

**RECLAIM Toolkit for  
Media Literacy**

# ***Facilitator's Guide***

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# SESSION

# 1

# SESSION 1

01

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## Reclaiming Liberal Democracy in the Postfactual Age

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

Introduce yourself

02

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## What is Media literacy for?

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Introducing the topic.

**Speaker notes:** Explain that in this session participants will learn about the crucial role that media literacy plays in today's fast-changing information landscape, reflecting on the core purpose of media literacy and its importance in empowering individuals to critically engage with media, navigate misinformation, and make informed decisions.

03

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## What is Media Literacy?

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** General introductory question to prompt reflection.

**Speaker notes:** Pose the question to the group: 'What is media literacy to you?' Take a few answers to encourage engagement. This prepares them for the following definition slides. Let them know there are many possible definitions, and that media literacy has evolved with the development of digital technology.

04

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## What is Media Literacy? (Aufderheide, 1993)

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Classic definition of media literacy

**Speaker notes:** Read and briefly unpack each word:

**Access:** Can people find and use media?

**Analyse:** Can they understand the meaning of the message?

**Evaluate:** Can they judge its accuracy or bias?

**Produce:** Can they create media themselves?

Emphasise this early definition helped shape how we think about media literacy today.



## What is Media Literacy? (NAMLE, 2023)

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Updated definition including action

**Speaker notes:** Explain how this definition adds a crucial component: ACT.

You may say: “Today, media literacy includes the ability to take informed action, and this reflects the participatory nature of digital media today”.

## What is Media Literacy? (Livingstone, 2022)

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Flexible definition reflecting participation.

**Speaker notes:** Quote Sonia Livingstone’s definition: ‘Whatever knowledge and skills one needs to understand and participate in the media ecosystem.’

Explain that this definition is open-ended, acknowledging how media and society constantly evolve, and for this reason the knowledge and skills needed to deal with the media ecosystem constantly change as well.

Invite discussion: ‘What knowledge and skills do you think are essential to navigate today’s media environment?’

**Facilitation Tips:** Invite discussion, clarify terms, and connect to participants’ real-world media experiences.

## Digital Media Literacy (DML)

**Estimated Duration:** 30 seconds

**Slide Summary:** Media literacy in digital environments

**Speaker notes:** Clarify that DML is a subset of media literacy focused on digital platforms like social media, messaging apps, and games.

You may say: “DML helps people participate responsibly and effectively in digital spaces, which are now where much of the media experiences happens.”

Emphasise how the world is increasingly digitally mediated.

## Mediated World

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Digitally mediated world.

**Speaker notes:** Explain how many of our everyday experiences and activities are mediated by digital technology, giving examples based on the topics on the slide. The phrase “the world is increasingly mediated” refers to how digital technology and media platforms play a growing role in how we access, share, and experience information. From streaming services and social media to news apps and video calls, media technologies connect people across distances and provide instant access to content. This shift means that much of our communication, learning, and entertainment now happens through digital channels. As media tools become more advanced and integrated into daily life, they shape how we interact with the world, making digital literacy and familiarity with media technologies more important than ever.

## Focus

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Clarifies that media literacy should focus on foundational and critical knowledge about media, and not on technology

**Speaker notes:** You may say “While tech skills matter, our focus is deeper — it’s about understanding how media works, how it influences our thinking, and how we can respond to it”.

Use the examples listed: disinformation, manipulation, hate speech, and cyberbullying (challenges); communication, learning, creativity, cooperation (opportunities).

Prompt participants: 'Which of these challenges or opportunities do you think is most urgent today?'

**Facilitation Tips:** Tailor discussion based on audience knowledge and interests. Use real-world examples where possible.

## Celebratory Approach

**Estimated Duration:** 1-2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Presents a positive, empowerment-focused lens on media literacy.

**Speaker notes:** The celebratory approach sees media as a powerful tool for empowerment, creativity, learning, and self-expression. It encourages audiences to appreciate the positive potential of media and to become enthusiastic, skilled producers and consumers of content.

Go through each of the guiding questions. Invite participants to share how they have used digital media creatively or for civic expression. This slide is a reminder that media is not just a threat — it can be a meaningful resource.

## Critical Approach

**Estimated Duration:** 1–2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** A contextual and reflective perspective encouraging analysis of power, representation, inequalities and bias

**Speaker notes:** The critical approach emphasises reflection and analysis, focusing on how media can reinforce power structures, stereotypes, and misinformation. It teaches audiences to question motivations, ownership, and underlying messages.

You can make some questions, such as:

- Have you seen a news story that reinforced a stereotype?
- How might a media company's funding influence what they report?

Reinforce that this approach helps people become empowered and informed citizens, instead of passive consumers.

**Facilitation Tips:** Tailor discussion based on audience knowledge and interests. Use real-world examples where possible.

**IMPORTANT: Both approaches are essential and complementary.**

## Media Literacy in Practice

**Estimated Duration:** 30 seconds

**Slide Summary:** Explores the uses of media literacy

**Speaker notes:** Moving from theory to practice, now it is time to explore some of the uses of media literacy in our everyday life.

## Media Literacy Framework

**Estimated Duration:** 30 seconds

**Slide Summary:** Introduces the NAMLE framework

**Speaker notes:** Explain that there are many media literacy frameworks out there, and in this session we are going to use the one developed by NAMLE, the National Association for Media Literacy Education in the US.

## Core Principles 1 and 2

**Estimated Duration:** 30 seconds

Read out the 2 core principles on the screen.

## Meaning Making Practices

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Introduces the concept of meaning-making practices with digital media

**Speaker notes:** These two core principles frame media literacy as a meaning-making practice in today's digital culture. First, it expands literacy to include the ability to understand, analyze, and create meaning across various media forms - texts, images, videos, and interactive content. In a digital world, being literate means navigating and interpreting complex media environments. Second, it envisions individuals as active participants who draw on their personal experiences, skills, and beliefs to interpret and create media. Rather than passively receiving information, people engage critically and creatively, shaping their understanding of the world through media. This approach values diverse perspectives in constructing meaning within digital culture.

## Multimodality

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Introduces the concept of multimodality

**Speaker notes:** Multimodality in media literacy refers to the use and interpretation of multiple modes of communication - such as text, images, sound, video, and colours - to create media messages. In today's digital culture, meaning is often made through a combination of these modes. In the slide, we use the example of the many ways in which you can represent a lion using different modes. Understanding this helps individuals critically analyse how different elements work together to convey messages, and how to effectively create content using various modes for clearer, more impactful communication.

## Core Principles 3 and 4

**Estimated Duration:** 30 seconds

Read out the 2 core principles on the screen.

## Critical Thinking

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** The importance of a critical approach within Media Literacy

**Speaker notes:** These principles highlight media literacy as an active, reflective process essential for navigating today's complex media environment. By promoting curiosity and critical inquiry, they support the analysis of media content and information, encouraging individuals to question sources, intentions, and accuracy. This is crucial in an era of content manipulation and disinformation, where false or misleading information is easily created and spread. Media literacy empowers learners to detect bias, identify misinformation, and understand how media can shape perceptions. It also provides tools to critically evaluate conspiracy theories, which often rely on emotional appeal rather than evidence. Encouraging open-minded reflection and logic-based thinking helps learners responsibly interpret, create, and share media, strengthening their role as informed participants in digital culture.

## Reliable Sources

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Emphasises evaluating the credibility of information sources

**Speaker notes:** Knowing where information comes from is crucial. A meme on Instagram is not the same as a report from a trusted news outlet. Offer a quick checklist: Is the source transparent, reputable, and independent?

Also, since all media messages are constructed through specific choices - such as visuals, language, and framing - they can also be deconstructed to reveal how meaning is created. Deconstruction involves analysing elements like purpose, audience, bias, and techniques used. By breaking down media messages, we uncover hidden assumptions, values, and intentions. This process empowers individuals to think critically, question the meanings presented, and better understand how media influences beliefs, behaviours, and perceptions of reality.

**Facilitation Tips:** Use real-world media examples and invite participant reflections to deepen engagement.

## Content Manipulation / Disinformation / Conspiracy Theories

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Explores real-world examples of false or misleading content

**Speaker notes:** Introduce common misinformation topics: QAnon, flat earth, vaccine conspiracies. Briefly explain that these theories spread through emotional triggers, repetition and closed-group sharing.

## Core Principles 5 and 6

**Estimated Duration:** 30 seconds

Read out the 2 core principles on the screen.

