



Co-funded by
the European Union

CheckMate

Combating Misinformation through Media Literacy

POLICY

RECOMMENDATIONS

TOOLKIT

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1. Few Words about the CheckMate Project

The “CheckMate - Empowering Europeans towards a Media-Savvy Citizenry” project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme (KA2 – Adult Education), looks to raise awareness on the problem of misinformation and disinformation, turning alienation into constructive engagement, among the topic's stakeholders, fostering social dialogue and enabling new and innovative solutions. Furthermore, CheckMate looks to train adults of any social, age, religious, economic and ethnic background, paying special attention to vulnerable and marginalised groups, to be able to critically filter, investigate sources, fact check content, and categorise all information received, turning chaos into critical and analytical capacities. In that effort, CheckMate shall integrate and promote the use of innovative technological solutions.

Specifically, the CheckMate project aims at four main objectives:

- To tackle misinformation, while bringing International Law closer to European citizens.
- To strengthen media literacy by training participants in innovative strategies and methods to evaluate media reports.
- To raise awareness and promote social dialogue among stakeholders aiming at developing new solutions to misinformation and suggest relevant policy recommendations.
- To promote the use of advanced new technologies by stakeholders and participants in addressing the issue.

To achieve these goals, the CheckMate project consists of the following activities:

- Organisation of digital information sessions and workshops with civil society and other stakeholders to raise awareness using innovative metaverse platforms, achieving more than 150 users in 6 countries.
- Development of e-training course and web browsing extension for critical media literacy.
- Development of the Metaverse Networking Platform containing features such as avatar and venue customization, networking tools, analytics, integration with other applications.
- Development of a policy and recommendations report based on project implementation experiences on ways to tackle mis/disinformation.

2. Overview of WP Outcomes

In the context of the research & stakeholder engagement activities of this project (WP2), our findings reveal a **persistent confusion among stakeholders** between the concepts of **misinformation and disinformation**. While the distinction is clearer in some partner countries, in others it is obscured by linguistic or cultural nuances. Nevertheless, across all contexts, participants consistently **acknowledged the dangers posed by both phenomena**, with disinformation often seen as the more harmful due to its deliberate intent to mislead and manipulate.

All stakeholders recognised the **importance of social media** in the contemporary information ecosystem, yet expressed widespread concerns about **trustworthiness, echo chambers, and the growing influence of artificial intelligence** in shaping and potentially distorting public discourse. Focus groups and interviews underscored a clear demand for accessible, high-quality information and for educational programmes that are context-sensitive, age-appropriate, and responsive to user interests and professional profiles.

The project's *Best Practice Guide* synthesized a **comparative analysis of national contexts, legal frameworks, and media literacy practices** across the six participating countries. It identified shared challenges—such as social fragmentation, uneven digital competences, and algorithm-driven echo chambers—which hinder media literacy and contribute to social polarization. However, it also highlighted **opportunities**, including momentum from EU initiatives, the pedagogical shifts enabled by distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, and increased **inter-sectoral collaboration**. **Artificial intelligence** emerges as both a **risk and a potential resource**, with promising applications in real-time fact-checking, detection of manipulated content, and educational innovation.

Legal and regulatory frameworks across all six countries affirm the principles of **freedom of expression and freedom of the press**, albeit with varying degrees of protection and enforcement. While there is a **lack of dedicated legislation** on misinformation and disinformation in most jurisdictions, **criminal and civil law instruments** (e.g. defamation laws) are commonly used to address the dissemination of false information. For their part, **transparency laws and soft-law mechanisms**—such as journalistic codes of ethics and voluntary self-regulatory standards—play a crucial role in upholding public trust and media accountability. However, their effectiveness hinges on the **willingness of media professionals and institutions** to adhere to these principles.

Field research revealed important insights into attitudes and behaviours. In many countries, participants expressed a **strong preference for fewer, but verified and reliable sources of information**, even if this comes at the expense of immediacy. The project also revealed that there is **growing scepticism towards traditional media**, perceived as biased or disconnected from citizen concerns, and a **parallel reliance on digital platforms**, despite awareness of the risks of manipulation and surveillance. The **need for critical thinking, data privacy, and information security** emerged as key educational priorities.

Participants emphasized the emotional impact of discovering that a piece of news previously accepted as true was actually false—highlighting the **psychological dimension of disinformation** and the importance of **emotional resilience training**. There was a general call for **pedagogical approaches** that empower users to evaluate sources critically, identify bias, and understand the mechanics of algorithmic curation and online virality. Moreover, respondents advocated for **differentiated education strategies** tailored by age group, professional background, and digital experience.

