

“CHECK IT OUT” HANDBOOK: MODULE 3

Developed by: OpenEurope – EUDisinfoLab

Version: 2.1

Project n.2018-1-BG01-KA204-047871 “Open Your Eyes: Fake News for Dummies”

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HOW TO TACKLE DISINFORMATION: TOOLS AND METHODOLOGIES

Get Ready

Introduction:

After having introduced the conceptual background of online disinformation strategies, this module will present the tools to debunk them, and present methodologies to assess the reliability of a news source with concrete examples and a case study. It will also provide adult educators with tips to spot disinformation networks and to verify the reliability and transparency of a Facebook page. For this training, we chose to focus on Facebook because it is a widely used social network, with 2 billion active users in the world.¹

A large amount of the module materials are visual, so it would be a good idea to prepare a PowerPoint presentation, print some of the images/visual aids in colour or prepare handouts for learners to see the information and examples more clearly.

Contents:

- Analysing Internet-based information
- Analysing information on social networks
- Tools to verify information

Objectives:

By the end of this module, adult educators will have been able to:

- understand the strategy behind a typical disinformation campaign
- check and question written contents/images/videos
- identify indications of who is behind disinformation
- verify the reliability of a Facebook page
- verify the reliability of the information on Twitter

Methods:

- Desk research, visual verification of information
- Facebook transparency features
- Specific tools (InVid, CrowdTangle)

Equipment needed:

- Computer, tablet or smartphone
- Facebook account
- Internet connection
- Download the following tool: InVid, CrowdTangle

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/>
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CHECK IT OUT

Start by asking some open questions. You can do it by printing them out and give each learner one of the questions (face-to-face teaching) or by displaying them on the screen (online teaching). These are some of the suggested questions:

- Have you ever spotted disinformation on your social media feeds? If yes, what tools did you use to tackle disinformation? Were you able to identify who was behind the disinformation campaign?
- Do you usually check written contents, images, or videos in social networks? Why?
- What do you usually share on your Facebook page? Can you assess how reliable a Facebook page is?

To learn some of the basic vocabulary that will be used throughout the module, start by learning the definition of the following words: Bias, Cross-posting, and Fact-Checking.

Face-to-face teaching: print the words and definitions in separate pieces of paper and ask you students to match them.

Bias	The action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgment.
Cross-posting	The act of sending a message to more than one internet discussion group or news group at a time, or the message that is sent
Fact-Checking	The act of checking factual information in non-fictional text in order to determine the veracity and correctness of the factual statements in the text.

Face-to-face and online teaching: Ask the learners to provide their own definitions or thoughts on each term and then discuss the actual meaning together as a group.

Bias: the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgment².

Cross-posting: the act of sending a message to more than one internet discussion group or news group at a time, or the message that is sent.³

² <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bias>

³ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cross-posting>

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Fact-Checking: the act of checking factual information in non-fictional text in order to determine the veracity and correctness of the factual statements in the text. This may be done either before (*ante hoc*) or after (*post hoc*) the text has been published or otherwise disseminated.⁴ Fact-checking can be done by journalists in media entities, or organisations dedicated to fact-checking such as:

- ☑ <https://www.factcheck.org/>
- ☑ <https://www.politifact.com/>
- ☑ <https://firstdraftnews.org/>
- ☑ <https://factcheck.afp.com/>

Use additional resources, which are specific to your country. You can show on a screen how to browse through some of them. Here is an example of fact-checking platforms in Spain:

- ☑ <https://maldita.es/malditobulo/>
- ☑ https://verne.elpais.com/tag/bulos_internet/
- ☑ <https://saludsinbulos.com/>

Theoretical Inputs

3.1 Analysing internet-based information

Start by providing some theoretical input to your learners. You can do so by printing the following information (face-to-face teaching) or by preparing a presentation with animation where each of the FIVE CHECK steps is displayed (face-to-face and online teaching).

If you are reading an article from a website, you have never heard before, it is important to dig deeper to try to understand who is behind it, and if the news is truthful.

These five CHECK steps will help you analyse the information you deal with every day and spot disinformation.

1. **Check** the content: read the article carefully to see if:
 - all the data is accurate
 - the article provides an unbiased (impartial) opinion
2. **Check** the website
 - Look at pages such as “Contact” and “About Us” to see if you can get more details about the owner of the website. Lack of such information is a sign that the source might be an actor spreading disinformation items.
 - Take a look at the URL of the website to check that it does not try to mimic the URL of a legitimate media.

⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fact-checking>

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- Try to see if the website has been quoted by legitimate sources (e.g. known media outlets) in the past.
3. **Check the author**
 - Look for other articles written by the author.
 - If there is no name of the author, the information is likely to be less credible.
 4. **Check the sources**
 - Look if the sources used in the article are from legitimate sources/media.
 - Check if the quoted experts are real people/specialists. Use Google to see if these individuals exist and have a good reputation.
 5. **Check the pictures**
 - Use InVID to detect manipulation of videos or specialists.

Once you have discussed the CHECK steps, go to the following activity. Make sure that participants can use a computer, tablet or smartphone (individually or in groups).

Go through the steps described above to decide if this media outlet is real.

Here are some tips:

- Search for this media on Google. What do you see?
- Check the logo
- Have a look at the “About Us’ page

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MSNBC

Latest News

Opinions

Politics

Technology

Politics

Sports

About Us ▾

Home / [About Us](#)

About Us

MSNBC is an American news cable and satellite television network that provides news coverage and political commentary from NBC News on current events. In the late summer of 2015, MSNBC revamped its programming; the moves were in sharp contrast to previous programming decisions at the network.