## Ongoing Skills-Building and Participation

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Explores the need for constant learning and participation

**Speaker notes:** These principles highlight media literacy as a continuous, developmental process essential for building informed, responsible participants in the digital world. By emphasizing the need for integrated, age-appropriate building of knowledge and skills, they recognize that media literacy must evolve with learners through interactive and cross-curricular opportunities. This supports not only technical and critical skills but also ethical engagement. At the same time, promoting a participatory media culture encourages individuals to reflect on the ethical implications of content creation and sharing. Navigating today's media requires more than passive consumption - it demands thoughtful participation.

## AI and New Knowledge

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Explores how AI brought new skills to be learned

**Speaker notes:** Explain that AI brings new opportunities and challenges (as shown on the slide), and this means that now we must acquire new knowledge and skills to deal with it. In Media Literacy, as technology evolves, we must be ready to keep learning.

## Everyday Experiences

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Acknowledges the importance of people's everyday experiences with digital media and the role of media in representing diverse identities.

**Speaker notes:** Explain the importance of people's real, everyday interactions with digital media and how these experiences shape identity and perception. Media are not neutral; they play a powerful role in constructing, reinforcing, or challenging representations of race, gender, culture, and other aspects of identity. By acknowledging the influence of media in daily life, this approach values the personal, social, and cultural contexts individuals bring to their media use. It also highlights the need for diverse and accurate representation, allowing people to see themselves reflected in meaningful ways.

## Threats in Digital Spaces

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Covers harmful online behaviours like hate speech and cyberbullying

**Speaker notes:** Explain that media literacy also means being aware of harmful behaviours and knowing how to respond - including reporting, blocking, or supporting others. You can use some real examples.

## Core Principles 7 and 8

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

Read out the 2 core principles on the screen.

## The Architecture of Media Power

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Understanding the systems, rights, and responsibilities that shape our digital media environment

**Speaker notes:** Media literacy includes understanding how business models shape the content we consume, including how advertising, engagement metrics, and algorithms influence cultural forms and narratives. It also involves awareness of data safety and privacy - how personal information is collected, stored, and used by platforms, often without full transparency. Lastly, media literacy must address responsibilities and accountabilities, encouraging citizens to participate in public consultations and demand regulation that protects democratic values. These elements emphasise that media literacy is not only about analysing content but also about engaging critically with the systems, policies, and power structures behind the media we use daily.

## Business Models and Platforms

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Discusses how platforms profit from engagement

**Speaker notes:** Many digital platforms are free to use because users themselves are the product. These platforms make money by capturing our attention and collecting data about our behaviour, preferences, and interactions. This data is then used to target us with personalized content and ads. The longer we stay online, the more data is gathered - turning our engagement into a powerful and profitable business model.

You may ask: 'What does it mean to pay with your data?'



## Cultural Forms

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Examines how digital platforms are not neutral platforms

**Speaker notes:** Digital platforms are not neutral tools; they are cultural forms that shape how we communicate, express identity, and understand the world. Their design, algorithms, and business models influence what we see, value, and believe. Platforms promote certain voices, behaviours, and norms while marginalizing others. Understanding them as cultural forces helps us critically examine how power, representation, and meaning are constructed and distributed in the digital public sphere.

## Regulation

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Briefly discusses policy and governance in media spaces

**Speaker notes:** Governments and organizations are trying to regulate digital platforms - but it's complicated. Regulating digital platforms is essential to protect privacy, ensure transparency, reduce harm, and uphold democratic values. It holds companies accountable for their impact on society, information, and individual rights.

Mention current debates about free speech, platform responsibility, and content moderation.

## Core Principles 9 and 10

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

Read out the 2 core principles on the screen.

## Media Industries and Activism

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Media industries and civic participation.

**Speaker notes:** These principles frame media literacy as both critical and civic. The first emphasises the need to question how media industries operate within power structures, shaping and reflecting issues like equity, inclusion, and sustainability. The second shifts focus to individual empowerment, encouraging people to be thoughtful, active participants in democratic life. Together, they position media literacy as a tool for understanding systemic influence and for fostering informed, socially responsible engagement in society.

## Media Ownership

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Explores who controls media companies and why it matters

**Speaker notes:** As an example, briefly discuss how media ownership may affect what we see and hear. Concentrated ownership may limit diverse viewpoints.

You may ask: 'Do you know who owns the platforms or news outlets you use most?'

## Empowerment, Engagement, Citizenship

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Summarises the goal of media literacy.

**Speaker notes:** Reinforce that media literacy is about participation - making people confident, thoughtful, and active in the digital world.

## Other Frameworks (DigComp)

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Links media literacy to other digital competence frameworks.

**Speaker notes:** Briefly explain that there are other media literacy frameworks, such as DigComp, the European Commission's framework for digital competence. It includes skills related to safety, communication, problem-solving, and content creation.

Point out that media literacy overlaps with many of these areas - especially critical evaluation and responsible online behaviour.

## Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Media literacy is a combination of these three dimensions

**Speaker notes:** Explain that as we have just seen, media literacy is a broad field of studies encompassing many different areas of studies and different knowledge, skills and attitudes (as shown on the slide). The idea from now on is to emphasize how comprehensive and complex the media literacy field is.

## Topics

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Overview of key content areas within media literacy

**Speaker notes:** Briefly go over the broad media literacy topics - from disinformation to understanding advertising and journalism standards.

Clarify that these are all key focus areas for media literacy education today.

## Subtopics – MIS/DISINFORMATION

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Examples of media literacy subtopics related to misinformation

**Speaker notes:** Taking mis/disinformation as an example, its subtopics show how detailed and specific media literacy can get. Each of these subtopics could be a full workshop.

## Areas of Knowledge

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Interdisciplinary nature of media literacy.

**Speaker notes:** Due to its broad and complex nature, media literacy draws from multiple fields -communication, education, psychology, technology.

## What Does It Mean to Be Media Literate?

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Wrap-up reflection on the goal of the session.

**Speaker notes:** Conclude with this reflective question. Ask: 'What does media literacy mean to you now, after this session?'

Encourage a few participants to share their opinions.

Explain that to be a media literate person means to actively and critically engage with media in all its forms - not just as a consumer, but as a participant in shaping public discourse. As we have seen, media literacy involves the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, and create media with awareness of its purpose, audience, and impact. It requires understanding that media messages are constructed, often with economic, political, or ideological intentions, and that they reflect and shape cultural values and power dynamics.

A media literate individual questions sources, recognizes bias and misinformation, and understands how algorithms, ownership structures, and business models influence content. They are aware of how media portray diverse identities and can identify issues of representation and exclusion. Being media literate also means reflecting on one's own media habits, emotions, and biases, and understanding how personal beliefs and behaviours influence what we see, share, and trust.

Ultimately, media literacy empowers people to engage in democratic life with responsibility and critical awareness. It fosters informed decision-making, respectful dialogue, and ethical participation in digital culture. In an era of disinformation and polarization, being media literate is essential not only for personal awareness, but also for protecting truth, inclusion, and democratic values.



**SESSION**

**2**

## SESSION 2

### 01

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## Reclaiming Liberal Democracy in the Postfactual Age

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

Introduce yourself

### 02

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## Understanding Misinformation through Media Literacy

**Estimated Duration:** 1-2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Introduces the session's goal: to understand misinformation through the lens of media literacy, and how it affects democracy

**Speaker notes:** This slide captures the purpose of today's session: we are going to examine misinformation not just as a problem, but through a solution-oriented framework: media literacy. Also, we are going to explore how it might affect democratic societies.

You may ask participants: "Why do you think misinformation is such a powerful force today?"

Build on their answers to show why the topic matters from the start.

### 03

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## Definition – Information Disorder

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Introduces the term "information disorder" to describe a polluted media ecosystem

**Speaker notes:** This is our first key term: information disorder. It describes an environment where false or misleading content pollutes the information space. Information disorder disrupts public trust and our ability to make decisions as informed citizens. It's not just an isolated incident, it's systemic."

You may ask: "Have you encountered information online that made you pause and question its veracity?"

## Definitions – Disinformation, Misinformation, Malinformation

**Estimated Duration:** 2–3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Defines the three core types of problematic information

**Speaker notes:** This is a foundational slide. It breaks down three terms you'll hear often:

- **Disinformation:** False info created intentionally to cause harm.
- **Misinformation:** False info shared without harmful intent.
- **Malinformation:** True information used maliciously to cause harm.”
- Understanding these categories helps us respond differently, based on intention and context.

Use can use real-world examples:

- **Disinformation:** Deepfake political video.
- **Misinformation:** False COVID medicine shared by a relative that was trying to help
- **Malinformation:** Leaked personal emails used to discredit someone.

You may encourage participants to come up with their own examples as well.

