

Module 7 (Part 4)

Making the Internet a Safer, Fairer & Honest Space

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Module Snapshot

Focus Area:

Ethics & Governance

Aim:

Focuses on building multi-stakeholder governance models and accountability mechanisms for digital platforms. This section highlights the collective role of media professionals, educational institutions, and civil society in maintaining ethical digital environments. It emphasises media standards, governance, and digital literacy.



Key Words:

- Ethical Digital Spaces
- Online Accountability
- Multi-Stakeholder Governance
- Digital Collaboration, Transparency
- Media Integrity
- Inclusive Platforms
- Universal Design
- Citizen Participation
- Fair Digital Practices
- Civil Society Engagement
- Journalism & Media Standards
- Universities and Media Education
- Policy & Regulation

Module Overview

This module highlights the collective role of media professionals, educational institutions, and civil society organisations (CSOs) in maintaining ethical digital environments.

It explores media standards, governance frameworks, and the importance of digital literacy in promoting responsible online spaces.

Participants will examine challenges and opportunities in promoting credible journalism, multi-stakeholder governance, and digital citizenship in Europe through real-world case studies, policy discussions, and digital tools.

YOU ARE HERE

TOPIC 01

Ethical Journalism in the Digital Age: The Role of European Media Standards

Examines how media professionals can maintain credibility, combat misinformation, and uphold ethical reporting standards.

TOPIC 02

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Inclusive Digital Governance

Discusses how governments, CSOs, and tech companies can co-create policies that ensure a safer and more inclusive digital space.

TOPIC 03

Universities and Media Education: Strengthening Digital Citizenship in Europe

Explores how higher education institutions can equip students with critical media literacy skills to navigate the digital landscape.

TOPIC 04

The Role of Civil Society in Holding Digital Platforms Accountable

Highlights how activists and watchdog organisations monitor tech giants, advocate for transparency, and push for policy changes.

Learning Outcomes

Topic 1: Ethical Journalism in the Digital Age: The Role of European Media Standards

- Analyse the role of European media standards in promoting ethical journalism and combating misinformation in the digital age.
- Evaluate the challenges journalists face in maintaining objectivity, transparency, and public trust in digital media environments.



Learning Outcomes

Topic 2: Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Inclusive Digital Governance

- Examine the roles of governments, civil society, and private sector actors in shaping inclusive and accountable digital governance.
- Assess best practices for enabling multi-stakeholder collaboration to address issues such as platform regulation, online safety, and digital rights



Learning Outcomes

Topic 3: Universities and Media Education: Strengthening Digital Citizenship in Europe

- Explore how universities contribute to digital literacy and responsible media consumption among students and the wider public.
- Develop strategies for integrating critical media education into higher education curricula to empower digital citizens