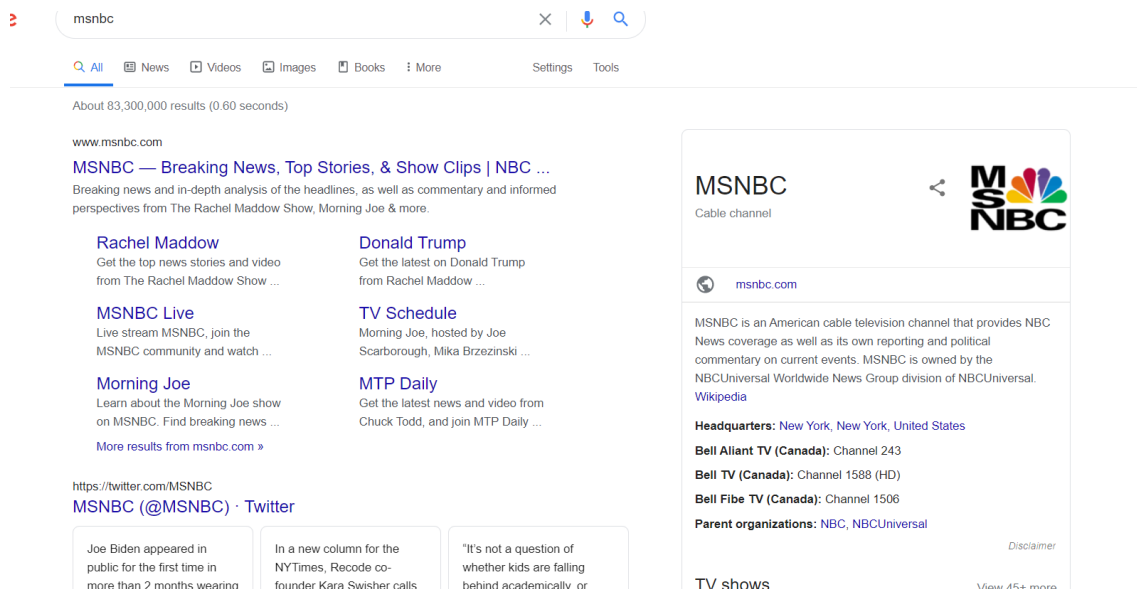
In Asia and Europe, MSNBC is not shown on a dedicated channel.

For more information get in touch at info@msnbc.uk

Correct answer:

This page is false, and it is impersonating the real American media “MSNBC”.

If you search “MSNBC” on Google, you will find that MSNBC.com is a real American media, with a dedicated Wikipedia page.



The screenshot shows a Google search for 'msnbc'. The search bar contains 'msnbc' and the search button is visible. Below the search bar, there are filters for 'All', 'News', 'Videos', 'Images', 'Books', and 'More'. The search results show 'About 83,300,000 results (0.60 seconds)'. The first result is 'www.msnbc.com' with the title 'MSNBC — Breaking News, Top Stories, & Show Clips | NBC ...'. Below this, there are several links to content: 'Rachel Maddow', 'Donald Trump', 'MSNBC Live', 'TV Schedule', 'Morning Joe', and 'MTP Daily'. To the right of the search results, there is a card for 'MSNBC' with the NBC peacock logo and the text 'Cable channel'. Below this card, there is a link to 'msnbc.com' and a Wikipedia entry for 'MSNBC' which states: 'MSNBC is an American cable television channel that provides NBC News coverage as well as its own reporting and political commentary on current events. MSNBC is owned by the NBCUniversal Worldwide News Group division of NBCUniversal.' Below the Wikipedia entry, there are links for 'Headquarters: New York, New York, United States', 'Bell Aliant TV (Canada): Channel 243', 'Bell TV (Canada): Channel 1588 (HD)', 'Bell Fibe TV (Canada): Channel 1506', and 'Parent organizations: NBC, NBCUniversal'. At the bottom of the card, there is a 'TV shows' link and a 'View 45+ more' link.

The logo is different.

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- The “About Us” page says the email address is info@msnbc.uk, whereas the real website is MSNBC.com

Show learners the following tips. If you want to do it more dynamic, you can organise, for example, a true/false quiz by adding false statements to the ones below.

ADVANCED PRACTICE: Challenge the content you are reading

- Polarizing, divisive and shocking contents are often more likely to be false and should encourage to be vigilant.
- Spelling and grammatical errors, sloppy punctuation, partisan vocabulary are often a good sign that a source is probably not reliable.
- Lack of clear context, quotes, or references to some identifiable sources should encourage you to dig deeper to verify the information.
- Look at other media outlets and trustworthy sources to see if they report the same story.
- If the information concerns another country, try to check if local media’s reporting is similar to what your article describes.
- Verify that images are not used in the wrong context or manipulated.

Check that the information has not been already verified by a recognized fact-checkers.

If you want to know more how to spot bogus (= false, not real, or not legal) claims, watch this video from FactCheck.org:



<https://youtu.be/Fm0LwscDYHs>

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3.2 Tools to verify Facebook information



Facebook Page

To assess the reliability of a Facebook page, go to the **Page Transparency** section on Pages:

- Visit any Page's timeline.
- Scroll down to the Page Transparency below the *About* section.
- Tap *See All*.

The information in the Page Transparency section shows:

- The date of the Page creation
- The primary country locations where the Page is managed
- The number of people who manage the Page in each country
- The Page's previous name changes
- Any Page merges that happen on or after September 6, 2018
- The confirmed business or organisation that has claimed ownership of the Page or that has been granted access to help manage the Page.