## Definition – Populism

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Defines populism based on Cas Mudde's political science framework

**Speaker notes:** Populism is the idea that society is split into two groups: 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite.' This definition comes from Cas Mudde, a leading scholar on the subject (you can use a different definition from another source in case you think it is more appropriate to your audience).

Populist leaders claim to represent the voice of the people and portray themselves as standing in opposition to a corrupt system, often using emotionally charged, binary language.

You may ask: "Have you recently seen this kind of rhetoric in political movements or leaders?"

Emphasise that populism can appear on both the left and right of the political spectrum.



## Definition – Post-Truth Politics

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Introduces the term “post-truth” and its political implications

**Speaker notes:** The term post-truth was Oxford Dictionaries’ Word of the Year in 2016. It describes a political culture where emotional appeal and personal belief often outweigh facts. In post-truth environments, rational arguments lose effectiveness because people stick to their beliefs even when faced with contradictory evidence.

**Facilitation Tips:** You may invite discussion on how social media might amplify this trend.

## 07

## Why ‘Post-Truth’ Was Word of the Year (2016)

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Reinforces the significance of the term “post-truth” by referencing the year it gained global recognition

Play the video that discusses “post-truth” as the word of the year in 2016 (you can select a different and more recent video if you want)

## 08-09

## Practical Activity – Statement Discussion

**Estimated Duration:** 15 - 20 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Group activity to reflect on the evolution of information access and control.

This activity should be done in groups of 3 or people.

**Speaker notes:** This activity encourages participants to reflect on how access to information has changed with the internet. Historically, information was controlled by few gatekeepers - governments, media, publishers. Today, anyone can create and share content. What are the main consequences of that?

Ask participants to read and discuss the statement provided in their groups.

- Read the statement and the guiding questions.
- Encourage open discussion, ensuring quieter voices are heard.
- Use a flipchart or board to capture emerging themes.

### DISCUSSION WITH PARTICIPANTS

Before the internet, information was controlled by centralized institutions like governments, media corporations, and universities. This control meant the public largely depended on newspapers, television, and books to learn about the world, with little opportunity to question or verify the information. While this model ensured a certain level of editorial oversight and reliability, it also limited diversity of perspectives and often reflected the interests or biases of those in power.

The rise of the internet significantly shifted this dynamic. It removed many of the traditional barriers to publishing and accessing information. Now, anyone with an internet connection can share their ideas, report events, or express opinions. This has led to greater democratization, allowing marginalized voices to be heard and offering more varied viewpoints on every topic. However, the absence of traditional gatekeepers also means there is less regulation and quality control, leading to challenges like misinformation, echo chambers, and the spread of conspiracy theories.

We expect participants to argue that while the internet has increased freedom and access, it has also made it harder to determine what information is trustworthy. Overall, this transformation reflects a trade-off between control and freedom, raising important questions about how societies navigate truth, credibility, and media literacy in the modern age.

This first activity serves as a warm-up for the lecture that follows. It is important to try to bring participants analysis during the activity into the discussions in the lecture. The lecture starts with slide 11.

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## Definition – Information Literacy

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Defines information literacy using the classic 1989 American Library Association (ALA) description

**Speaker notes:** This slide introduces information literacy, a foundational concept. According to the American Library Association, it's the ability to recognise when information is needed - and to locate, evaluate, and use that information effectively.

This skill is essential in every domain of life: education, work, health, and civic participation.

11

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## Media & Information Literacy

**Estimated Duration:** 30 seconds

**Slide Summary:** Transition slide introducing the next section focused on media and information literacy.

**Speaker notes:** This next section explores two intertwined literacies: media literacy and information literacy. Together, they provide the skills we need to navigate the modern media landscape. Many scholars and organizations, such as UNESCO, have been using the expression Media & Information Literacy (MIL). The incorporation of the word 'information' emphasizes the fact that we live in the information age, and for this reason new skills based on information literacy are needed to deal with the media ecosystem.

## Media vs. Information Literacy – Skills and Focus Areas

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Compares the focus of media literacy and information literacy.

**Speaker notes:** This slide clearly lays out the distinction and similarities between the two:

- Media literacy is about analysing, understanding, and producing media messages.
- Information literacy is about locating, evaluating, and ethically using information.

Both are crucial, and often overlap, especially in digital spaces. Go through each bullet point in the slide, pausing for comments.

You may ask: “Which of these skills do you already use in your everyday life? Which ones feel less familiar?”

## The Polluted Information Environment

**Estimated Duration:** 1–2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Reframes the modern media ecosystem as a polluted environment.

**Speaker notes:** Today’s information space is not just chaotic – it is polluted. This metaphor helps us understand how disinformation and manipulation do not just mislead individuals, they contaminate the public conversation. Just as we protect our natural environment, we need tools to clean and defend the media ecosystem.

You may ask: “What comes to mind when you hear the phrase ‘polluted information environment’?”

**IMPORTANT:** Explain that the following slides aim to explain that the concept of dis/misinformation is more nuanced than it seems. There are many different ways to manipulate information, and it is important to understand these nuances. For this reason, the following slides discuss ‘information manipulation’, a more generic term.

## Information Manipulation – Fabricated Content

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Defines and illustrates one form of information manipulation: fully fabricated content

**Speaker notes:** This is one of the most extreme forms of information manipulation: completely false content, made up from scratch. Often designed to deceive, stir outrage, or influence public opinion.

An example is a deepfake video of a politician saying something they never said.

## Information Manipulation – Imposter Content

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Covers impersonation tactics used to mislead, such as fake accounts mimicking real journalists

**Speaker notes:** This type of manipulation involves pretending to be a trusted source. For example, someone might create a fake Twitter account that mimics a well-known journalist, with profile photo and username that look real.

This can trick people into believing false information just because it appears to come from a credible voice.

## Information Manipulation – Manipulated/Doctored Content

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Discusses how real images or documents are altered to deceive.

**Speaker notes:** This form of manipulation uses real content, like photos, videos, or official documents, but alters them digitally. It is designed to look authentic while delivering a false message.

For example, protest signs might be edited in an image to say something completely different from what was actually written.

## Information Manipulation – False Context

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Explains how real content can be misleading when shared out of context

**Speaker notes:** This happens when real images, videos, or quotes are used in a misleading way - by pairing them with the wrong context. It's one of the most common forms of disinformation.

For instance, a photo from an old natural disaster might be shared during a new crisis to cause panic.

## Information Manipulation – Misleading Content

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Describes framing techniques like cherry-picking facts or writing clickbait headlines.

**Speaker notes:** This kind of content misleads by focusing on one side of a story. Sensationalist headlines, selective quotes, or exaggerations all fall under this.

Even mainstream outlets may occasionally do this to attract clicks or stir controversy.

You may ask: "What's the difference between misleading and outright falsehood?"

## Information Manipulation – Satire/Parody

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Looks at humorous or exaggerated content that is mistaken for real.

**Speaker notes:** Sometimes, content is meant to be a joke - like articles from The Onion or Waterford Whispers News. But when shared out of context, people might believe it's real news. This is unintentional misinformation - the creators were not trying to deceive, but the audience misunderstood the message.

**Facilitation Tips:** Remind participants that tone and context are key to recognising satire/parody.

## Information Manipulation – Conspiracy Theories

**Estimated Duration:** 2-3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Explains how conspiracy theories construct alternative realities by connecting unrelated events

**Speaker notes:** Conspiracy theories offer simplistic, secretive explanations for complex realities. They often claim that powerful groups are secretly coordinating events, and they resist all forms of counter-evidence.

An example is the QAnon conspiracy, which falsely connects a broad range of events to an imaginary elite plot.

## Information Integrity Spectrum

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Presents the range of information from reliable to harmful, offering a framework beyond the “real vs. fake” binary

**Speaker notes:** This spectrum helps us understand that not all misleading content is outright fake. There are shades - from satire to manipulated context to outright lies. Treating all misinformation as the same can prevent nuanced understanding.

Information integrity is about how trustworthy, complete, and ethically produced content is.

## Breaking the Fake News vs. Media Dichotomy

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Challenges the oversimplified view that media is either good or bad, real or fake.

**Speaker notes:** This slide draws from Julian McDougall’s work, which argues that fighting misinformation is not just about labelling true vs. false - it’s about being inquisitive and resilient.

Rather than teaching people what to think, we should help them become more critical, inquisitive consumers and producers of media.

**Facilitation Tips:** You may ask: “How can we encourage inquisitiveness, not just scepticism?”

## How Not to Solve the Problem

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Warns against treating misinformation as merely a technical issue that can be “fixed” with technical tools.

**Speaker notes:** This slide emphasises that misinformation is not just a tech issue with a quick fix. Social, cultural, and emotional factors play major roles. Thinking of this as only a digital problem misses the bigger picture: values, power, and systems.

