RECLAIM Toolkit for Media Literacy

Teaching Module

Prepared By :
Ricardo Castellini da Silva

INTRODUCTION

Critical media literacy is essential for protecting democratic values as it empowers individuals to analyse, question, and evaluate the media they consume. In democratic societies, informed citizens are vital for making thoughtful decisions, holding leaders accountable, and engaging in meaningful public discourse. The media plays a major role in shaping opinions and, without critical thinking, people are vulnerable to misinformation, propaganda, and manipulation.

Digital platforms increasingly become the main sources of news and, at the same time, false information spreads quickly, undermining trust in institutions and polarising communities. In this sense, critical media literacy helps individuals discern credible sources, detect bias (including their own), and understand the motivations behind different media messages. This awareness fosters transparency, encourages civic participation, and strengthens public dialogue based on facts rather than fear or deception.

Furthermore, media literacy has the potential to promote inclusion and empathy by encouraging the examination of whose voices are represented or silenced in media narratives. It challenges dominant ideologies and helps uncover systemic inequalities, contributing to a more just and equitable society.

In today's digital world, promoting critical engagement with media is a collective responsibility. To support this, the RECLAIM Toolkit offers ready-to-use resources for educators, facilitators, librarians, and community leaders who want to lead conversations around media literacy. It is designed as a practical, accessible tool to help people deliver a media literacy training inspired by the RECLAIM Skills Training Lab combining lectures, interactive activities, and group discussions.

By empowering facilitators to share these tools within their communities, this initiative aims to build a network of informed, resilient individuals. The goal is to strengthen society's ability to confront disinformation, promote truth, and support democratic dialogue in an increasingly complex media environment.

Dr Ricardo Castellini da Silva
Media Literacy Educator and Consultant

How to use this resource

This toolkit includes slides, notes and extra resources for a media literacy programme comprised of five structured sessions, featuring a blend of theoretical and practical components. It also includes a pedagogical framework and learning outcomes, outlining the educational approach and rationale behind the learning experience.

We encourage facilitators to follow the suggested format for a more meaningful experience. This means running all the five sessions in the proposed sequence, keeping the structure and content the way it is:

- Recognise and differentiate key media literacy frameworks and core principles, including critical and celebratory approaches.
- Identify and reflect on the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for navigating media content responsibly.
- Understand the complexity of the media literacy field and the many areas involved.
- Reflect on what it means to be media literate and the lifelong learning process involved in it.

Session 1
What is Media Literacy for?

Estimated Duration: 50 minutes

Session 2
Understanding Misinformation through Media Literacy

Estimated Duration: 90 minutes

This session introduces media literacy and explores the complexity of the field, showing its relation with different areas of studies. The session emphasises both critical and celebratory approaches to media, exploring through a media literacy framework the different knowledge and skills needed to navigate the increasingly complex media ecosystem. Facilitated by interactive discussions, it reflects on what it means to be media literate in today's mediated world.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Define media literacy and explain its relevance in today's digitally mediated society.

This session explores how misinformation affects democratic societies and how media literacy can be a strategic response. Participants examine the concepts of information disorder, disinformation, post-truth politics, and populism. Through definitions, theoretical frameworks, and practical group activities, they critically explore the polluted information environment and its impact on civic trust and institutional integrity. The session also introduces types of information manipulation and equips participants with conceptual and practical tools, including lateral reading, representation analysis, and source evaluation, to counter the spread of misleading information and become more

resilient, informed participants in democratic discourse.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Explain key terms such as misinformation, disinformation, malinformation, populism, and post-truth, and analyse their impact on democratic values.
- Identify and evaluate various forms of information manipulation, including fabricated, doctored, imposter, and misleading content.
- Understand the concept of a polluted information environment and describe its effects on trust, polarisation, and civic engagement.
- Apply practical media literacy tools, including lateral reading and source analysis, to assess the credibility of media messages.
- Reflect on the importance of ethical, critical media habits and differentiate between being critical and being cynical toward media content.

Session 3
Media Literacy in the Digital Age

Estimated Duration: 90 minutes

This session explores the powerful intersection of media literacy, artificial intelligence (AI), and digital platforms. Participants examine how AI, algorithms, and data-driven technologies shape media consumption, influence public opinion, and challenge democratic participation. Through videos, lectures, and group discussions, the session highlights the attention economy, surveillance capitalism, deepfakes, and the ethical implications of algorithmic curation. Participants also consider the benefits and limitations of AI in media contexts. The workshop introduces the emerging literacies - AI literacy, algorithmic literacy, and data literacy - as essential tools for informed and autonomous digital citizenship in today's media landscape.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe how AI, algorithms, and data systems shape media content, personalisation, and user behaviour in digital environments.
- Recognise the opportunities and risks associated with AI-generated content, including deepfakes, recommendation systems, and surveillance.
- Define and differentiate new literacies (AI literacy, algorithmic literacy, and data literacy) as extensions of media literacy in the digital age.
- Critically analyse how the attention economy and platform design influence engagement and the spread of disinformation.
- Reflect on ethical, social, and democratic challenges posed by digital media systems, and identify strategies to promote critical, informed media use.