The piloting phase confirmed that **interactive, experiential learning formats** are especially **effective** in fostering media literacy. Gamified modules, avatar-based simulations, and Metaverse-based role-playing activities were particularly well received across diverse learner profiles. These formats enabled participants to **engage with complex issues such as** disinformation tactics, emotional manipulation, and platform bias in immersive, accessible ways.

Testing further demonstrated the importance of adapting content to the learner's digital proficiency, interests, and age. Educators stressed the value of integrating media literacy training with broader themes such as **emotional regulation, cybersecurity awareness, and ethical digital behaviour**. These insights will inform the refinement of the CheckMate training curriculum and support the design of future impactful educational tools.

3. Lessons Learned and Suggestions from the Best Practice Guide

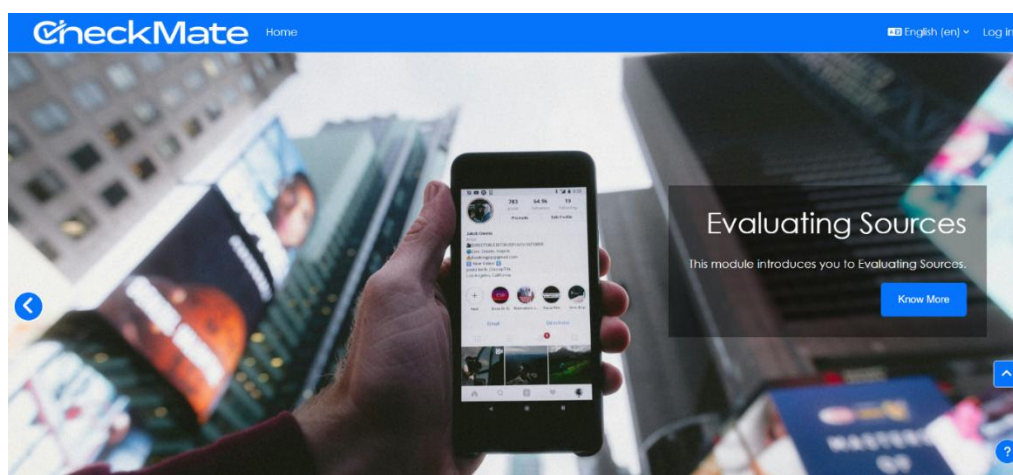
In light of the **increasingly complex, dynamic, and rapidly evolving** information landscape, the project's Best Practice Guide offers a set of insights and lessons learned. While the manipulation of information is not new—history is replete with examples of propaganda used to shape opinion, justify conflict, or marginalize dissent—the **scale and speed of today's information flows**, amplified by digital platforms and AI, present **unprecedented challenges for democratic societies**.

Paradoxically, as **information becomes faster**, shorter, and more pervasive, its **influence on democratic processes**—including voting, public discourse, and policy preferences—**grows exponentially**. Fortunately, **media literacy** has evolved in tandem, emerging as a **multidisciplinary and adaptable field** capable of addressing these challenges through education, civic engagement, and innovation.

The CheckMate project outlines **practical directions** for the design of media literacy education programmes, particularly those aimed at **disadvantaged or low-skilled adult learners**, based on the project's research findings and stakeholder consultations.

In the following section, we will examine lessons learned in three key areas :

- 3.1. Strategic Educational Directions
- 3.2. Pedagogical Approaches and Methodologies
- 3.3. Towards a Democratic and Inclusive Media Culture



3.1. Strategic Educational Directions

A successful media literacy programme must be **multidimensional**, addressing **technological, cognitive, ethical, and emotional aspects** of digital engagement. Several key directions emerged:

- **Strengthening digital skills** is foundational. Both **basic competencies** (e.g., using social media, navigating online platforms) and **advanced skills** (e.g., understanding AI-driven content curation or algorithmic bias) must be systematically cultivated. Importantly, adults must not only learn how to use digital tools but also how to **engage critically and responsibly** with them.
- **Harnessing AI as a positive force** in education and fact-checking is essential. Rather than fearing automation, learners should be empowered to **understand and leverage AI functionalities**—including detection of manipulated content, language analysis, and content verification—**consciously and ethically**.
- **Promoting responsible digital citizenship** is equally crucial. Just as behaviour in public spaces is guided by social norms, so too should interaction in digital “public squares” be governed by principles of **respect, inclusion, and accountability**. Education must therefore include **netiquette**, digital rights and responsibilities, and **mechanisms for preventing and responding to online abuse**.
- **Cultivating critical thinking and fact-checking abilities** is at the heart of media literacy. Learners must be supported to **analyse news content**, evaluate sources, detect manipulation, and understand the **production and distribution dynamics** of media narratives. Workshops on **news creation and reverse analysis (fact-checking)** have proven particularly effective.
- **Fostering collective awareness and shared responsibility** is a guiding principle. Media literacy is not just about individual competence, but about building a culture of **active, informed, and ethically aware participation**. Topics such as **participatory journalism, community fact-checking, and democratic engagement** should be integrated into course content.