You may ask: “Why might technical solutions alone be insufficient?”

## 24 ---

## Technical Solutions (Fact-checking, Search Tools, etc.)

**Estimated Duration:** 2–3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Introduces common digital tools used to combat misinformation

**Speaker notes:** Technical tools do help. Fact-checking sites like Snopes, search engines, and reverse image tools can be valuable in verifying information. However, even though these tools help users, they do not replace the need for a critical approach to media.

Demonstrate one tool live if possible (e.g., Google reverse image search).

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## Technical Solutions Are Not Enough

**Estimated Duration:** 1-2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** While useful, fact-checking and verification tools alone are not sufficient; we need habits grounded in critical thinking

**Speaker notes:** This slide makes a crucial point: verification tools and fact-checking are important, but not enough. Most of the time we consume digital media passively, as it is not possible to verify every post or headline we come across.

We need long-term critical habits: critical thinking, curiosity, and understanding of how media operates. This means applying concepts from media studies - like representation, narrative, and ideology - to our everyday media use.

You may ask: “What habits could help us navigate digital media more wisely, even when we are not fact-checking?”



## Threats to Information Integrity

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Explores the multifaceted threats to trustworthy information: technological, economic, and sociopolitical

**Speaker notes:** This slide maps out the major threats undermining the integrity of the information we consume:

- **Technological:** AI-generated content, algorithmic filters, easy manipulation tools.
- **Economic:** clickbait incentives, the collapse of sustainable journalism models.
- **Social/Political:** polarisation, tribalism, erosion of trust in institutions.

These dynamics are interconnected, and they all affect how people engage with facts and media.

## Media and Information Literacy – Knowledge and Skills

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Poses a key question: What knowledge and skills are needed to tackle disinformation?

**Speaker notes:** This slide sets up a transition. It asks: What do we actually need to know and do to fight disinformation?

We are about to explore practical knowledge and skills that participants can take away and use.

## Video – Representation

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Introduces a video resource to explain media representation.

**Speaker notes:** This short video explores the concept of representation - how people, ideas, and identities are shown in media. This affects how we see ourselves and others.

## Representation – What It Means

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Defines representation and explains how media constructs meaning

**Speaker notes:** This slide discusses representation, i.e., how cultures, identities, and experiences are depicted across media (TV, film, news, advertising, social media etc).

These representations shape our worldviews, consciously and unconsciously. Emphasise that one of the main concepts in media studies is that all media messages are constructed. They reflect choices, not a neutral reality.

## Knowledge and Skills – Editing and Media Narratives

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Introduces editing as a key literacy skill that shapes how stories are told and understood

**Speaker notes:** This slide explores how editing choices affect the way stories are constructed in media. It is not just about what's shown, but how it's shown - in what order, using what tone, and with what emphasis.

Media narratives are never neutral. Editing plays a key role in how meaning is created, and which perspectives are focused or silenced.

You may ask: "Have you ever seen a video clip where the editing changed your emotional response?"

## Knowledge and Skills – Media Production

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Advocates for hands-on media creation as a powerful learning tool

**Speaker notes:** This slide highlights why producing media, and not just analysing it, is crucial. By making videos, social posts, or articles, learners see how much intentional decision-making goes into every media message.

"As Buckingham (2003) and others argue, media production is highly engaging, creative, and effective in building critical skills."

## Knowledge and Skills – Critical Analysis Through Practice

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Making media helps learners recognise professional techniques and develop analytical skills

**Speaker notes:** Creating media helps learners better understand how editing, framing, and visual design shape meaning. Once they try it themselves, they are more likely to recognise manipulation or persuasion in professional media.

Media production builds confidence and insight - it bridges the gap between consumer and creator.”

## Knowledge and Skills – Content/Source Evaluation (Lateral Reading)

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Introduces lateral reading — a strategy used by fact-checkers to evaluate sources

**Speaker notes:** Lateral reading means opening new tabs to investigate a source, instead of staying within the page or article you are reading. Professional fact-checkers use this method all the time.

Rather than relying on the site itself to prove its credibility, you look at what others say about it.

**Facilitation Tips:** You may demonstrate live: Google the name of an unknown website and explore what others say.

## How Can You Know If a News Source Is Reliable? – Lateral reading in practice

**Estimated Duration:** 2–3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Encourages evaluation of the motivations and reputations behind media sources

**Speaker notes:** This slide emphasises questioning the origin of content. Who made it? Why? Are they credible? Use search engines to investigate the outlet: is it known for spreading false content? Who funds it? Is it parody or satire?

## How Can You Know If a News Source Is Reliable? – Journalistic Practices

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Highlights signs of trustworthy journalism - original reporting and professional standards

**Speaker notes:** This slide gives us concrete indicators of a reliable news outlet. Reliable sources do not just share opinions - they invest in professional journalists, original reporting, and careful editorial standards.

Look for detailed articles, attribution to reporters, and balance in how stories are told.

**Facilitation Tips:** You may ask: “What news sources do you trust and why?”

Consider discussing the difference between commentary vs. original investigative work.

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## How Can You Know If a News Source Is Reliable? – Ethics and Transparency

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Outlines journalistic ethics: independence, accountability, balance, transparency, and accuracy

**Speaker notes:** Reliable journalism follows certain ethical principles:

- **Independence:** no conflict of interest.
- **Fairness:** no biased framing.
- **Accountability:** correcting mistakes.
- **Transparency:** who owns and funds the outlet.
- **Accuracy:** checking facts before publication.

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## How Can You Know If a News Source Is Reliable? – Language Use

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Encourages evaluating the tone, language, and professionalism of news content

**Speaker notes:** Language is a key evidence. Reliable sources avoid emotional or sensationalist language. They are usually clear, professional, and avoid clickbait headlines or discriminatory language.

If a headline seems exaggerated or designed to provoke outrage, it may not be trustworthy.

## The Role of Emotion and Bias in Media Consumption

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Explores how our psychological traits affect media interpretation

**Speaker notes:** This slide shows that media consumption is not purely objective, but also emotional. Our identities, desires, fears, and biases all shape what we choose to believe.

To be truly media literate, we need to be aware of our own blind spots.

You may ask: “Can you recall a time when you wanted a piece of news to be true - even if it wasn’t?”

Remind participants that self-awareness about their own bias is a core media literacy skill.

## Taking a Critical (Not Cynical) Approach

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Advocates for healthy scepticism without falling into distrust or apathy.

**Speaker notes:** The goal is not to distrust everything (cynicism), it is to engage critically. We must avoid the binary of ‘mainstream media = lies’ and ‘alternative sources = truth.’

Democracy needs journalism, but it also needs citizens who question, verify, and reflect.

**Facilitation Tips:** You may ask: “What is the difference between being critical and being cynical?”

End by encouraging participants to build healthy media habits and priorities.



**SESSION**

**3**

## SESSION 3

01

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### Reclaiming Liberal Democracy in the Postfactual Age

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

Introduce yourself

02

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### Media Literacy for Democracy – Data, Information & Algorithms

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Frames the session's core themes - navigating data, information, and algorithms in media

**Speaker notes:** This slide frames our key question: in an era dominated by data and digital systems, how do we make sense of media? This is not just about consuming content, it is about understanding how digital platforms shape our experience online.

Today, we'll break down how these systems operate, how they affect us, and what tools media literacy can give us to remain empowered citizens.

03

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### Only 22 Years Ago... (David Buckingham)

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** References media education expert David Buckingham and the evolution of media literacy

**Speaker notes:** The book 'Media Education' by David Buckingham was launched in 2003 and it was a major reference in the field. In this book, Buckingham does not discuss disinformation or Artificial Intelligence, which are the 2 major topics in Media Literacy nowadays. This gives us an idea of how the evolution of digital technologies has changed the field in just 2 decades, and also shows us that it will continue to change over the next years with the evolution of AI.

Use this to highlight why a modern approach to media literacy must now include data, platforms, and AI.



## Up to Now... And in the Future.

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Reflects on how media engagement has looked in the past, and will look in the future

**Speaker notes:** These 2 slides aim at showing that the way we engage with media – especially digital media – is about to radically change because of Artificial Intelligence. Whereas we still use editing software to create videos, in the future we might do so with just a few prompts. How is this going to change the way we engage with media in general?

## Video Clip – “The Fake Mayor” by Karim Amer

**Estimated Duration:** 12 minutes

**Slide Summary:** A video clip illustrating real-world disinformation, involving AI / deepfake content

**Speaker notes:** We’re going to watch a short video that demonstrates how AI, manipulation, and false narratives can be used to influence public perception. This clip is called “The Fake Mayor by Karim Amer”.