Session 4
Whom should we Trust? Our Minds and the Importance of Reliable Sources

Estimated Duration: 90 minutes

This session builds on previous discussions about why people believe false or misleading information by introducing strategies to evaluate sources more effectively. Participants explore the psychological, social, and technological factors that influence vulnerability to disinformation, and then learn about pre-bunking as a proactive defence. The session discusses different sources - messaging apps, social media, and professional journalism - emphasising that, while no source is perfect, journalism offers higher standards of verification and transparency. Through reflection and a hands-on activity, participants develop the ability to assess credibility and apply critical thinking to the consumption of information.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of this session, participants will be able to:
- Identify psychological, social, and technological factors that increase susceptibility to disinformation and conspiracy theories.
- Explain and apply the concept of pre-bunking, including how it helps build resistance to manipulative tactics.
- Compare the reliability and limitations of messaging apps, social media, and journalism as information sources.

- Recognise the value of journalistic practices (verification, accountability, transparency) in democratic societies.
- Apply practical evaluation tools, such as Stop-Investigate-Find-Trace (SIFT) and source-checklists, to assess and compare the credibility of different media content.

Session 5
Critical Thinking for Democracy: Harnessing the Power of Media Literacy

Estimated Duration: 100 minutes

This session emphasises the civic importance of media literacy in defending democracy in a post-truth world. Participants explore how misinformation, emotional manipulation, and populist strategies erode democratic processes, institutional trust, and social cohesion. The workshop deepens understanding of the media ecosystem, highlighting how digital platforms shape public discourse. Civic media literacy is introduced as an approach that integrates media literacy with public engagement. The session concludes with a collaborative activity where participants design an educational initiative or policy proposal to promote media literacy.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of this session, participants will be able to:
- Explain how post-truth dynamics, emotional appeals, and populist communication challenge democratic dialogue and public trust.

- Analyse the effects of misinformation on elections, institutions, and social cohesion.
- Describe how algorithms, platform design, and ownership shape the flow of information in the digital media ecosystem.

Demonstrate core media literacy competencies, including source evaluation, content analysis, and self-awareness of bias.

Apply the concept of civic media literacy by proposing strategies that link media skills to democratic participation and collective well-being.

ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

Even though we suggest delivering the full programme for a more complete experience, it is also possible to deliver each session as a standalone event. We understand that it might not be possible for individuals or organisations to have the time or resources to deliver all 5 sessions, and they are totally free to decide how to make the best use the sessions of the toolkit.

Session 1, for instance, is a more theoretical session to introduce participants to the main media literacy concepts and practices, so it might not be so relevant to people who are not interested in the fundamentals of the field.

Also, you are free to adapt all the materials according to your needs. Slides are copyright free and can be edited to suit your audience, objectives, or presentation style.

PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The toolkit was conceived based on a pedagogical framework that combines critical pedagogy, critical media literacy, and social constructivism. This means that you should seek to create a learning experience that follows some important principles and practices, such as:

Shared Learning Experience: dialogue is key throughout the learning experience, not as a mere exchange of information, but as a collaborative pursuit of understanding and knowledge.
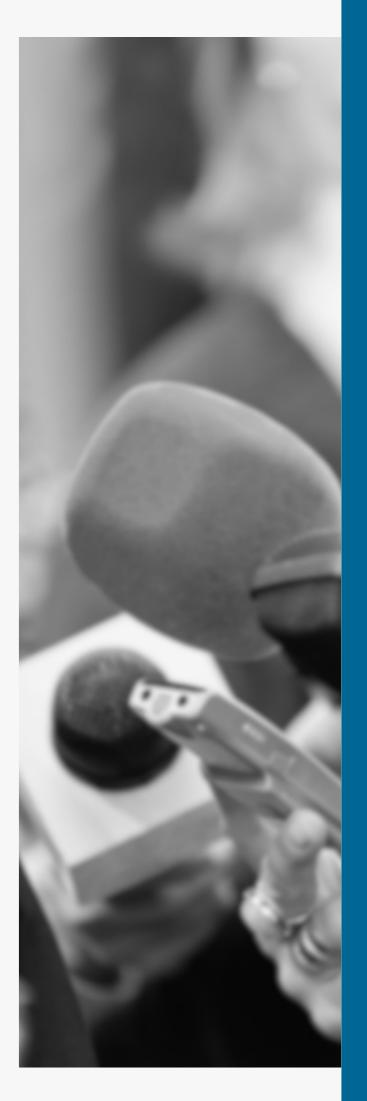
Representation: each participant's voice, experience, and perspective should be valued and considered to create a more

inclusive learning environment.

Collaborative Work: participants should be encouraged to work together to complete their tasks. This practice not only facilitates the sharing of knowledge and diverse perspectives, but it also enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills as participants engage in discussions with peers.

Critical Thinking Development: participants should be encouraged to question, analyse, and reflect on the content, leading to deeper understanding and critical awareness.

Praxis: praxis involves reflection and action. Participants should reflect on what they learned during the workshop and build strategies to take effective and transformative actions.

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.