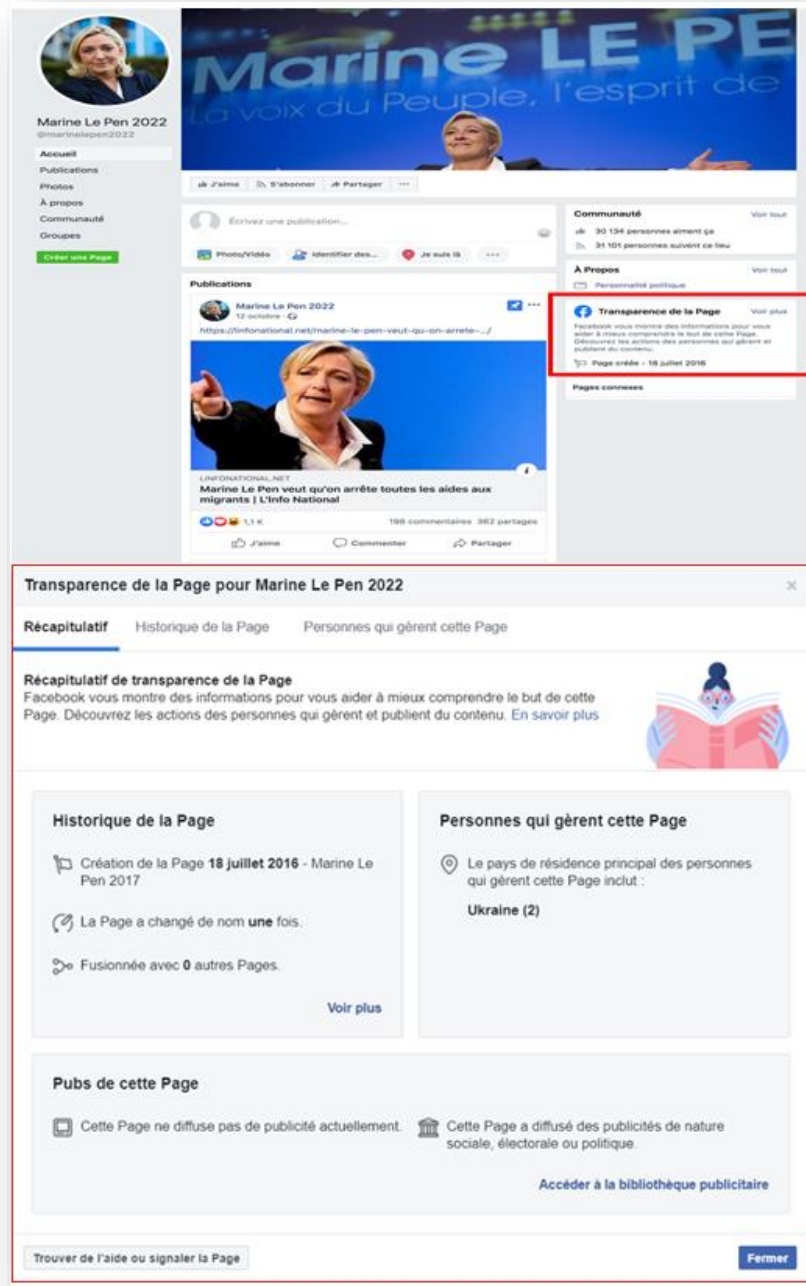
From: https://www.facebook.com/help/323314944866264?helpref=about_content



When you look at the transparency of this Facebook page, you can see that it is managed from Ukraine, despite being a support page of French political candidate Marine Le Pen... this is suspicious.

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The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook page for 'Marine Le Pen 2022'. A red box highlights the 'Transparence de la Page' link in the right-hand menu. Below the main page content, a detailed view of the 'Transparence de la Page pour Marine Le Pen 2022' is shown. This view includes a 'Récapitulatif' section with the following information:

- Historique de la Page:**
 - Création de la Page **18 juillet 2016** - Marine Le Pen 2017
 - La Page a changé de nom **une** fois.
 - Fusionnée avec **0** autres Pages.
- Personnes qui gèrent cette Page:**
 - Le pays de résidence principal des personnes qui gèrent cette Page inclut : **Ukraine (2)**
- Pubs de cette Page:**
 - Cette Page ne diffuse pas de publicité actuellement.
 - Cette Page a diffusé des publicités de nature sociale, électorale ou politique.
 - Accéder à la bibliothèque publicitaire

At the bottom of the transparency page, there are links for 'Trouver de l'aide ou signaler la Page' and a 'Fermer' button.

This page mainly shares content from the website “linfo national.net”.

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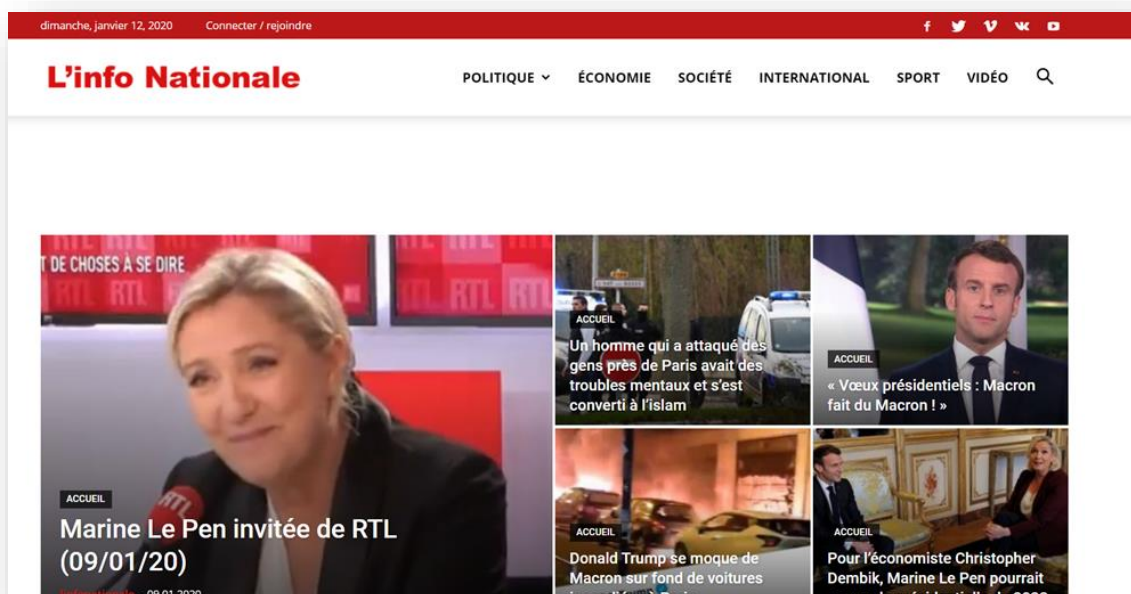


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[Linfonationale.net](https://www.linfonationale.net) is a website that was identified in a French fact-checking article⁵ as an alleged news website copying and amplifying disinformation items.



If you have enough time, ask your learners to follow the same procedure with a Facebook page they think might be fake. When they finish, give each learner 5 minutes to present to the other his/her findings and start a debate if possible.

Facebook Group

Although Facebook groups may give a good opportunity to feel connected with people all over the world, they can also be a hotspot for spam, fake news, and misinformation.