Pay close attention to how the deception works and, more importantly, how it spreads.

After the video, ask: “What struck you most about the tactics used?”

Guide the group into recognizing the ease and scale of modern digital manipulation.

## Media Literacy in the Digital Age – Group Discussion

**Estimated Duration:** 20 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Promotes group reflection on how AI and digital media reshape media literacy

**Speaker notes:** The first slide is designed to open a conversation about how AI and new technologies are changing the media literacy landscape. David Buckingham’s earlier work reminds us that we need to constantly update our knowledge, skills, and attitudes. With this mind, given the emergence of AI and new digital media technologies, how do you think the Digital Ecosystem changes the Media Literacy field? What are the new knowledge, skills and attitudes required to deal with media in the digital age?

Divide participants into groups of 3 or 4.

Show participants the guiding questions on slides 8 and 9. These questions invite them to explore how platforms use personal data, persuasive design, and recommender systems to influence attention and shape behaviours. They also provoke reflection on privacy, surveillance, and personal freedom.

- Encourage open discussion, ensuring quieter voices are heard.

- Use a flipchart or board to capture emerging themes.

### DISCUSSION WITH PARTICIPANTS

After 20 minutes of group discussion guided by these prompts, participants are likely to come up with thoughtful reflections. They may begin by recognizing that AI and algorithm-driven platforms shape the digital ecosystem through personalization, data collection, and recommendation systems that influence what we see, believe, and share. Many will note that these systems are not neutral — they are designed to maximize engagement and profit, often at the cost of accuracy, privacy, and autonomy.

Participants might raise concerns about filter bubbles, persuasive design, and the amplification of misinformation, particularly when it aligns with emotional or ideological biases. Ethical issues, such as the commodification of personal data and lack of transparency in AI decision-making, are also likely to emerge.

In terms of media literacy, groups may identify new essential skills: understanding algorithms, recognizing manipulation, verifying information, and reflecting on their own digital habits. Some may question the impact of these dynamics on democracy - especially how they empower populist figures or threaten free will and informed citizenship.

This first activity serves as a warm-up for the lecture that follows. It is important to try to bring participants analysis during the activity into the discussions in the lecture. The lecture starts with slide 10.

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## Media Literacy in the Digital Age

**Estimated Duration:** 30 seconds

**Slide Summary:** Transitions into a new section exploring modern media literacy concepts and challenges

**Speaker notes:** This slide introduces the next section, where we will explore what media literacy looks like in the age of data and AI.

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## Media Literacy in the Digital Age (Section Title)

**Estimated Duration:** 30 seconds

**Slide Summary:** The importance of some definitions

**Speaker notes:** It is important to start this session with some definitions to make sure everyone is on the same page and follows the concepts that will be discussed during the lecture.

## Artificial Intelligence

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Defines AI as computer systems simulating human intelligence to perform complex tasks

**Speaker notes:** Artificial Intelligence refers to computer systems that perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as decision-making, learning, and problem-solving. It includes technologies like machine learning, deep learning, and natural language processing - all used to automate and personalise media content.

## Algorithms

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Describes algorithms as step-by-step instructions used by systems to process data and make decisions

**Speaker notes:** An algorithm is a set of rules or steps used to solve problems or perform tasks. In the digital media world, algorithms decide what content you see - from your social feed to your Netflix list. AI systems rely on complex algorithms to simulate human reasoning and shape your experience online.

**Facilitation Tips:** Use may use the analogy of a recipe: “Just as a cake recipe gives step-by-step instructions, algorithms give computers instructions for what to do with data.”

## Machine Learning

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Explains how systems learn from data to make predictions or decisions without explicit programming

**Speaker notes:** Machine learning is a branch of AI focused on teaching systems to learn from data. Instead of being manually programmed for every task, the system improves over time by identifying patterns. Media platforms use machine learning to personalise content, recommend videos, flag posts, and more.

## Generative AI

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Introduces generative AI - systems that can create original content like text, images, or music

**Speaker notes:** Generative AI refers to systems that can generate entirely new content based on training data. This includes tools like ChatGPT, DALL-E, and deepfake generators. These systems do not just organize information - they create it. That opens incredible possibilities, but also serious risks.

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## Attention Economy

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Introduces the attention economy as a system where human attention is treated as a valuable commodity

**Speaker notes:** The attention economy is the idea that human attention - your clicks, views, and scroll time - has value. In our digital age, media companies and platforms compete not just for money, but for your focus. Why? Because attention can be turned into advertising revenue, influence, and behavioural data.

Tech companies like social media platforms and streaming services generate profit by capturing and holding users' attention for as long as possible. Their business model relies on collecting user data to personalize content and target ads, making engagement more profitable. In this way, algorithms are designed to keep users scrolling, watching, or clicking. The longer users stay, the more data is collected, and the more ads are served to them, turning attention into revenue, and shaping how information is consumed online.

You may ask: "What's the last thing online that totally grabbed your attention — even when you didn't plan to engage with it?"

Or: "How do these platforms keep us coming back again and again?"

Emphasise how this model is not transparent, and how it often happens without informed consent.

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## Surveillance Capitalism

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Defines surveillance capitalism: data-driven behavioural predictions for profit and control

**Speaker notes:** Surveillance capitalism is a term popularized by Shoshana Zuboff. It describes how companies collect behavioural data from our clicks, searches, movements to predict and influence our future actions. This is not just about showing you better ads. It is about changing behaviour and guiding what you'll buy, believe, or even vote for.

## The Digital Media Ecosystem

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Outlines five structural features of the modern digital media ecosystem

**Speaker notes:** This slide summarises how the digital media world works today:

- **Business model:** Based on attention and ads.
- **Content:** Cheap and easy to create and spread.
- **Platforms:** Dominated by a few tech giants.
- **Metrics:** Driven by views, clicks, and shares.
- **Competition:** Fierce battle for attention.

This creates an ecosystem that favours viral, emotional, and sometimes misleading content, because that is what grabs more attention.

## Digital Platforms – Strategies to Grab Our Attention

**Estimated Duration:** 15 seconds

**Speaker notes:** Simply prompt the question: What strategies do digital platforms use to grab our attention?

## Source – Tactical Tech / The Glass Room

**Estimated Duration:** 5-7 minutes

**Slide Summary:** A video by Tactical tech showing the many strategies tech companies use to grab our attention.

**Speaker notes:** Play the video and take the opportunity to suggest that participants follow the work of Tactical Tech for more learning resources - <https://tacticaltech.org/>

Briefly discuss with participants the main strategies used to grab our attention from their own everyday media experiences.

## Quantity Over Quality

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Explains how content creators prioritize virality over depth

**Speaker notes:** This slide explains how many media organizations and other content creators use eye-catching, often sensational techniques to grab your attention. Think: shocking headlines, emotional language, and exaggerated visuals. The goal? Get you to click, share, comment - not necessarily to inform. This pressure for engagement affects not just social media but traditional journalism too.

You may ask: “Have you ever clicked something and then realized it wasn’t what you expected — or it felt misleading?”

You can also briefly discuss the term clickbait and how it distorts trust in media.

## Too much information

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Reflects on the constant overload of information

**Speaker notes:** This slide highlights the great volume of media messages we are exposed to daily - texts, tweets, videos, notifications, newsfeeds - all competing for our attention. The fact that media content can be easily created and disseminated means that the amount of information online is staggering, and it only continues to grow. We are constantly bombarded with information coming from many different sources. Other than the traditional media, such as TV, newspaper and radio, a lot of people are constantly connected to the internet accessing all types of content in different digital platforms and applications, such as social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok...), messaging apps (WhatsApp, Telegram...), search engines (Google, Yahoo...) and video-sharing platforms (YouTube, Vimeo...).

This overload makes it harder to pay attention, think critically or even notice what is happening behind the scenes.

## Less Attention = More Vulnerability

**Estimated Duration:** 3–4 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Explains how diminished attention makes individuals easier targets for misinformation

**Speaker notes:** As we have seen, amidst this ocean of information, digital platforms and media organizations want to grab your attention. When we are distracted or overwhelmed, we don’t have the capacity to properly evaluate information. That’s when we become vulnerable to disinformation, manipulation, and to reinforcing our own biases without realising it.

This slide outlines the dangers of reduced attention:

- We can't evaluate the media environment.
- We can't assess sources.
- We overlook our own biases.”

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## Media Literacy – AI and Media Literacy

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Introduces a focused segment on how AI intersects with media literacy practices

**Speaker notes:** Now that we have a better understanding of how the digital platforms operate and influence our media consumption and behaviour, this next section focuses on how AI intersects with media literacy. As we have seen, AI now mediates what content we see, when we see it, and even how it's framed.

