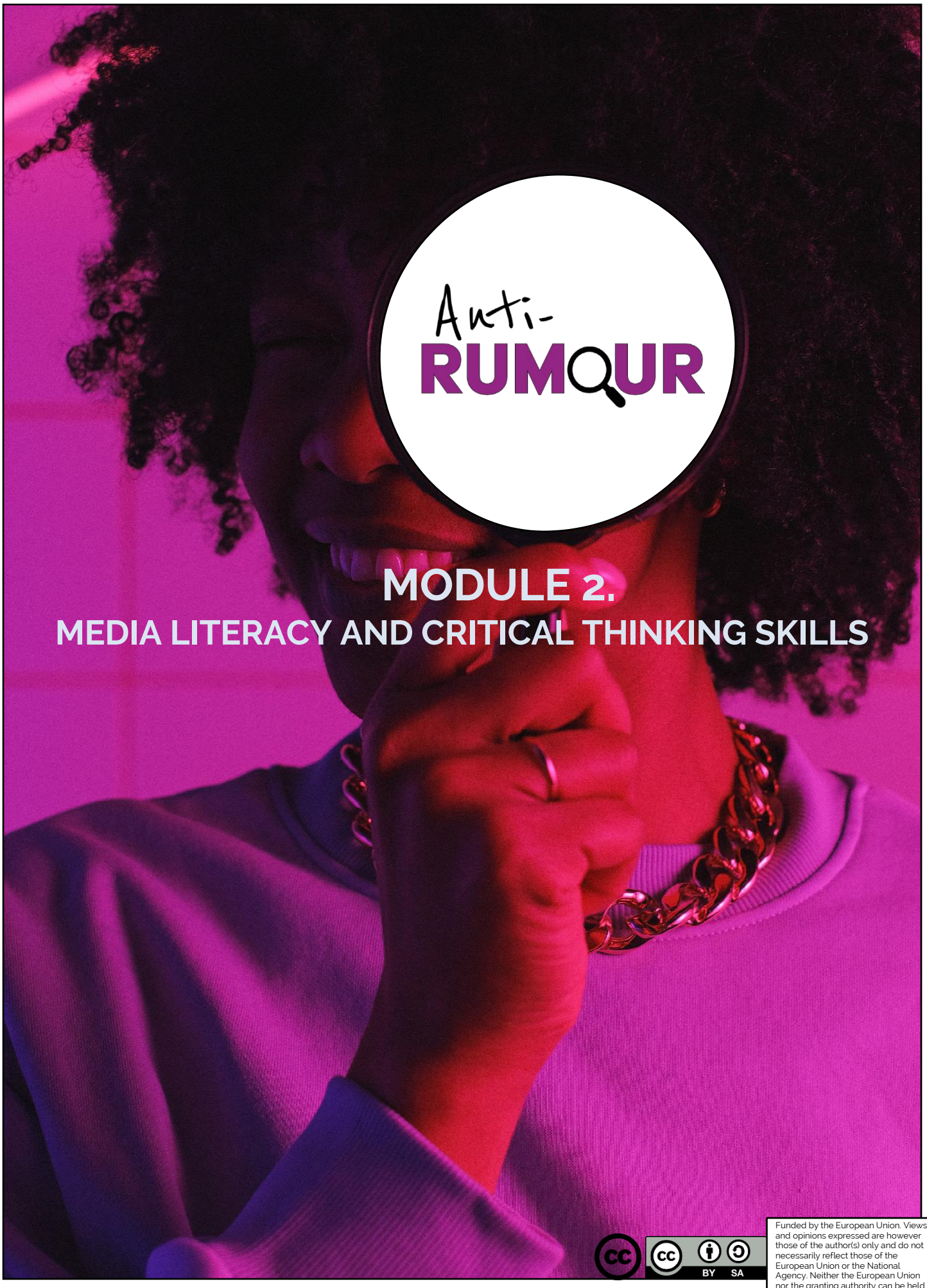

Anti-
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MODULE 2.
MEDIA LITERACY AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

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Module 2: Media Literacy and Critical Thinking Skills

Title: Emphasize the importance of media literacy and critical thinking in combating fake news, particularly regarding marginalized groups like immigrants and LGBTQ+ individuals.

Learning Objectives: To enhance participants' ability to critically analyze media content, identify fake news, and understand the impact of disinformation on marginalized groups, specifically immigrants and LGBTQ+ individuals.

Duration: 25 minutes

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Internet access for video presentation and research
- ✓ Projector and screen
- ✓ Flip chart or whiteboard
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Pens and paper for participants

Theoretical Background:

Media literacy is a critical communication approach that equips individuals with the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and interact with messages across various media formats, including print, video, and digital platforms. Defined by the Center for Media Literacy, this approach not only provides a framework for engaging with media but also fosters an understanding of the significant role that media plays in modern society. It underscores the essential skills of inquiry and self-expression that are vital for active citizenship in contemporary democracies.

Encompassing a range of strategies, media literacy promotes the development of critical thinking skills across all types of media—both online and offline. It helps individuals comprehend how media information can shape societal norms and cultures. According to the Council of Europe, media literacy empowers individuals, communities, and nations, enabling them to actively participate in and contribute to global knowledge societies.

In an era dominated by digital media, where disinformation and conspiracy theories are rampant, developing cognitive, technical, and social competencies is crucial. These skills enable individuals to critically assess media content, make informed decisions, avoid fake news, and communicate effectively. The European Digital Media Observatory highlights that media literacy is essential for engaging fully with the modern media environment, fostering informed and active citizenship.