Learning Outcomes

Topic 4: The Role of Civil Society in Holding Digital Platforms Accountable

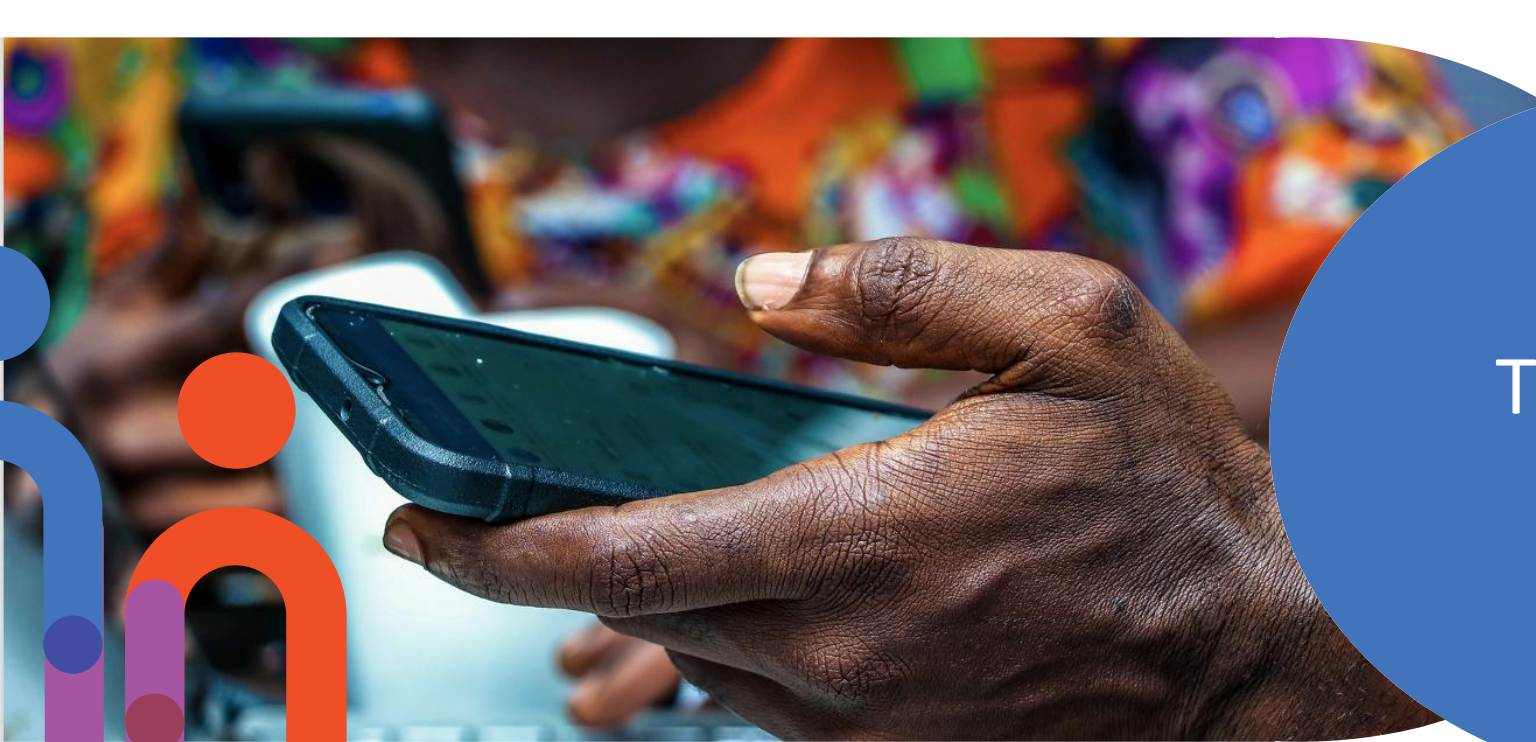
- Identify the key advocacy tools and legal mechanisms used by civil society organisations to demand transparency and ethical governance from digital platforms.
- Evaluate the impact of civil society interventions on platform policies related to misinformation, algorithmic bias, and data privacy



Topic 4

The Role of Civil Society in Holding Digital Platforms Accountable





Overview

The Role of Civil Society in Holding Digital Platforms Accountable



In the digital age, civil society organizations (CSOs) play a critical role in promoting transparency, accountability, and ethical practices across digital platforms.

From fighting misinformation and algorithmic discrimination to advocating for stronger data privacy protections, CSOs act as **watchdogs, policy influencers, and public educators**. Using advocacy, litigation, research, and public campaigns, they pressure tech companies to uphold democratic values and protect **users' rights** in the digital space.

Explains Key Definitions and Concepts



Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Non-governmental, non-profit entities that represent citizens' interests and advocate for public good, often through activism, policy engagement, and legal action.

Platform Accountability

The principle that digital platforms - such as Facebook, Google, and X - should be transparent and responsible in their practices, including content moderation, data handling, and algorithm design.

Digital Rights

Fundamental rights applied to the online environment, including freedom of expression, privacy, access to information, and protection from discrimination.

Algorithmic Bias

Systematic and unfair discrimination embedded in automated decision-making systems, often due to flawed data or opaque algorithm design.



Focus Area 1

Advocacy and
Coalition Building
How Civil Society
Creates Public
Pressure for Platform
Accountability

CSOs create public pressure and policy momentum by:

- Forming alliances (e.g. Access Now, EDRI, Digital Rights Watch)
- Publishing open letters, manifestos, and watchdog reports
- Engaging directly with policymakers and tech companies

Example: The Real Facebook Oversight Board - an independent group of experts challenging Meta's policies through public scrutiny.