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## AI in Everyday Life

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Lists real-life applications of AI - navigation, shopping, email - showing its integration in daily tasks

**Speaker notes:** Just go through the examples of applications and platforms that use AI and how they affect our everyday lives.

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## AI and Media Literacy

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Highlights the growing overlap between AI and media literacy.

**Speaker notes:** This slide shows that media literacy now requires understanding AI. These systems influence how information and media content in general are created, spread, and interpreted. Tools like deepfakes and AI-written articles challenge our ability to judge what is real. But at the same time, AI also helps with fact-checking, accessibility, and content personalization.

**Facilitation Tips:** Emphasise that the same technology can offer opportunities and challenges.

## AI in Media Literacy – Video

**Estimated Duration:** 4 minutes

**Slide Summary:** A video on generative AI and Media Literacy

**Speaker notes:** Play the UNESCO video about generative AI and Media Literacy

## Opportunities

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slides Summary:** Presents the positive potential of AI tools in democratising content production and breaking language barriers

**Speaker notes:** AI tools open new opportunities:

- Anyone can now create high-quality videos, articles, and visuals with simple prompts.
- Translation tools help people understand content across languages.
- Complex topics can be simplified using summarisation AI.
- Adaptive tools personalise lessons to a learner's pace and style.
- AI can help compare news sources, detect bias, and assist with fact-checking.

These are powerful ways to include more people in digital discourse - if used ethically. Used well, these tools can also make learners more empowered, not just more efficient.

## Challenges – Algorithmic Influence & Representation

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

**Slide Summary:** Explores how AI and algorithmic systems affect fairness, diversity, and access to information

**Speaker notes:** This slide lays out several challenges AI poses to democracy:

- **Filter bubbles:** personalisation may isolate users from diverse viewpoints.
- **Engagement-based curation:** recommendation systems may favour emotional or misleading content.
- **Hidden decisions:** we often don't know why we are seeing certain content.
- Additionally, AI systems can perpetuate bias or marginalise underrepresented communities due to the data they are trained on.



## AI and Representation – Video

**Estimated Duration:** 4-8 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Introduces a video on AI image bias

**Speaker notes:** This video explores how generative AI image tools can replicate - or worsen -existing social biases, including those related to race, gender, and power. Visual AI is not neutral - it's built on historical data that reflects inequality.

The video is 8 minutes long and, depending on your time, playing just the first 3 minutes will be enough to convey the message.

You may ask: “Have you noticed these kinds of biases in your experience online?”

## Challenges – Privacy, Data, and Authorship

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Identifies risks related to data collection, surveillance, AI authorship, and content authenticity

**Speaker notes:** This slide covers a wide range of ethical concerns:

- Platforms collect massive amounts of user data — often without full consent.
- Personalised content raises privacy issues and emotional manipulation.
- Overreliance on AI-generated content may reduce human creativity.
- AI tools challenge traditional concepts of authorship and originality.

## Challenges – Information Quality & Authenticity

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Highlights misinformation, deepfakes, and the limits of traditional verification systems

**Speaker notes:** We are entering an age where fake content can look incredibly real - whether it's a deepfake video or slightly distorted news. Traditional indications for credibility (design, tone, source logo) are no longer enough. And AI-generated content often lacks clear attribution.

You may ask: “How confident are you in telling real content from synthetic media?”

## Deepfakes – Video

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Features a video explaining how to detect deepfakes and AI-manipulated visuals.

**Speaker notes:** Play the video by New Scientist (or any other video on the same topic – there are plenty out there) about deepfakes and AI-generated images.

## Addressing the Challenges

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Ends the session by emphasising proactive responses to AI and digital media challenges.

**Speaker notes:** As we have seen, the digital ecosystem requires a new set of knowledge and skills to deal with both the opportunities and challenges posed by digital technology. In this context, AI literacy, algorithmic literacy, and data literacy have emerged as essential extensions of media literacy in today's digital society. Whether or not it is appropriate to call them 'literacies' is a big debate (some scholars will prefer the term 'competencies'), but the main point here is that as Artificial Intelligence increasingly shapes our media environment, learning about AI helps individuals understand how these systems work, what their limitations are, and how they influence decision-making, creativity, and public opinion. It encourages critical reflection on the role of AI in producing and curating information.

Algorithmic literacy goes hand in hand, focusing on how algorithms filter, recommend, and prioritise content. Understanding how algorithms shape what we see (and don't see) empowers users to question the neutrality of platforms and recognise the biases embedded in digital systems.

Data literacy is equally vital. It enables individuals to understand how personal data is collected, analysed, and monetised - and the implications this has for privacy, surveillance, and manipulation. It supports ethical awareness and informed choices about digital engagement.

Together, these literacies (or competencies) equip people to navigate a world where information is algorithmically curated, AI-assisted, and data-driven — fostering more reflective, autonomous, and responsible digital citizens.



**SESSION**

**4**

## SESSION 4

01

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### Reclaiming Liberal Democracy in the Postfactual Age

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

Introduce yourself

02

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### Who should we trust?

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Session outline and goals

**Speaker notes:** Walk participants through the structure of the session:

- Part 1: Why people believe false information and conspiracy theories
- Part 2: The importance of professional journalism.
- Part 3: Group activity

Set expectations that the session will be reflective and collaborative, and emphasise the participatory nature of the final exercise.

03

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### False Information

**Estimated Duration:** 5 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Focus question: Why do people believe in disinformation and conspiracy theories?

**Speaker notes:** Show some examples of disinformation on the slide, ask the main question and collect some answers from the participants. Ask them to give some real examples of people they know that fell for false information or conspiracy theories. This is a good warm up.

## We are all susceptible to disinformation

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Disinformation taps into our mental shortcuts and emotions

**Speaker notes:** Explain that evidence shows that people believe false or misleading information for a variety of contextual reasons rather than a single cause. Factors include emotional states like fear or anger, social influences such as group identity or peer pressure, and cognitive shortcuts like confirmation bias. Trust in institutions, media exposure, education levels, and even political or cultural contexts also play a role. People may accept disinformation not because they are uninformed, but because it aligns with their values, experiences, or sense of belonging. Understanding these diverse influences is essential for developing effective strategies to counter misinformation in different communities and social environments. And we are going to discuss this in more detail now.

## Attention

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Lack of attention

**Speaker notes:** Explain that attention-grabbing features like infinite scroll, autoplay, or sensational headlines are designed to keep users engaged, but they often do so at the cost of critical thinking. These design elements encourage fast, passive consumption of information, reducing the mental space needed for reflection or verification. When users are distracted or overwhelmed, they are more likely to process content superficially, relying on emotion or assumptions. This increases vulnerability to false or misleading information. Without focused attention, it becomes harder to distinguish credible sources from manipulative ones.

## Cognitive Capacity

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Speaker notes:** Explain that our ability to process information, reason, and make decisions is crucial for evaluating media critically. However, this cognitive capacity can be easily compromised by factors like fatigue, stress, anxiety, or information overload. When we are mentally or emotionally strained, we tend to rely more on intuition or emotion rather than careful analysis. This can lead to quicker judgments and a greater likelihood of believing false or misleading information. Reduced analytical thinking makes it harder to question sources, check facts, or detect bias. In today's fast-paced media environment, protecting our cognitive clarity is essential for resisting manipulation and making informed, responsible choices.

## Knowledge Repertoire

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** The importance of knowledge

**Speaker notes:** Explain that our level of knowledge on a subject significantly influences how we interpret information. When we lack accurate or sufficient understanding, we are more likely to accept false or misleading claims because we have no reliable basis for comparison. This knowledge gap can make us more trusting of superficial explanations or manipulated content. In contrast, well-informed individuals are better equipped to question, verify, and critically assess information, reducing the risk of being misled by misinformation or disinformation.

## Repetition and the Illusory Truth Effect

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Repeated information

**Speaker notes:** Explain that when we are repeatedly exposed to the same piece of false or misleading information, we become more likely to accept it as true - a phenomenon known as the “illusory truth effect.” Repetition increases familiarity, and familiarity is often mistaken for accuracy. This cognitive trait makes us more susceptible to believing falsehoods simply because we have seen or heard them multiple times, especially in fast-moving media environments. Over time, repeated misinformation can shape beliefs and influence public opinion.

## Biases

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** How our biases influence our perception

**Speaker notes:** Explain that studies suggest that humans are influenced by many different biases, which are basically mental shortcuts that help us process information quickly but can lead to flawed thinking. These biases affect how we perceive, remember, and interpret information, often without us realising it. While we like to believe that we think logically and objectively all the time, this is an illusion. Our brains are constantly influenced by unconscious patterns that shape how we perceive, recall, and interpret information. In the media landscape, biases like confirmation bias, availability bias, and the illusory truth effect can make us more vulnerable to misinformation.