If you are a member of a Facebook group, check who is active in this group. Look at suspicious behaviour:

- profile posting always the same type of content
- profile posting always the same website
- profile not interacting with each other or has no friends, looks blank



⁵ https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/2019/04/04/non-il-n-y-a-pas-eu-18-millions-d-immigres-en-europe-en-5-ans_1719500

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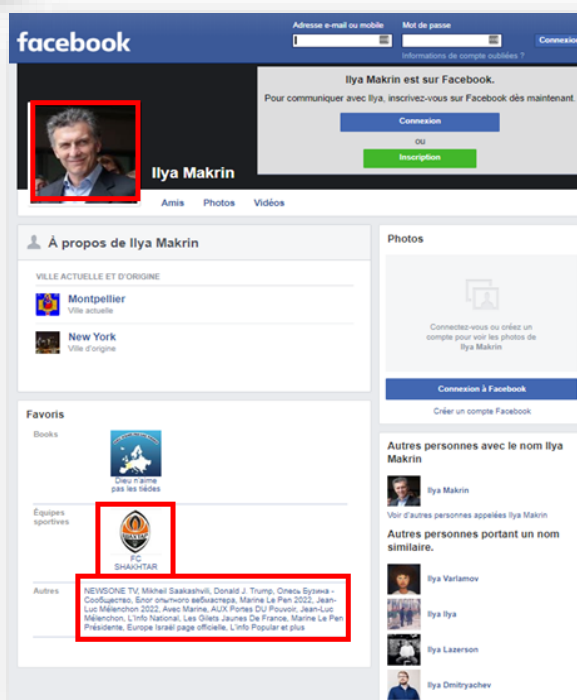
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Example:

This profile shares content on French politics but never interacts in French. It has no friends and only likes a few pages in Russian.



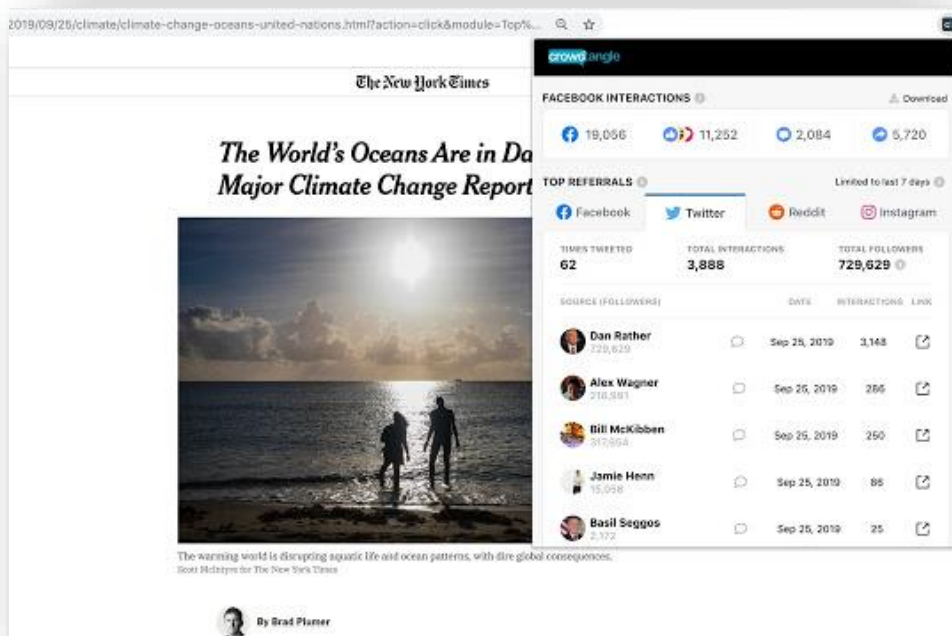
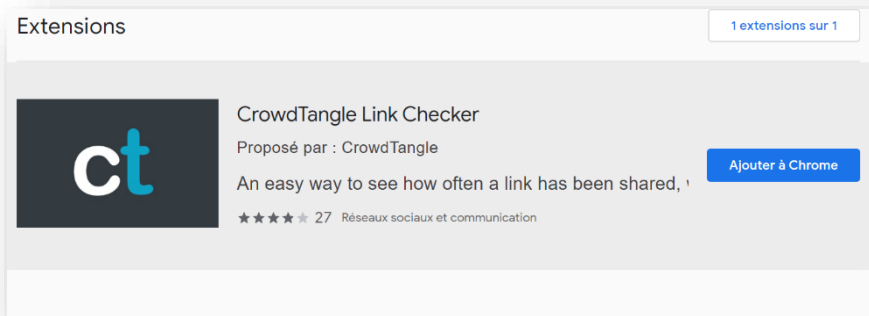
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ADVANCED PRACTICE:

Assess how an article has been shared on social media with a social media analysis tool. Here as an example is used CrowdTangle

- Download CrowdTangle: www.crowdtangle.com
- Install the Plugin on your browser
- Check how an article has been shared online by clicking on the con



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You can do the following practical activity individually or in groups. A good idea would be to prepare several images in advance and provide each participant/group with an image for them to check. Another option is to ask learners to cross-assign images to each other.

3.3 Tools to verify images


Reverse search image with Google

If you want to verify where an image might come from or where it appears online, you can try a reverse image search with Google:

Upload a picture

1. On your computer, open a web browser, like Chrome or Safari.
2. Go to Google Images.
3. Click Search by image .
4. Click Upload an image > Choose file or Browse.
5. Select a picture from your computer.
6. Click Open or Choose.

Search with a URL

1. On your computer, open a web browser, like Chrome or Safari.
2. Go to the website with the picture you want to use.
3. To copy the URL, right-click on the picture.
4. Click the Copy image address.
5. Go to Google Images.
6. Click Search by image .
7. Click Paste image URL.
8. In the text box, paste the URL.
9. Click Search by image.

Search with a picture from a website

1. On your computer, open the Chrome browser.
2. Go to the website with the picture you want to use.
3. Right-click the picture.
4. Click Search Google for the image. You'll see your results in a new tab.