Advocacy and Coalition Building



Forming Alliances

- CSOs join forces to amplify their impact and speak with a united voice
- Notable networks: Access Now, European Digital Rights (EDRi), Digital Rights Watch

Public Advocacy Tools

- Open letters, manifestos, and watchdog reports target platform failures and demand reforms
- Raise awareness, influence public opinion, and shape political debate

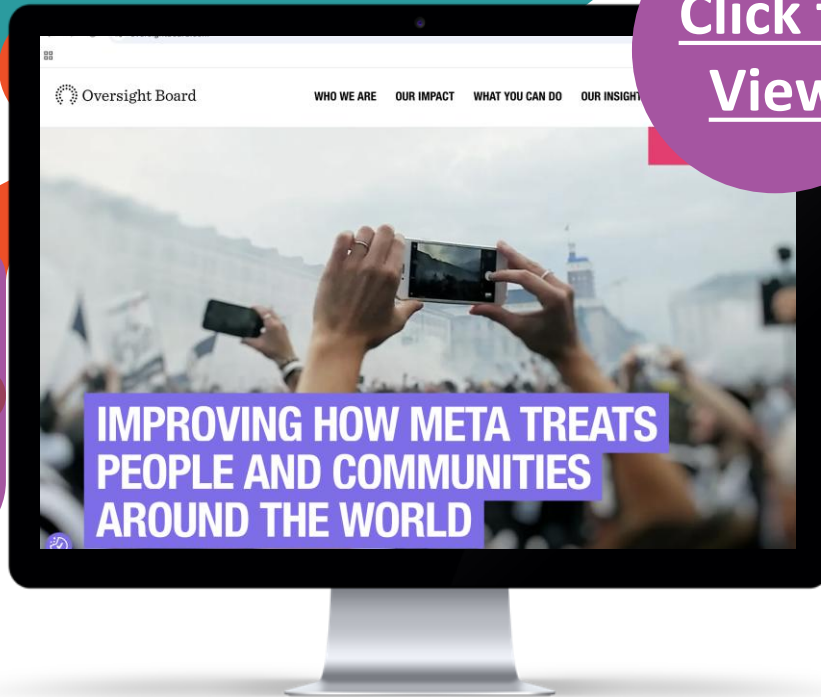
Direct Engagement

- CSOs participate in public consultations, policy dialogues, and private meetings with tech firms and regulators
- Push for transparency, user protections, and ethical standards

Case Study

The Real Facebook Oversight Board (RFOB)

[Click to View](#)



Independent Civil Society Oversight of Meta Platforms

Overview:

- Established in 2020, the Real Facebook Oversight Board is an independent coalition of academics, journalists, and civil rights leaders.
- It was formed to scrutinize Meta's (formerly Facebook) content moderation policies and advocate for greater transparency and accountability.

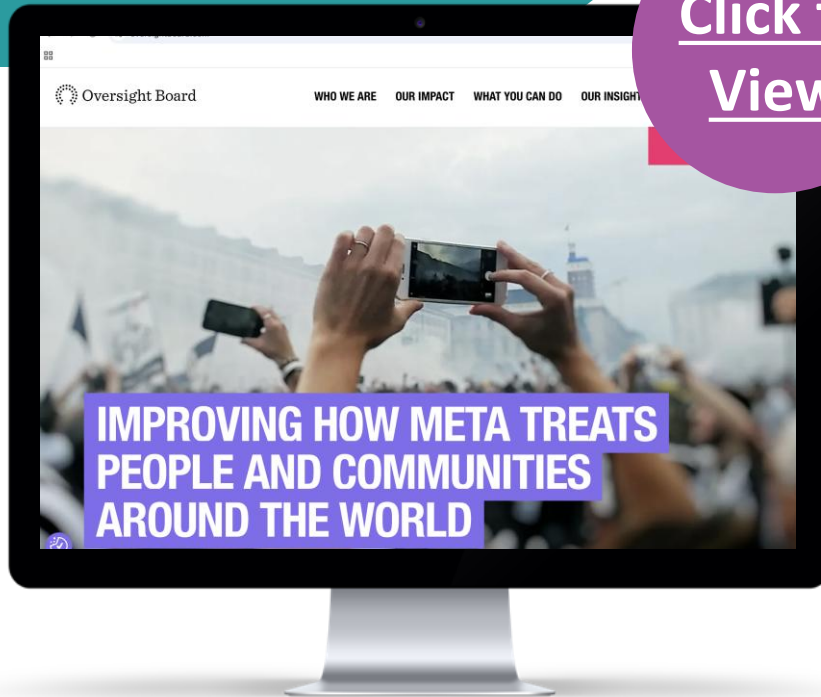
Key Actions:

- Publicly challenged Meta's decisions on content moderation, especially concerning misinformation and hate speech.
- Released reports and held briefings to highlight platform shortcomings and their societal impacts.
- Collaborated with other civil society organizations to amplify calls for ethical governance in digital platforms.