Discuss with participants 2 biases that largely influence the way we understand and interpret information: confirmation bias and motivated reasoning. Ask them to give real examples of situations where they were deceived by false information because of one of these biases.

## Conspiracy Theories - Psychological Factors

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Psychological traits that influence the belief in CT

**Speaker notes:** Focusing more specifically on conspiracy theories, there have been many studies recently in different areas of knowledge examining the main factors that make people believe in such theories. Here we are going to discuss the psychological, social and technological factors. In relation to the first one, these studies suggest that conspiracy theories appeal to psychological needs by offering a sense of control in uncertain situations. When events feel chaotic or unexplainable, people may turn to simplified narratives that suggest hidden causes or secret plots. This illusion of control makes the world feel more predictable. Additionally, these explanations offer psychological relief by reducing anxiety and uncertainty, as they are easier to accept than complex, messy realities. Finally, our brains are wired for pattern recognition, a survival mechanism that helps us make sense of the world. But this can backfire, leading us to see patterns or connections where they do not actually exist. These cognitive tendencies make people more vulnerable to misinformation, especially in times of crisis, stress, or social upheaval.

## Conspiracy Theories - Social Factors

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Social factors that influence the belief in CT

**Speaker notes:** Explain that conspiracy theories often succeed because they fulfill deep social and emotional needs. Group identity is reinforced when people find belonging in communities of like-minded individuals who share the same beliefs. These connections can feel powerful and personal. Social validation further reinforces belief, as agreeing with others provides a sense of purpose and reassurance. Additionally, the idea of status and exclusivity - that only a few people “know the truth” - can create a sense of superiority. Together, these factors make conspiracy theories emotionally rewarding and socially reinforcing, making them difficult to challenge with logic or evidence alone.

## Conspiracy Theories - Technology Factors

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** How to talk to someone who believes in disinformation

**Speaker notes:** Explain the technology plays a major role in shaping how we receive and believe in information. Filter bubbles, for example, show users content that aligns with their existing views, reinforcing beliefs and limiting exposure to diverse perspectives. At the same time, lack of trust in traditional media and institutions weakens the public’s ability to identify credible sources. Additionally, platforms prioritise virality over accuracy - sensational or misleading content spreads more rapidly than factual news, due to its emotional appeal. These factors distort public understanding and make it harder for people to critically assess the reliability of the information they consume.



## How to talk to people who believe in conspiracy theories?

**Estimated Duration:** 3-4 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Strategies to discuss conspiracy theories

**Speaker notes:** Explain that talking to someone who believes in conspiracy theories requires patience, empathy, and strategy. Avoid direct confrontation or ridicule, as this often causes the backfire effect, strengthening their beliefs instead of weakening them. Instead, approach with an open mind. Listen carefully, show respect, and find shared values to build trust. This foundation opens space for meaningful dialogue. Introduce counterpoints gradually, asking thoughtful questions about inconsistencies or contradictions in their arguments. Rather than forcing facts, help them reflect on alternative explanations. Encourage a critical exploration of sources by suggesting they engage with a variety of perspectives, including those aligned with their views, but using the same critical lens they use for sources they disagree with. The goal should not be to “win” the debate, but rather to foster reflection and curiosity.

And remember: changing beliefs takes time, and it begins with respectful, open, and nonjudgmental communication.

15- 17

## Biases

**Estimated Duration:** 6 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Introduces pre-bunking as a proactive media literacy strategy

**Speaker notes:** You can start by connecting to the previous session: “We explored why people fall for false or misleading information - including emotion, stress, and social influence. Now, let’s shift to what we can do about it.”

Introduce pre-bunking: This approach is based on inoculation theory, which suggests that, just like vaccines, pre-exposure to a diluted dose of disinformation can stimulate mental defenses, enabling individuals to recognize and resist false information when confronted with it later.

Educational interventions using this approach aim to teach people to recognize common manipulation tactics and rhetorical techniques before encountering them. They focus on the methods of deception rather than just specific content.

If you can, open the browser and to the Bad News game website, a game based on the pre-bunking concept. Briefly show students how the game works.



## Who should we trust?

**Estimated Duration:** 4-5 minutes

**Slide Summary:** In a world full of false and misleading information, how do we choose what - and who - to believe?

**Speaker notes:** Facilitate a quick group brainstorm: where do you most often see news, stories, or viral content? Write responses: messaging apps, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, newspapers, TV, etc. Then ask: “What influences your trust in these sources?” Discuss how different platforms serve different roles - private conversation, entertainment, or news. Acknowledge that many people mix multiple sources, and some are more easily manipulated or misleading than others.

Emphasise: trust is built not just on content, but also on intent, structure, and accountability.

## No Perfect Source... But Some Are Better

**Estimated Duration:** 2 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Discusses imperfection vs. reliability and introduces journalism as a more trustworthy model.

**Speaker notes:** Explain that every source has limitations. Even reliable journalists make mistakes and there is no source that is 100% neutral, especially in relation to political and ideological leanings. However, not all sources are equal. Messaging apps and social media allow anyone to post (almost) anything - often without context, evidence, or accountability. In contrast, journalism involves verification, editorial oversight, and professional ethics. It is not flawless, but it is more transparent and self-correcting. Encourage participants to be sceptical without becoming cynical.

Ask: “What would you rather trust - a picture you received on WhatsApp or a source that shows its work?”

## Why Journalism Still Matters for Democracy

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Professional journalism offers a more structured, transparent process to help the public understand the world.

**Speaker notes:** Reinforce why journalism remains a critical pillar in a chaotic media environment. Professional journalists:

- Investigate, fact-check, and seek diverse sources
- Are trained to verify before publishing
- Are accountable to editorial standards and public criticism
- Work under regulations (in most cases)

Contrast this with influencers, anonymous accounts, or unverified viral content.

Add: “Journalism helps us think beyond our own bubble.” Invite participants to share which outlets they trust, and why.

## Choosing Better, Every Day

**Estimated Duration:** 7 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Encourage ongoing habits of critical thinking, transparency-seeking, and curiosity

**Speaker notes:** Encourage participants to ask key questions about sources: Who is behind it? Is evidence provided? Are multiple perspectives considered? Is the outlet transparent about errors? Mention the importance of media pluralism - using multiple reputable sources, not just one. Share that building trust in journalism means learning to recognise strong reporting and distinguishing between occasional bias and deliberate manipulation or misleading. Encourage curiosity with a critical eye. Remind them: “Every scroll is a choice. Let’s choose better, more often.”

However, what do we do if we are faced with a very complex or important issue and don’t know in whom we should trust? We need to act as investigators.

Introduce participants to SIFT, a simple but effective strategy developed by digital literacy expert Mike Caulfield to help people quickly evaluate online information. It stands for: Stop; Investigate the source; Find better coverage; Trace claims to the original context. This is based on the concept of lateral reading that we discussed in session 2.

The idea is to pause before reacting or sharing, and ask key questions: Who created this? Are they trustworthy? Can I find the same information from a more credible source? SIFT encourages users to leave the original post or website and check what others say about it. This approach helps avoid falling for misinformation or emotionally manipulative content. In a fast-paced digital world, SIFT offers a practical, fast way to slow down and make smarter decisions online.

## Practical Activity

**Estimated Duration:** 30 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Group work - In small groups, participants compare content from different platforms using a source-evaluation checklist.

**Speaker notes:** Explain the activity: give each group 3 pieces of content about the same topic. For example, one viral WhatsApp message, one social media post, and one news article. Provide a short reliability checklist (source cited? evidence? emotional tone? transparency? motive?). Ask groups to assess and rank the sources from least to most trustworthy, and explain their reasoning.

After 20–25 min, each group presents briefly. Debrief by reinforcing practical skills learned: asking questions, identifying tactics, using lateral reading, and choosing curated information.

It is expected that participants will choose the news article as the most trustworthy. However, in case they do not like the news media outlet for some reason, some participants may raise questions about trusting the news report. In this case, you can ask them to check other news outlets discussing the same topic and compare the content. This will generate more discussion and you will have remind them that there is no 100% neutrality in news reporting, but even if you don't agree 100% with a news publication, their standards are often more reliable than what you see on social media or messaging apps.



