



Lesson 2.

Combating fake news regarding environmental awareness & Global Warming

Introduction

Modules

1 Sociological factors

1.1 Theoretical input. Explaining the sociocultural factors behind fake news regarding Climate Change

1.2 Guess who – identifying relevant actors in spreading fake news

2 Media Literacy and Critical Thinking skills

2.1 Spot & Verify

2.2. My Internet Action Plan

3 Strategies for identifying and combating fake news

3.1 Theoretical input. Strategies for identifying and combating fake news.

3.2 Responding and Informing

4 Case study

4.1 Case study 1 – The Venetian Dolphins

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Annexes

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Introduction

This module intends to teach and provide learners with the capacity of understanding fake news and false narratives around climate change and the impact they have on it. Climate change represents one of the most prolific areas for producing fake news and disinformation. It is a complex issue involving intricate interactions among scientific, environmental, economic, and political factors.

The complexity of the subject can be challenging for the public to grasp; thus, climate change is very susceptible to misinformation, disinformation. Often, fake news circulates around climate casting doubt on the well-established scientific consensus. Economic and political interests further contribute to the spread of misleading narratives. Navigating climate change discussions requires media literacy and critical thinking to discern scientifically supported information from fake news.

It is important to discern between fake news and false narratives. False narratives are those that establish an abstract idea or concept, based on different arguments, but do not tackle anything specific, rather the issue as such. For example, climate change has several false narratives such as 'it is just a natural phenomenon', 'it does not represent a threat, nor a problem', 'environmental policies are a fraud, designed to impose political agendas'. These narratives generate conflict, without specifying who is to blame for. Rather, the enemy of these arguments tends to be an broad concept (state, world elite, world organizations, deep-state...). They are powerful because they increase and spread the idea that the citizens are being manipulated, but do not explain why, and by who exactly. The danger radiates in the (uncontrolled) power they have to generate anger, frustration and polarization, aiming at triggering the irrational part of individuals, manipulating their emotions. The purpose of spreading these narratives can vary, depending on the interested party. Module 1 and 2 aims to explain and teach about this.

Fake news, on the other hand, are different. They are based on a general false narrative, and normally the ultimate aim is to support it, but they are usually more specific. They are mostly simple but concrete facts: 'this has happened', 'scientist say this', 'someone has said this...'. For example, regarding climate change, some fake news examples could be: 'Germany's share of global CO₂ emissions is only 1.8 percent'. This fact is false, supporting the false narrative that climate protection measures are pointless. The aim however may vary, although it would still carry a hidden interest. In this case, many fake news, with sensationalist and controversial headlines, aim at attracting views and increasing the emissary's presence in the community. However, they are also the instrument used by those who are interested on spreading fake narratives, so to provide with concrete and melodramatic hints that all together provide the false narrative a certain sense. Module 2 and 3 focuses on the identification and how to combat fake news regarding climate change.