From: <https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/1325808?co=GENIE.Platform%3DAndroid&hl=en>

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ADVANCED PRACTICE:

Verify pictures directly from your Browser with InVID (EU Horizon 2020 Project)

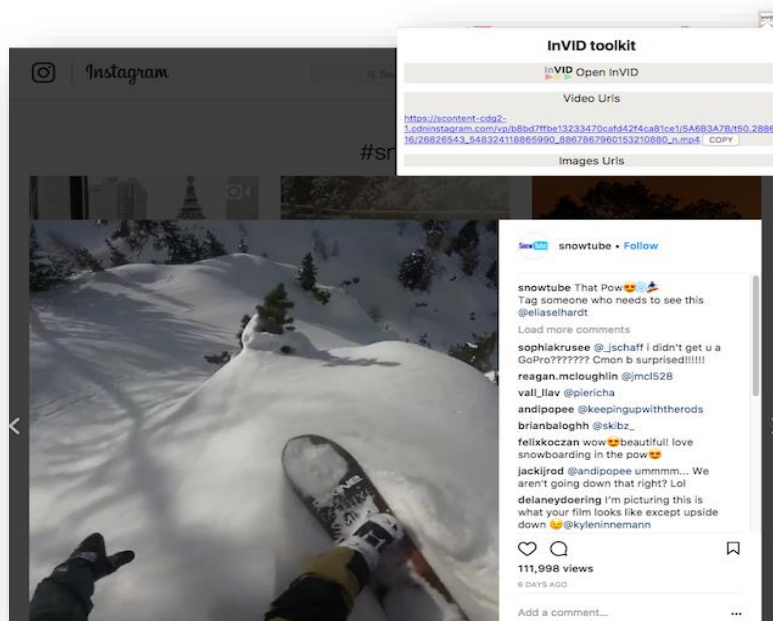
- ☑ Download the plugin: <https://www.invid-project.eu/tools-and-services/invid-verification-plugin/>



- ☑ Watch this video on how to use the plugin:



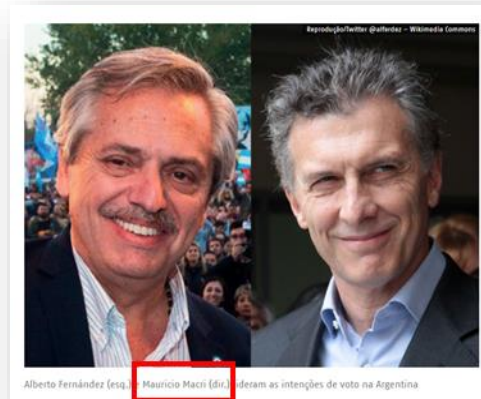
<https://youtu.be/nmgbFODPiBY>



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If you use InVID to verify the profile picture of Ilya Markin, you will figure out that it is actually a public figure from Argentina.



VERIFY

1. Bias is prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair.
Is it true or false?
Correct answer: True
2. To verify the reliability of a website, check if there is a section “Partners”. Lack of such information is a sign that the source might be an actor spreading disinformation items.
Is it true or false?
Correct answer: False. You have to check the section “Contact” and “About us”
3. To spot disinformation, you have to:
 - a. To read the article attentively
 - b. Check the URL website
 - c. Look for other articles written by the author
 - d. All of the aboveCorrect answer: d
4. A profile that always posts the same website or the same type of content in a Facebook group is highly probable to be bogus.
Is it true or false?
Correct answer: True

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5. If you want to verify where an image might come from, try a reverse image search with Google:
- Uploading a picture
 - Searching with a URL
 - Searching with a picture from a website
 - All of the above
- Correct answer: d



Activity 1. Discussion in pairs or small groups. Recommended for face-to-face and online sessions. You can provide students (using a projector or in paper format) with the fake image first and ask what they think about it. Then, provide or display the second one and start a group discussion. To prompt participation, keep asking questions like:

- Why do you think someone would manipulate a photo like that?
- Do you think that it was spread intentionally or that those who shared it did not know it was fake?
- Would you share this photo if you saw it on your Facebook Feed?

Activity 1. *Look at these images. Which one is a fake?*

Correct answer: the second one

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Answer:

The second picture is manipulated. The original picture of a meeting between Greta Thunberg and Al Gore was edited to claim falsely that the young Swedish activist met George Soros.

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Activity 2. Discussion in pairs or small groups. Recommended for **face-to-face** and **online** sessions. You can provide students with all the questions at a time, or separately in small pieces of paper (face-to-face teaching). You can also prepare a PowerPoint presentation with a different question on each slide (face-to-face and online teaching). Ask the following open questions or any other you think appropriate, and start a group discussion.

Activity 2. Answer the following questions:

- Have you ever spread disinformation?
- What channels do you trust when looking for information?
- Do you know fact-checking services in your country?
- How harmful do you think disinformation can be to you?
- What do you think of the information from the example below: is it reliable?
“Coronavirus is an offensive biological weapon”



Activities 3 and 4. Discussion in pairs or small groups. Recommended for **face-to-face** and **online** sessions. For this activity, you can also look for more images, maybe some that has been spread in your country. Display only the fake image on the screen and ask them if they have ever seen this image before. Ask them to discuss in pairs or small groups whether they think it is true or false. Then display the real one and have a short discussion with the whole group. You can ask them, for example “Why do you think someone faked this piece of news?”, “Would you believe it if you saw it on Social Media?”, “And if you saw it in another media channel?”, etc.

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Activity 3. Discussion in pairs or small groups.

Verify real images/videos: are they true or fake?






In March 2020, an intimate moment between nurses in a hospital during Coronavirus pandemic.

True or fake?

Correct answer: Fake

Back to search results 39 of 426,473 results


PICTURES OF THE WEEK PHOTO GALLERY

Overview    Get price

A man and woman kiss in the Barcelona, Spain airport on Thursday, March 12, 2020. President Donald Trump, who had downplayed the coronavirus for weeks, suddenly struck a different tone, announcing strict rules on restricting travel from much of Europe to begin this weekend. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)

Use Information This content is intended for editorial use only. For other uses, additional clearances may be required.

ID:	20073816103263
Creation Date:	March 12, 2020 03:22:46 AM
Submission Date:	March 13, 2020 11:07:05 PM
Photographer:	Emilio Morenatti
Source:	AP
Credit:	ASSOCIATED PRESS
Resolution:	5003 x 3336 3.89 MB
Person:	AP Week in Pictures



Reverse image search shows the image has been taken by an “Associated Press” agency photographer at Barcelona’s Airport.