3.2. Pedagogical Approaches and Methodologies

Insights from interviews and best practices suggest that **traditional, lecture-based models** are insufficient for engaging adult learners.

The most impactful programmes are those that:

- Emphasize **participation over passive reception** of knowledge.
- Use **non-formal education approaches**, especially those that encourage **interaction, reflection, and co-creation**.
- Incorporate **experiential methodologies** such as:
 - **Gamification**
 - **Learning by doing**
 - **Edutainment** (educational entertainment)

These methods enhance **learner motivation**, foster deeper **internalisation of content**, and support the **development of transferable skills**.

Furthermore, all learning materials should adopt a **clear, inclusive, and jargon-free language**, tailored to the **diverse backgrounds** and **cognitive capacities** of adult learners. There is no “one-size-fits-all” model—**flexibility and adaptability** are essential. The pace of technological change demands that **media education be continuously updated**, responsive to emerging risks and technologies.



3.3. Towards a Democratic and Inclusive Media Culture

Ultimately, **media literacy is not an endpoint but a process**—a shared societal effort that requires the **active participation of educators, institutions, civil society, and learners themselves**. The search for **truthfulness and accountability in the public sphere** must be framed as a **collective good**, one that cannot be outsourced to algorithms or individual initiative alone.

The CheckMate project aims to contribute to that broader project by offering **concrete tools, methods, and reflections** for developing more resilient, critical, and empowered digital citizens. The partnership hopes that this work will support **ongoing and future efforts** to **embed media literacy across adult education** and to **strengthen democratic values through informed public dialogue**.

4. The CheckMate Policy Toolkit: Targeted Recommendations

The following targeted recommendations aim to support learners, educators, and policymakers in building **resilient, media-literate societies**. They are informed by evidence gathered through desk research, focus groups, and interviews across six European countries as part of the *CheckMate* project. These guidelines are adaptable to a range of socio-political contexts and can be implemented in both formal and non-formal adult education settings.

4.1. Targeted Recommendations for Learners: Building Personal and Collective Resilience through Practice and Participation

- **Adopt critical media routines:** Develop consistent habits for assessing digital content. This includes **triangulating sources**, using **fact-checking browser extensions**, verifying publication dates, and reflecting on the **emotional manipulation techniques** often used in headlines or imagery.
- **Cultivate personal 'media hygiene':** Set intentional routines for media engagement. Allocate **specific times for news consumption**, limit exposure to sensationalist platforms, and use **diverse, multilingual, and cross-cultural sources** to avoid algorithmic echo chambers.
- **Engage in community-based learning and peer exchange:** Join or establish **local media literacy clubs**, **online discussion forums**, or **intergenerational workshops** to share experiences, discuss misinformation cases, and strengthen community-level resilience.
- **Recognise online behaviour as civic behaviour:** Treat digital interaction with the same ethical responsibility as offline engagement. Uphold **netiquette principles**, promote constructive dialogue, and **report online abuse or misinformation** when encountered.



4.2. Targeted Recommendations for Decision-Makers and Policymakers: Embed media literacy within systemic policy frameworks

- **Formalise media literacy within national adult education strategies:** Integrate media literacy competences into lifelong learning frameworks, national digital skills agendas, and active citizenship initiatives. Ensure alignment with EU objectives under the Digital Decade and promote its inclusion in social cohesion policies.
- **Support robust and transparent digital platform regulation:** Ensure full and timely implementation of the Digital Services Act (DSA), with emphasis on algorithm transparency, flagging harmful content, and protecting users from AI-driven amplification of disinformation. Promote transparency in content moderation and recommender systems.
- **Promote inclusive outreach strategies:** Design culturally and linguistically tailored media literacy campaigns for marginalised populations—including older adults, linguistic minorities, migrants, and rural communities. These groups often face barriers to digital education and are disproportionately targeted by misinformation.
- **Strengthen or establish national coordination bodies:** Reinforce the mandate of independent authorities responsible for monitoring media practices, misinformation trends, and public trust. Facilitate inter-institutional cooperation between media regulators, digital literacy agencies, and public broadcasters.
- **Encourage public-private-educational partnerships:** Collaborate with tech platforms, universities, NGOs, and media organisations to co-design initiatives that enhance digital resilience while upholding freedom of expression and privacy rights.