Case Study

The Real Facebook Oversight Board (RFOB)

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Independent Civil Society Oversight of Meta Platforms

Impact:

- Brought significant public attention to issues of algorithmic bias and the spread of misinformation on Meta's platforms.
- Influenced discussions around the need for independent oversight and regulatory frameworks for digital platforms.





Conclusion



Advocacy and Coalition Building - How Civil Society Creates Public Pressure for Platform Accountability

Civil society is a driving force behind platform accountability. Through coalitions, public advocacy, and direct engagement, CSOs amplify citizens' voices and demand ethical, transparent governance from digital platforms. Their persistent efforts - like the Real Facebook Oversight Board - demonstrate that collective action can influence corporate policies and shape digital spaces that respect rights, protect users, and serve the public good.

The message is clear: Democratic oversight of digital platforms begins with organized, informed, and empowered civil society.



Focus Area 2

Legal Action and
Strategic Litigation
Using the Law to Hold
Digital Platforms
Accountable

Civil society uses legal mechanisms to enforce accountability:

- Filing lawsuits under GDPR, Digital Services Act (DSA), and national laws
- Challenging violations of privacy, freedom of expression, and anti-discrimination principles



Legal Action and Strategic Litigation



What It Is

Civil society organizations (CSOs) use legal mechanisms to challenge unethical or unlawful practices by tech companies. This includes violations of privacy rights, algorithmic discrimination, lack of transparency, and failure to protect users from harmful content.

Key Tools

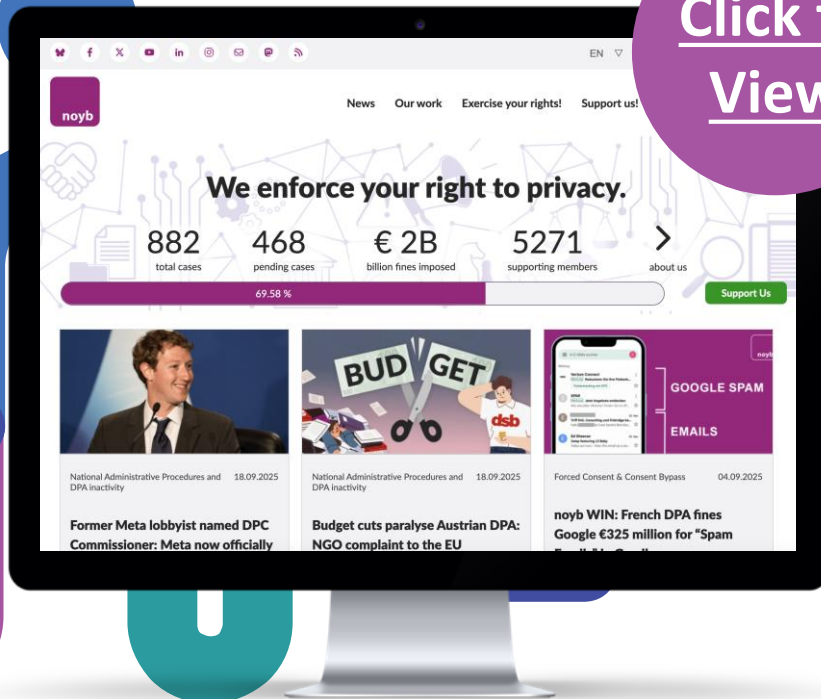
- **GDPR (EU)** – to demand data protection and consent
- **Digital Services Act (DSA)** – to ensure transparency and content accountability
- **National laws** – e.g., consumer rights, anti-discrimination, freedom of expression

Legal Action and Strategic Litigation

Notable Cases

- **NOYB (None of Your Business):** Founded by Max Schrems, it has filed dozens of GDPR complaints against Meta, Google, and others, leading to multimillion-euro fines and improved privacy standards.
- **La Quadrature du Net (France):** Successfully litigated against government surveillance and AI-based predictive policing tools.
- **Privacy International:** Challenged mass data collection practices and won cases at national and international levels.

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“Strategic litigation is not only about winning cases, but about creating a ripple effect of awareness, reform, and accountability.”

**European Center for Constitutional
and Human Rights (ECCHR)**





Conclusion



Legal Action and Strategic Litigation - Using the Law to Hold Digital Platforms Accountable

- Legal action is one of **the most powerful levers** civil society has to challenge **digital power**.
- Strategic litigation has led to major reforms in how platforms **collect data, moderate content, and explain their algorithms**.
- By transforming courtrooms into catalysts for change, CSOs protect **digital rights** and set **legal precedents** for responsible tech governance.