**SESSION**

**5**

## SESSION 5

01

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### Reclaiming Liberal Democracy in the Postfactual Age

**Estimated Duration:** 1 minute

Introduce yourself

02

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### Critical Thinking for Democracy: Harnessing the Power of Media Literacy

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Introduces media literacy as a vital skill for democratic participation and resisting misinformation

**Speaker notes:** Begin by framing media literacy as a democratic tool. Emphasize that in today's media-saturated environment, the ability to think critically is essential for resisting misinformation and engaging in public life responsibly. In democratic societies, citizens must evaluate sources, question narratives, and make sense of conflicting information. This is not just a media issue - it's a civic one. Media literacy gives people the power to detect bias, demand accountability, and contribute to more informed, respectful public discourse.

You may Invite participants to reflect: "how does critical thinking support a healthy democracy?"

02

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### The Post-Truth Challenge to Democracy

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Explores how emotional manipulation and personal belief are undermining fact-based democratic dialogue

**Speaker notes:** Begin by asking: "What happens when facts no longer matter?" In a post-truth environment, emotional appeal and personal belief often outweigh objective evidence. This threatens democracy, which relies on a shared factual reality for decision-making. If citizens can't agree on basic truths, it becomes almost impossible to debate policy, hold leaders accountable, or reach consensus. Explain that this erosion of shared reality is not accidental – it is often exploited by bad actors. Media literacy, then, becomes a civic defence: it helps people navigate complexity, detect manipulation, and re-centre truth in public life.

## Populist Communication Strategies

**Estimated Duration:** 4 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Explains how populist messaging simplifies issues and fuels division to undermine democratic dialogue

**Speaker notes:** Introduce this slide by reminding participants how post-truth dynamics thrive on emotion over evidence. Populist communication often relies on oversimplifying complex issues into simple binaries - good vs. evil, us vs. them etc. These strategies reject nuance and undermine rational debate. Emotional appeals, especially fear and anger, bypass critical thinking. Emphasise the role of “alternative facts” in building parallel information ecosystems that reinforce group identity and reject mainstream expertise. Ask participants:

You may ask participants: “Have you seen these strategies in recent political or media discourse?”

Help them connect these techniques to broader patterns of misinformation and manipulation.

## The Democratic Stakes

**Estimated Duration:** 4 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Outlines how misinformation undermines democratic institutions, trust, and social cohesion

**Speaker notes:** This slide highlights what’s truly at risk when disinformation spreads unchecked. Begin with electoral integrity: if people vote based on lies or distorted facts, the legitimacy of democratic outcomes is compromised. Then move to institutional trust - explain how widespread misinformation erodes public confidence in courts, elections, media, and science. Finally, discuss social unity. Ask participants: “What happens when we no longer agree on basic facts?” Radical polarization makes dialogue difficult and cooperation nearly impossible. Emphasise that defending democracy today means defending our shared information space.

## Examples of Consequences of Misinformation

**Estimated Duration:** 4 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Examples of problems caused by false information and conspiracy theories around the world

**Speaker notes:** Briefly discuss with participants recent events involving the spread of disinformation and conspiracy theories (you don’t need to necessarily show the examples on the slide; you can pick your own ones). Slide 6 shows what happened after the election in the US, Brazil and Romania; slide 7 shows how false or misleading information about vaccines can have a negative impact in different parts of the world.

## The Media Ecosystem

**Estimated Duration:** 5 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Remind participants how algorithms, media ownership, and content dynamics shape the flow of information

**Speaker notes:** Remind participants about what we have discussed during the programme in relation to the media environment how it is shaped by several powerful factors. First, platform dynamics: social media and digital platforms are driven by the attention economy, prioritising engagement over accuracy. Algorithms often amplify content that triggers emotional responses, regardless of its truth. Second, media ownership matters - when a few powerful companies control much of the media, it can influence narratives, priorities, and access. Third, false information has a lifecycle: it often emerges on fringe platforms, spreads rapidly through social media, and sometimes reaches mainstream outlets. Understanding how these forces work together helps participants become more critical, informed media consumers who can navigate this complex system more thoughtfully.

## Core Media Literacy Skills

**Estimated Duration:** 5 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Discuss essential media literacy competencies for navigating misinformation

**Speaker notes:** This slide focuses on practical media literacy skills. Start with source evaluation, and the importance of assessing credibility by considering the author, evidence, and intent. Next is content analysis – how to spot bias, emotional manipulation, and logical fallacies, all of which weaken credibility. Lastly, cover fact-checking, emphasizing the importance of consulting multiple sources, using techniques like lateral reading. These core skills empower people not just to detect false or misleading information, but to build healthier, more informed media habits.

## Understanding Ourselves

**Estimated Duration:** 4 minutes

**Slide Summary:** How our internal responses affect how we consume and evaluate media

**Speaker notes:** This slide turns the focus inward. It emphasizes that media literacy is not only about understanding external content, but also about understanding our internal responses. Remind participants about our biases, particularly confirmation bias, and how our brain seeks information that aligns with what we already believe. Then address online behaviour: how digital platforms impact our attention span, focus, and capacity for reflection. Stress that knowing our weaknesses helps build stronger defences. Ask the group: Self-awareness is crucial for developing the critical distance needed to resist manipulation and misinformation.



## Civic Media Literacy

**Estimated Duration:** 4 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Emphasises integrating media literacy with civic engagement for the common good

**Speaker notes:** This slide introduces civic media literacy, which expands the idea of media literacy beyond personal awareness toward collective impact. Explain that this approach includes both critically analysing media and intentionally using media to participate in civic life - whether by voting, advocating, organizing, or sharing information responsibly. Civic media literacy encourages learners to ask: “How can I use what I know about media to contribute to society?” This transforms media literacy from a defensive skill into a tool for empowerment and public good.

You may invite participants to reflect on how they currently use media in civic spaces and what more they could do.

## Civic Media Literacy (Continued)

**Estimated Duration:** 4 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Presents five principles that define civic media literacy as a foundation for democratic engagement

**Speaker notes:** This slide deepens the concept of civic media literacy by outlining five core principles. Start with agency - empowering individuals to engage and contribute through media. Then highlight caring - empathy as a motivator for civic action. Critical consciousness involves awareness of social and political systems and the ability to challenge injustice. Persistence emphasizes long-term commitment, even when change is slow. Finally, emancipation means using media to free ourselves from manipulation and oppressive structures. Together, these traits position media literacy as a tool for social transformation and democratic renewal.

## Civic Media Literacy (Continued)

**Estimated Duration:** 3 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Reframes media literacy as a dynamic, community-centred and democratic practice

**Speaker notes:** This slide continues the conversation on civic media literacy by emphasizing its social and political dimensions. Begin by stating that media literacy isn't static—it's a dynamic, evolving practice shaped by real-world contexts. It's not just about protecting ourselves as individuals, but also about strengthening communities. Media literacy should help us build shared understanding, foster trust, and enhance participation in democratic life. Stress that the goal is not only to sharpen skills, but to use them for collective benefit. Encourage participants to think of media literacy as a public good that strengthens democracy from the ground up.



## Civic Media Literacy (Continued)

**Estimated Duration:** 5 minutes

**Slide Summary:** Highlights the broader democratic goals that civic media literacy supports

**Speaker notes:** This slide shifts the focus to how civic media literacy benefits democratic systems. Start with collective immunity - a well-informed public is more resilient against manipulation and disinformation. Then emphasize the importance of institutional support - democratic systems rely on strong, independent journalism and trusted institutions. Highlight dialogue - the ability to have constructive conversations across differences is essential for social cohesion. Next, life-long learning frames media literacy as an ongoing civic responsibility. Finally, democratic culture - media literacy nurtures values like evidence, diversity, and equity. Encourage participants to consider how these goals relate to their own communities.

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## Final Activity

**Estimated Duration:** 1 hour

**Speaker notes:** In this final activity, participants will use everything they learned during the programme to design either a media literacy educational activity or a policy proposal aimed at strengthening media literacy. Just follows the steps on the slides.



## About RECLAIM

RECLAIM is a three-year research project (2022-2025) funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe program. Consisting of a consortium of researchers from thirteen partner universities around Europe, the RECLAIM project addresses the implications of the challenge of post-truth politics for the future of liberal democracy in Europe, in order to (a) produce theoretically and empirically robust visions for the future of liberal democratic institutions, (b) to reflect on the meaning of liberal democracy in the 21st century in Europe and, (c) to develop recommendations, toolkits, narratives and methodologies to reinstate the legitimacy and effectiveness of liberal democracies.

## About TEPSA

The Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA) was established in 1974 as the first transnational research network in the field of EU affairs. It comprises leading research institutes throughout Europe, with an office in Brussels. Its aim is to provide high-quality research on European integration to stimulate discussion on policies and political options for Europe. This is achieved by the interaction between the European and national institutions as well as the academic and research community. TEPSA is active on a wide range of research topics, focusing on differentiated integration, the EU's external relations, democratic participation and citizens' engagement.