4.3. Targeted Recommendations for Adult Education Providers: Designing Transformative Learning Experiences

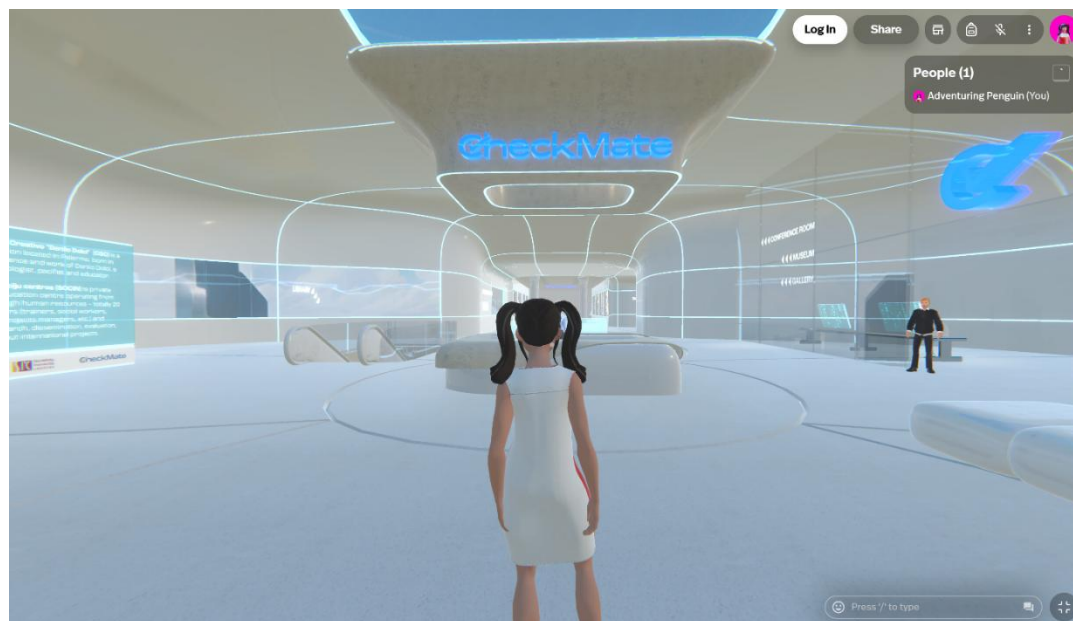
- **Incorporate gamification, simulations, and case-based learning:** Use tools such as role-playing scenarios in the Metaverse, interactive quizzes, and real-world misinformation incidents to enhance engagement and retention, particularly among low-confidence or lower-skilled learners.
- **Foster emotional intelligence and ethical digital behaviour:** Embed modules on emotional regulation, resilience to online hate speech, and managing disinformation fatigue. Address the ethical implications of algorithmic exposure, surveillance, and data commodification.
- **Collaborate with journalists, fact-checkers, and digital experts:** Facilitate guest sessions or co-developed workshops with practitioners in investigative journalism, AI explainability, and platform accountability. Learners gain direct access to tools, workflows, and credibility assessment practices.
- **Ensure adaptability and modularity of learning programmes:** Offer flexible, modular training paths that can be adapted during periods of crisis (e.g., pandemics, conflict, elections) and tailored to different learner profiles. This includes mobile-friendly platforms, multilingual resources, and asynchronous learning formats.
- **Integrate participatory methodologies:** Shift away from top-down instruction toward peer-led learning, project-based modules, and co-creation of content. Emphasise storytelling, participatory journalism, and learner-produced counter-narratives to foster agency and ownership.

5. Beyond the Toolkit: Future Research Priorities

While the CheckMate project has generated valuable insights and practical tools for enhancing media literacy and combating disinformation across diverse European contexts, it also **revealed areas warranting further investigation**.

Future research should explore the **long-term impact of immersive educational technologies**—such as metaverse platforms—on critical thinking and behavioural change, particularly among marginalised adult learners. Additionally, the **evolving role of artificial intelligence** in both spreading and mitigating disinformation calls for interdisciplinary inquiry into its ethical, legal, and pedagogical dimensions. Limitations of the current project include the scale of pilot implementations and the contextual specificity of findings, which must become generalisable across all EU regions.

Expanding longitudinal studies and comparative analyses could help refine strategies and adapt them to even broader policy environments. Nonetheless, the CheckMate experience confirms that **innovative, participatory, and inclusive media literacy interventions** hold immense promise for fostering **digitally resilient and critically engaged citizens** across Europe.