Focus Area 3

Research and
Transparency
Campaigns
Exposing Platform
Harms and Demanding
Accountability

CSOs conduct audits, data investigations, and algorithmic impact assessments to:

- Expose misinformation ecosystems and platform bias
- Demand algorithmic transparency and content moderation disclosures

Example: Mozilla Foundation's YouTube Regrets campaign spotlighted harmful algorithmic recommendations.



Research and Transparency Campaigns

Exposing Platform Harms and Demanding Accountability



What It Is

Civil society organizations (CSOs) conduct independent research and public campaigns to uncover how digital platforms operate - particularly how their algorithms, data policies, and business models affect users and society.

Key Activities

- **Algorithm Audits & Impact Assessments** - Examine how recommendation systems may promote harmful content or bias
- **Data Investigations** - Reveal how platforms track, profile, and monetize users
- **Transparency Campaigns** - Call for clear reporting from platforms on moderation, ads, and data use

Research and Transparency Campaigns

Exposing Platform Harms and Demanding Accountability

Notable Initiatives

- **Mozilla Foundation – YouTube Regrets** - Collected real user stories about harmful recommendations and called on YouTube to open its algorithms to audit
- **AlgorithmWatch** - Investigates the social impact of algorithmic systems and advocates for transparency legislation in the EU
- **Ranking Digital Rights (RDR)** - Publishes a scorecard ranking tech companies on their commitments to freedom of expression and privacy



“Without transparency, there can be no accountability. Civil society’s role is to pull back the curtain.”

Mozilla Foundation





Conclusion



Research and Transparency Campaigns Exposing Platform Harms and Demanding Accountability

- Research and transparency campaigns are essential for turning hidden digital harms into public knowledge.
- By translating complex tech systems into understandable findings, CSOs empower users, inform regulators, and pressure platforms to act ethically and openly.

Transparency is not a luxury - it's the foundation of trust in the digital age.



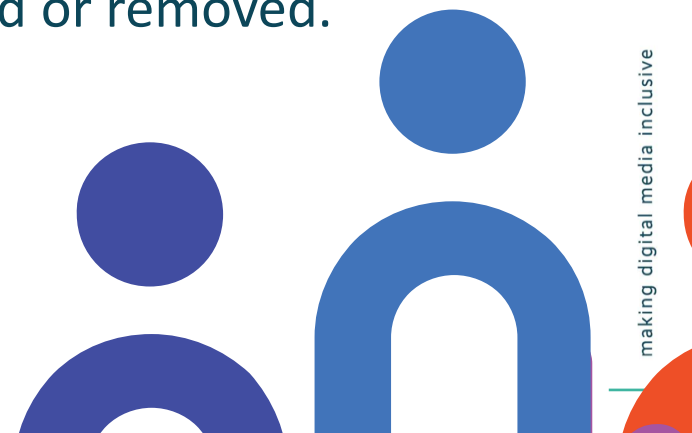
Focus Area 4

Influencing Policy on Misinformation, Bias, and Privacy - Shaping Regulations for Ethical and Transparent Digital Platforms

Through sustained engagement, civil society helps shape policy and platform behavior:

- Advising on EU legislation (e.g. DSA, AI Act)
- Advocating for independent oversight boards and user rights protections

Impact: CSO advocacy led to stronger transparency obligations in the EU Digital Services Act, requiring platforms to explain how content is recommended or removed.



Influencing Policy on Misinformation, Bias, and Privacy

Shaping Regulations for Ethical and Transparent Digital Platforms



What It Is

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a vital role in drafting, reviewing, and advocating for laws that regulate how platforms handle misinformation, protect user data, and ensure fairness in algorithmic systems.

Key Policy Engagement Areas

- **Misinformation** - CSOs advocate for content moderation that respects freedom of expression while minimizing harm (e.g. fact-checking, appeal mechanisms).
- **Algorithmic Bias** - Push for explainable, non-discriminatory AI systems and independent audits of automated decisions.
- **Data Privacy** - Defend user rights under laws like the GDPR, and push for stronger enforcement and global standards.