The technical definition of media literacy, as outlined by DigComp, includes the following key elements:

- Browsing, Searching, and Filtering: The ability to efficiently navigate and find relevant data, information, and digital content.
- Evaluating: The capacity to critically assess the credibility and reliability of data, information, and digital content.
- Managing: The skill to organize and handle data, information, and digital content effectively.

A media-literate person can articulate their information needs, conduct thorough research, and evaluate the credibility and reliability of sources with ease. This capability is particularly important in distinguishing between factual information and misleading content.

Media literacy education plays a transformative role in fostering critical thinking and combating disinformation. It raises public awareness about fake news and improves individuals' ability to navigate online environments, assess information, and communicate using digital platforms. Despite its importance, a survey by Ipsos Mori revealed that only a small percentage of Europeans have participated in media literacy training, although many express a strong interest in learning more.

Effective media literacy training should go beyond merely identifying true and false information. It should provide a deep understanding of the history of fake news, the reasons behind its spread, and the steps to counter it. This comprehensive approach can significantly enhance individuals' abilities to navigate the digital landscape and contribute to a more informed society.

Moreover, media literacy is not limited to countering disinformation; it also encompasses technology training, providing a better understanding of digital tools and online platforms. Continuous media literacy education helps individuals develop a broad range of skills, from critical thinking to advanced technical abilities, which in turn promote active citizenship, democratic participation, and employability.

In today's digital age, media literacy is vital for distinguishing between facts and opinions, especially on social media platforms where the lines between the two are often blurred. Media literacy helps individuals recognize the creators' intentions, differentiate between factual information and personal opinions, and critically evaluate the reliability of the information they encounter.

To achieve media literacy, individuals can follow a few guiding questions when evaluating information:

- ✓ Who created the content?
- ✓ What was the purpose of creating it?
- ✓ Is the information credible and supported by additional reliable sources?
- ✓ Could there be any bias in the content?

By following these steps and continuously engaging with media literacy education, individuals can better navigate the complexities of the digital media landscape, avoid falling prey to disinformation, and contribute positively to the information ecosystem. In summary, media literacy is an evolving concept that adapts to technological, social, cultural, and political changes. It is essential for developing informed and active citizens capable of critically engaging with media, understanding its influence on society, and participating in democratic processes.

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2.1 Activity 1: Toolkit Exploration – Leveraging Fact-Checking Websites

Learning Objectives:

- To equip participants with the necessary media literacy and critical thinking skills to effectively discern and counter disinformation targeting marginalized groups, particularly immigrants and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- To familiarize participants with fact-checking websites as valuable tools for verifying information and combating disinformation targeting marginalized groups.

Duration: 20 minutes

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Access to internet-connected devices (laptops, tablets, or smartphones)
- ✓ List of recommended fact-checking websites

Facilitator's instructions:

- Highlight the prevalence and impact of disinformation targeting marginalized communities.
- Emphasize the importance of media literacy and critical thinking in addressing this issue.
- Overview of Fact-Checking Tools
- Provide an overview of selected fact-checking websites, explaining their functions and reliability.
- Share tips on how to use these platforms effectively for verifying information.

Guided Exploration:

The facilitator will:

- divide participants into pairs.
- assign each group a fact-checking website to explore.
- instruct them to navigate the website, examine its features, and practice fact-checking a sample claim related to marginalized groups.
- encourage participants to discuss their findings and experiences in a group discussion.

Debrief: In the debrief, the facilitator will summarize key takeaways from the activity, emphasizing the importance of fact-checking in combating disinformation. They will also discuss any challenges or questions raised during the exploration of fact-checking websites. Finally, the facilitator will encourage participants to reflect on how they can apply these tools.

Possible Alterations:

- Offline Toolkit Demonstration: If internet access is limited, prepare printed handouts or guides featuring fact-checking methodologies and resources for offline use.
- Guest Speaker Presentation: Invite a guest speaker from a reputable fact-checking organization to provide insights and demonstrations of their fact-checking processes.
- Interactive Quiz: Develop an interactive quiz or game format to engage participants in practicing fact-checking skills and reinforce key concepts.

2.2 Activity 2: Debunking Misinformation

Learning Objectives: To develop strategies for debunking fake news using scientific and factual evidence.

Duration: 15 minutes

The facilitator will show a short video on critical thinking and how to evaluate the credibility of news sources. 'Critical Thinking Tools: "How to detect and debunk Fake News?" Critical Thinking Tools: "How to detect and debunk Fake News?" (youtube.com)'

Debunking Workshop (9 minutes):
The facilitator will:

- provide participants with examples of fake news specifically targeting marginalized groups.
- assign each group one fake news story and task them with finding scientific and factual evidence to debunk it. Provide access to the internet or pre-selected credible sources.
- groups should create a brief presentation or infographic summarizing their findings and the evidence they used to debunk the fake news.

Debrief:

Following the activity, the facilitator will guide the group through:
Each group presenting their debunking strategy and evidence. Discussion on the significance of credible sources and navigating conversations with individuals entrenched in misinformation. Summarization of key takeaways. Encouragement for applying acquired skills to combat misinformation and advocate for marginalized groups. Optional: Suggesting participants to craft a brief media literacy campaign, utilizing discussed strategies to debunk prevalent myths and fake news targeting marginalized communities.

Possible Alterations:
Community Fact-Checking Campaign Planning:

- Divide participants into teams and task each team with developing a community-based fact-checking campaign targeting misinformation about immigrants and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Provide guidelines and resources for creating educational materials, social media posts, and interactive workshops aimed at promoting media literacy and debunking fake news.
- Allow time for teams to brainstorm campaign ideas, outline strategies, and prepare a brief presentation outlining their proposed campaign.