The claim has been fact-checked by Agence France Presse: <https://factcheck.afp.com/photo-does-not-show-nurses-treating-covid-19-patients-italy>

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Activity 4.

In March 2020 in Italy, banknotes have been thrown on the street in a gesture to show the futility of money during the pandemic.

True or fake?

Correct answer: Fake

A reverse image search shows that banknotes of currency no longer in use due to hyperinflation in Venezuela.

The story has been fact-checked by Agence France Presse:
<https://factcheck.afp.com/these-photos-have-circulated-online-least-march-2019-covid-19-pandemic>



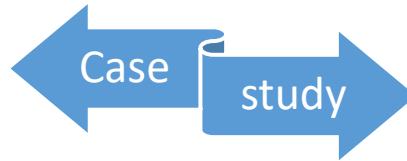
To conclude the session, you can ask learners if they have ever seen an image on social media that they knew was fake. What did they do? What would they do now?

Ask them to share with the other participants:

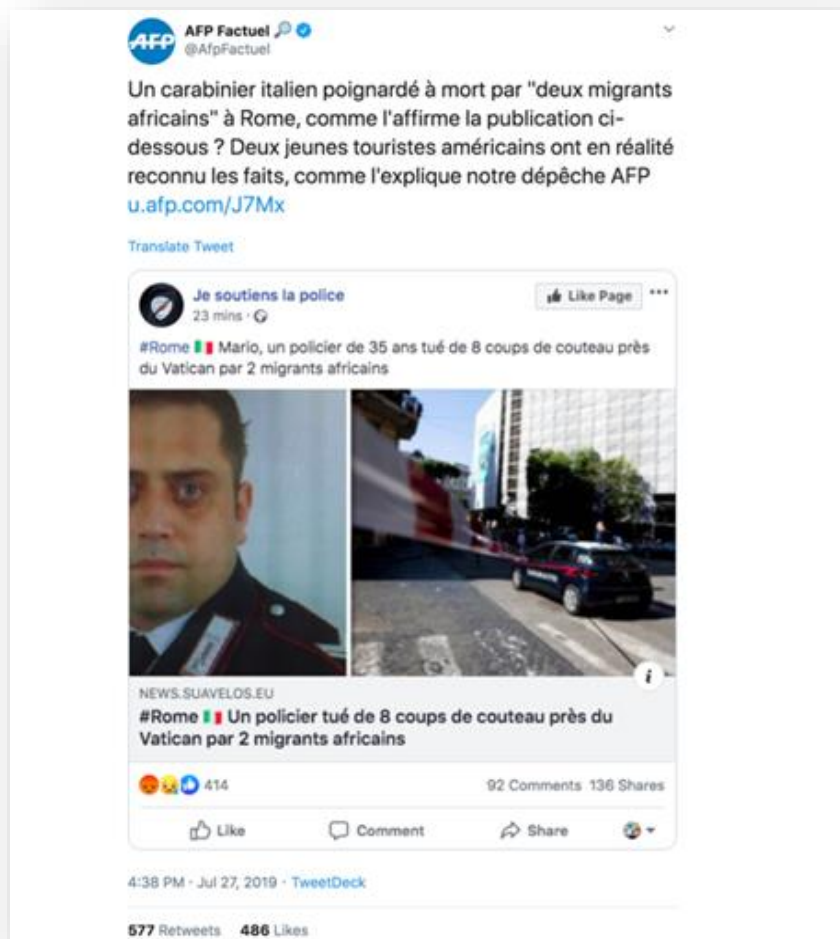
- What do they think were the most interesting aspects of this module?
- What have they learnt?
- Will their behaviour towards fake news change somehow from now on?

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Suavelos, a white supremacist network



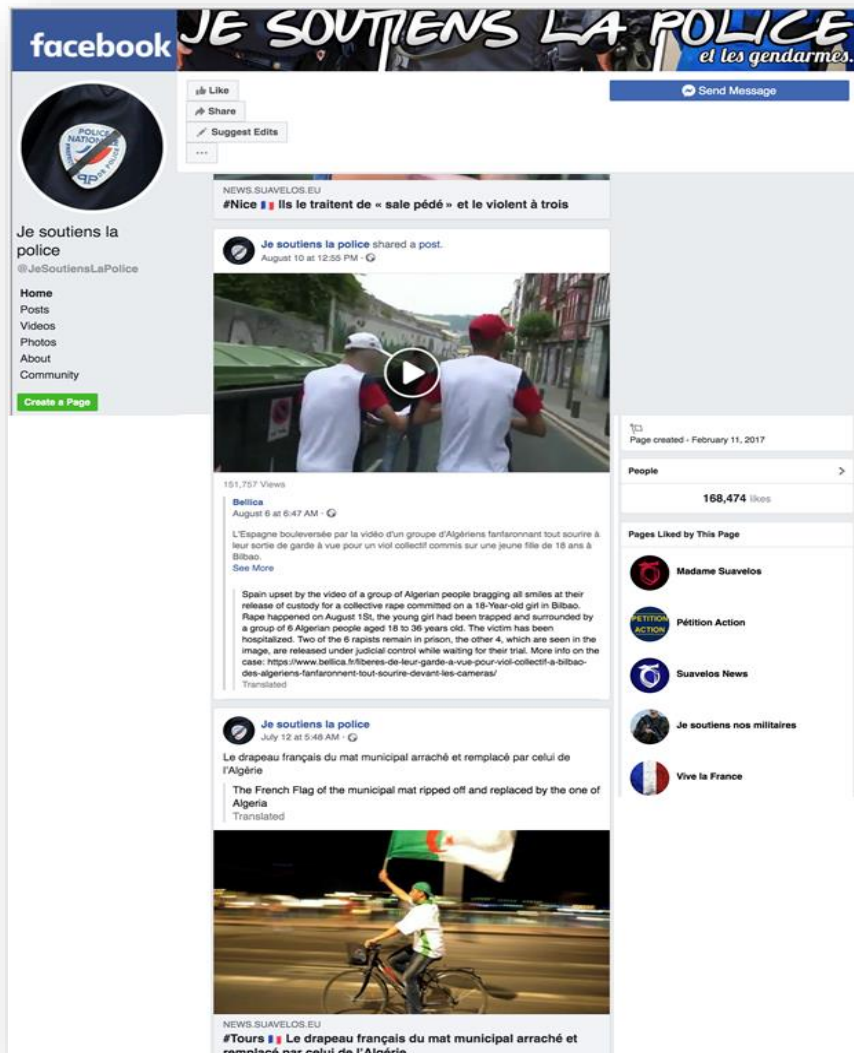
A Facebook page “I support the police” shared an article from a website called Suavelos about “the alleged murder of an Italian policeman by two Italian migrants near Vatican City.”