6. Annex I

Misinformation, disinformation and media literacy in the partner countries

This annex provides a snapshot of how misinformation, disinformation, and media literacy are perceived and addressed across the six partner countries involved in the CheckMate project. These insights serve as a foundation for tailoring future interventions to local realities.

France

Rooted tradition of media literacy based on critical thinking for citizenship.
Over 90% of metropolitan France's inhabitants are connected to Internet, indicating a significant level of digital literacy.

Italy

Significant challenges in media literacy and increased use of digital platforms for news.
Italy is one of the European countries with the highest number of contents removed from Facebook and Instagram in the first half of 2023, indicating considerable exposure to online misinformation.

Greece

Showed overall improvement in recent years, indicating progress in catching up.
Excels in the youngest demographic segment, with 88% of individuals aged 16 to 24 possessing basic digital skills.

Cyprus

Ranked below the European average in basic digital skills, higher digital skills, and basic digital content creation skills.
Ranked 25th out of 35 countries in the European region in terms of media literacy.

Austria

Significant number of adult citizens possess average or above-average digital skills, but ability to distinguish misinformation is an area of challenge.
Time spent in media use decreased in most categories in 2022 compared to the previous year.

Lithuania

Faces challenges in improving the population's media literacy, with a level relatively low compared to the European average.
Lithuania ranks below the European average in terms of media literacy according to the DESI Index.

7. Annex II

Needs Analysis Based on Stakeholder Interviews

The following annex summarises key insights gathered from interviews with diverse stakeholders involved in media education, digital innovation, governance, legal regulation, journalism, and social media. The findings reflect both shared concerns and field-specific recommendations, offering a holistic view of current challenges and needs in the fight against disinformation and the promotion of media literacy.

1. Adult Education Providers and Educators

- Content must be tailored to adult learners' experiences, interests, and prior media exposure.
- Interactive methods such as gamification, simulations, and hands-on exercises are especially effective in sustaining engagement.
- Awareness of the real-world impact of digital media is essential—participants must understand how media consumption shapes decisions, emotions, and actions.
- There is an urgent need to address online hate speech, particularly in educational contexts.
- Training materials should remain flexible and continuously updated to reflect evolving digital platforms and misinformation trends.

2. Digitalisation Experts and Web Developers

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a critical tool for managing large volumes of data, particularly in identifying false or manipulated content.
- AI-driven systems can enhance source verification and support early detection of disinformation patterns.
- At the same time, experts express concern over the potential misuse of AI for generating and amplifying disinformation.
- Innovative tools, such as browser plugins, citizen journalism platforms, and data visualisation systems, are valuable for both educators and learners.

3. Government and Public Authorities

- Authorities emphasise the need for structured national strategies to enhance the quality of information and support media literacy across age groups.
- Stronger enforcement of both national legislation and EU regulations—especially the Digital Services Act (DSA)—is seen as essential.
- Citizens should be encouraged to develop fact-checking skills, ideally through publicly funded initiatives.
- Awareness campaigns, including tools and resources like the *CheckMate* project, are valuable in promoting civic engagement and digital resilience.
- The EU is viewed as a key actor in fostering voter competence and combating disinformation.

4. Legal Experts

- Emphasise the importance of cross-border cooperation and harmonisation of laws to address the transnational nature of disinformation.
- Call for EU-wide regulations and coordinated awareness campaigns, particularly targeting platform accountability.
- Advocate for stricter regulation of online platforms, including legislative tools to curb hate speech and targeted disinformation.
- Support the integration of media literacy in formal education curricula, starting from early stages.
- Suggest identity verification measures as one possible tool to reduce anonymous dissemination of fake news, while acknowledging the need for a balanced rights-based approach.

5. News Media Agencies

- Note the shifting role of journalists in the digital era—from information providers to mediators of trust.
- Reaffirm the importance of fact-checking, transparency, and editorial independence.
- Acknowledge both opportunities and risks presented by social media platforms for journalism.
- Highlight the challenge of maintaining credibility amidst the overload of information and decreasing public trust.
- Stress the need to balance visibility with journalistic responsibility, avoiding clickbait while remaining relevant.

6. Social Media Influencers

- Recognise a shared responsibility to promote accurate and verifiable content.
- Express willingness to contribute to raising media literacy awareness among followers.
- Emphasise the importance of critical engagement with online content, including recognising manipulated narratives.
- Recommend greater collaboration between influencers, social media platforms, and educational institutions to co-create content and campaigns aimed at responsible digital behaviour.