Small Scale Partnership

SPOT IT. STOP IT. SHARE TRUTH.

A Student Guide to Navigating Fake News & Disinformation Across Europe

Why Does It Matter?

Your feed is constantly competing for your attention - whether you are scrolling TikTok in Germany, checking Instagram in France, or watching videos on X in Spain.

Not everything you see is real. **Fake news** and **disinformation** aren't just about boring political speeches—they are designed to trigger your emotions, shock you, sell you fake products, or turn groups of people against each other.

Since false information spreads six times faster than the truth, knowing how to spot it is a most important life skill.

Three Quick Steps to Fact-Check Your Feed

Before you hit **Like**, **Retweet**, or send that viral post to the group chat, run it through this quick checklist:

1. Stop & Check Your Emotions

- **The Trap:** Does the post make you instantly angry, shocked, or terrified?
- **Why it works:** Disinformation needs high emotional reactions, so you share it *before* thinking.
- **Your move:** Pause for 10 seconds. Take a breath before clicking share.

2. Trace the Source

- **The Trap:** "A friend of a friend said..." or an account with only twelve followers.
- **Why it works:** Fake accounts buy verification badges or copy real news logos.
- **Your move:** Check the profile history, creation date, and credentials. Search the headline on a trusted news outlet (e.g., *WDR/Tagesschau* in Germany, *Le Monde/AFP* in France, or *El País/RTVE* in Spain).

3. Spot AI & Manipulation

- **The Trap:** Hyper-realistic images, deepfake videos, or out-of-context quotes.
- **Why it works:** AI tools can generate convincing fake photos or audio clips in seconds.
- **Your move:** Look closely at AI red flags (weird hands/fingers, blurry background textures, robotic speech cadences, unnatural eye blinking). Do a reverse image search if something looks suspicious.

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Why Is Fake News Targeted at Us?

Reason	How It Works
Clickbait	Sensational headlines generate clicks, views, and ad income for creators.
Scams & Fraud	Fake crypto advice, fake online store discounts, or hacked accounts trying to steal your money.
Political Manipulation	Pushing extreme views during elections, creating division, or spreading hate speech.

How to Handle Disinformation in Your Group Chat

It happens all the time: a classmate or friend posts something wildly fake in the class WhatsApp or Telegram group. Here is how you can handle it without starting drama:

- **Don't humiliate them publicly:** Send a private message or reply calmly.
- **Focus on the facts, not the person:** Say *"Hey, I checked this and it turns out to be fake news. Here is the actual link..."* rather than *"You're so bad."*
- **Report harmful content:** If a post promotes hate speech, dangerous medical advice, or illegal content, report it directly on the platform.

Useful European Fact-Checking Resources

When in doubt, use these reliable regional fact-checkers:

- **International / English:** *Euronews Fact Check*, *AFP Fact Check*
- **Germany:** *Faktenfinder (Tagesschau)*, *Correctiv*
- **France:** *Les Surligneurs*, *AFP Factual*
- **Spain:** *Maldita.es*, *EFE Verifica*

The Golden Rule: *Think before you link! If you aren't 100% sure it's real, don't share!*

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