AFP Factuel, a French fact-checker, showed that the story was not true and that the policeman was in reality killed by two American tourists.

The disinformation item is used there to try to increase the fears related to migrants.

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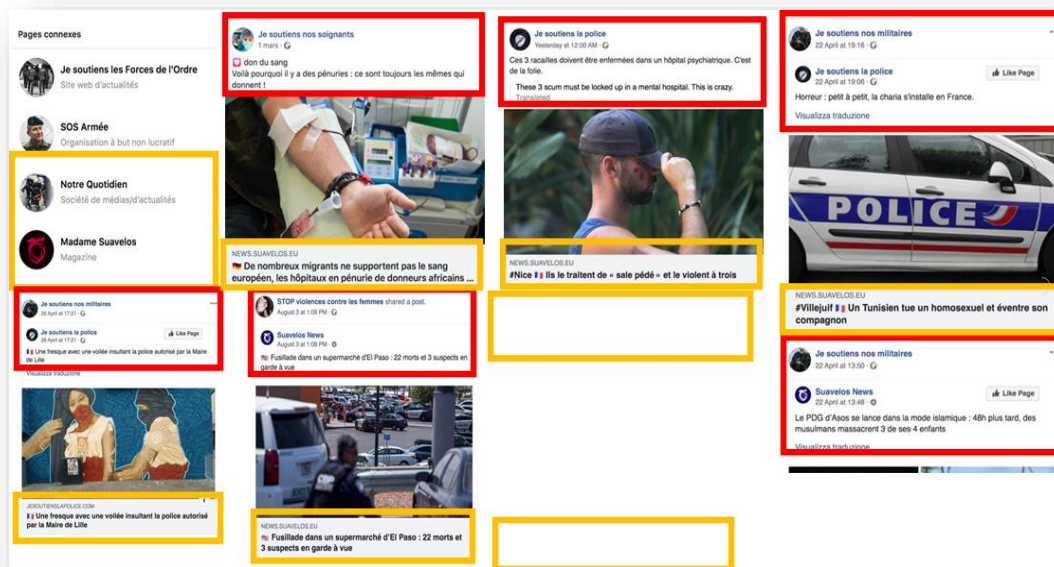
“I support the Police” Facebook Page:

- Created in 2017
- 172 000 fans on Facebook
- A name which can attract a large audience but can't allow us to clearly identify the owner of the Facebook Page
- Publishes content from two websites called Suavelos.eu or Bellica.fr
- Also republishes content from other Facebook pages called “I support”
- A lot of the content is linked to controversial issues (migration, violence, identity....)
- This page likes pages called Suavelos (Suavelos News, Madame Suavelos), another “I support” page and a page called “Vive La France”
- Website: Jesoutienslapolice.com

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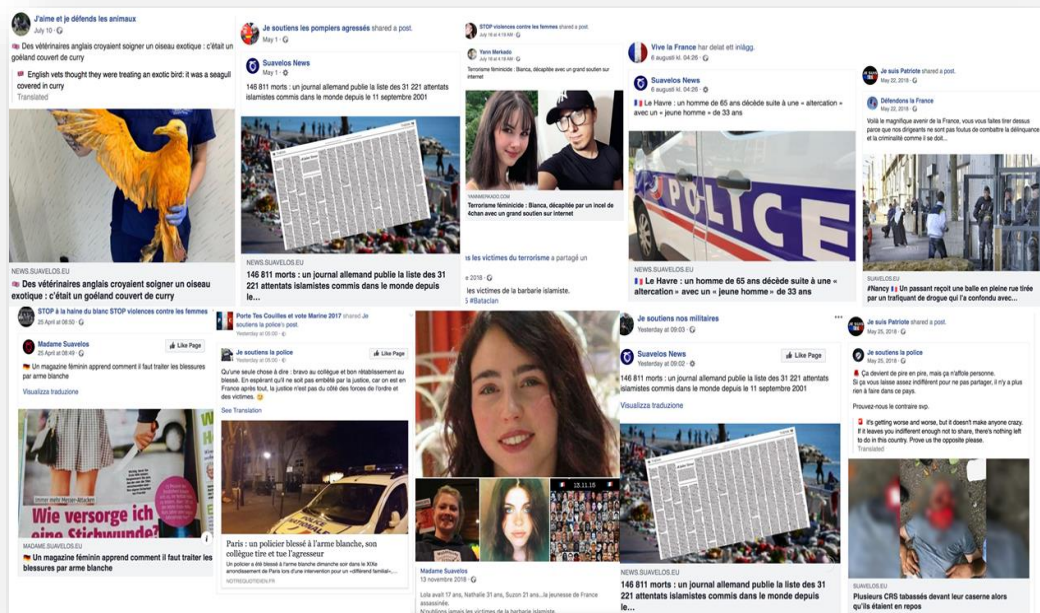
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What do you observe?



The screenshot shows a social media feed with several posts. Red boxes highlight posts such as 'Je soutiens nos militaires', 'Je soutiens la police', and 'Je soutiens nos militaires'. Yellow boxes highlight posts from 'NEWS.SUAVELOS.EU' with headlines like 'De nombreux migrants ne supportent pas le sang européen, les hôpitaux en pénurie de donneurs africains...', 'STOP violences contre les femmes shared a post.', and 'Furtille dans un supermarché d'El Paso : 22 morts et 3 suspects en garde à vue'. Other posts include 'Une fréquence avec une volée insultant la police autorisée par la Maire de Lille' and '#Villejuif # Un Tunisien tue un homosexuel et évince son compagnon'.

