–12), parents, educators

Conclusion

The challenging period of dominance of various types of media, social networks, and platforms places before the individual the need to have the basic knowledge about the roles of the media, to acquire critical thinking, to check and question media content – the need for individual media literacy. By mastering the tools of media literacy and accepting the possibility of different interpretations by different audiences, citizens broaden their own horizons and take on additional responsibilities, which is important for the functioning of a democratic society and participation in it.

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