Cross-posting and algorithmic hijacking

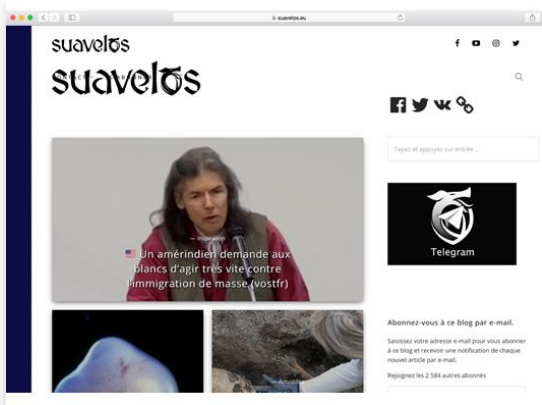


The screenshot displays a social media feed where the same post is repeated multiple times across different profiles. The post, shared by 'NEWS.SUAVELOS.EU', has the headline '146 811 morts : un journal allemand publie la liste des 31 221 attentats islamistes commis dans le monde depuis le 11 septembre 2001'. Other posts visible include 'Je soutiens les pompiers agressés shared a post.', 'Vive la France hier était est inlagg', 'Le Havre : un homme de 65 ans décède suite à une altercation avec un jeune homme de 33 ans', and 'Je soutiens nos militaires'. The repetition of the same post across different profiles illustrates the concept of cross-posting and algorithmic hijacking.



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What is Suavelos?



Les co-fondateurs de Suavelos sont Yann Merkado et Daniel Conversano.

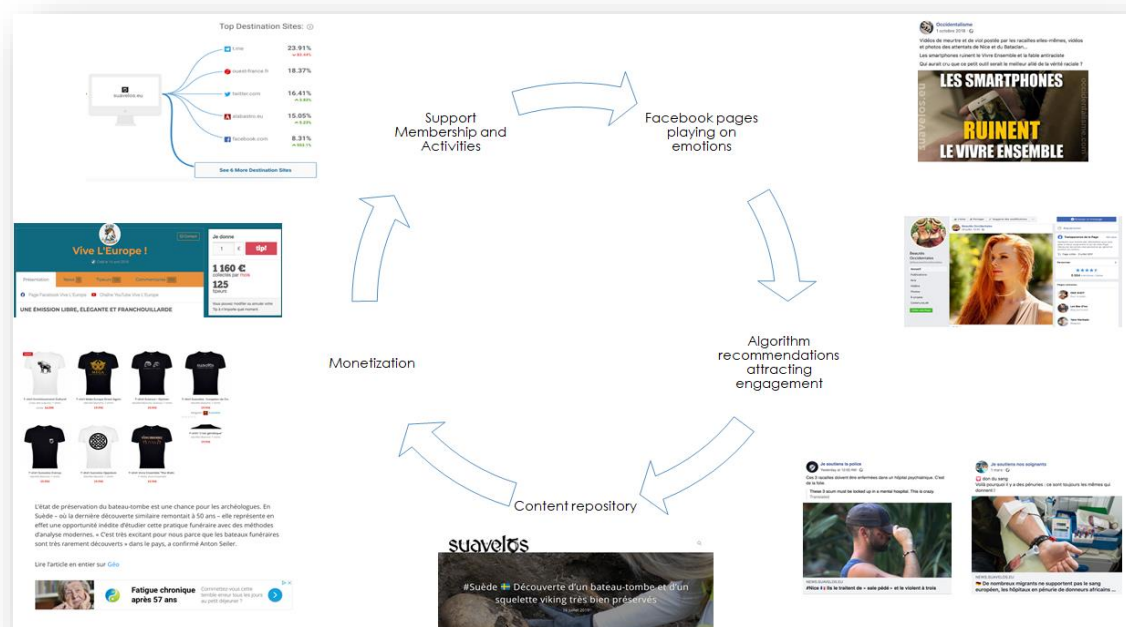



Le **nationalisme blanc** est une réclamation de l'héritage commun du monde blanc et de l'importance pour le blanc de se communautariser pour survivre, vivre mieux et s'adapter aux changements du monde. C'est la revendication que les blancs sont unis par une

Dans cette optique, nos objectifs sont clairs :

- Dénoncer le remplacement des blancs
- En finir avec la lose décliniste, la trahison défaitiste et les discours pompeux sur la décadence
- Dénoncer les faux alliés qui se servent du tremplin racial pour donner d'autres priorités que celle du nationalisme blanc
- Soigner l'ethnomasochisme blanc
- Combattre l'instinct d'ultracompetition entre blancs
- Réconcilier l'identité et la technologie
- Défendre le concept palpable d'Occident et l'honneur de l'Occident
- Répandre l'idée que les blancs ont le droit à une terre où ils sont en paix et chez eux
- Communautariser le blanc : lui donner le fond idéologique et les outils pratiques

The disinformation cycle



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SOURCES

- How to Spot when News is Fake:
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2017/599386/EPRS_ATA\(2017\)599386_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2017/599386/EPRS_ATA(2017)599386_EN.pdf)
- Facebook Transparency page:
https://www.facebook.com/help/323314944866264?helpref=about_content
- Crowdtangle: <https://www.crowdtangle.com/>
- InVid: <https://www.invid-project.eu/>
- EU DisinfoLab, list of tools to monitor disinformation
<https://www.disinfo.eu/resources/tools-to-monitor-disinformation>
- EU DisinfoLab list of initiatives tackling disinformation
<https://www.disinfo.eu/resources/initiatives-tacking-disinformation>
- AFP Factual: <https://factcheck.afp.com/>

FURTHER READING

- Facebook Discovers Fakes That Show Evolution of Disinformation
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/business/facebook-ai-generated-profiles.html>
- Evaluating News Sources: <https://libguides.utm.edu/newssources/evaluating>
- Claire Wardle (2017). 'Fake news, it's complicated':
<https://firstdraftnews.org/latest/fake-news-complicated/>
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- [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/624278/EPRS_STU\(2019\)624278_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/624278/EPRS_STU(2019)624278_EN.pdf)

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