Influencing Policy on Misinformation, Bias, and Privacy

Shaping Regulations for Ethical and Transparent Digital Platforms

Impact Examples

- **EU Digital Services Act (DSA):** Influenced by CSO input, it now mandates transparency on content moderation, algorithmic recommendations, and user complaints.
- **AI Act (EU):** CSOs successfully lobbied for stronger safeguards on high-risk AI systems, including facial recognition and automated profiling.
- **Global Influence:** Initiatives like Access Now's RightsCon bring together activists, governments, and companies to co-develop tech policies globally.



“Civil society brings democratic values to the digital policy table
- it’s how laws reflect people,
- not just profits.”

European Digital Rights (EDRi)





Conclusion

Influencing Policy on Misinformation, Bias, and Privacy - Shaping Regulations for Ethical and Transparent Digital Platforms

Constructive dialogue in the media is not just about content - it's about approach. Through inclusive storytelling and respectful formats, media can become a space for healing, empathy, and coexistence - not just information.



Additional Slides for
Resources etc.

Case Studies and
Interviews on
Separate Templates





More Tools to Identify Reliable Information Online

FaktaBaari (Fact Bar):

A Finnish fact-checking service with tools designed for media literacy education [\(PDF\)](#).

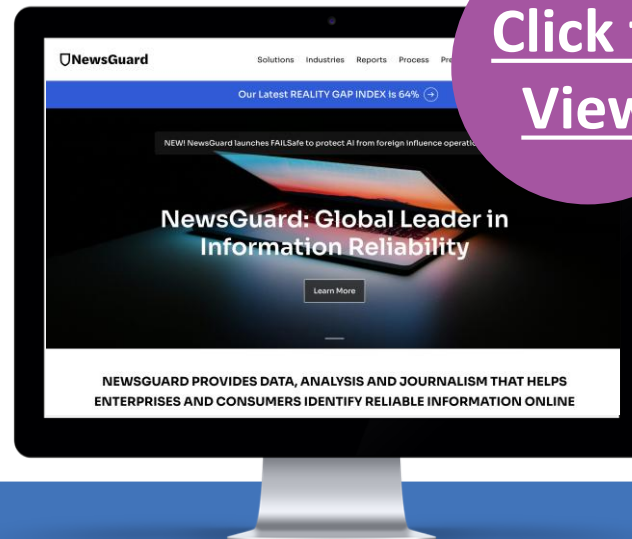
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NewsGuard:

Provides trust ratings for news websites based on credibility and transparency

[Click to View](#)



Hoaxy:

Visualizes how false information spreads online and tracks sources of disinformation

[Click to View](#)





More Tools to Identify Reliable Information Online

Ask FactCheck:

Ask FactCheck is a FactCheck.org feature where readers submit questions about political claims, viral rumors, or misleading info. The team investigates and answers selected questions.



How to spot fake news:

Click above link to watch the video by factcheck.org





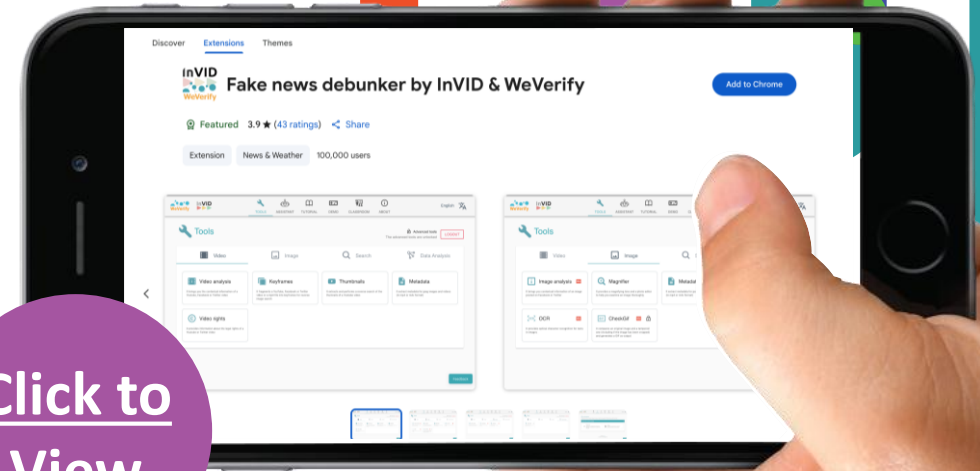
Digital Tool

Fake News Debunker by InVID & WeVerify

Description: a free Chrome extension designed to assist journalists, fact-checkers, and human rights defenders in verifying online content, particularly images and videos shared on social media platforms [A demo](#)

Apply to Topic 2: Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Inclusive Digital Governance

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View](#)





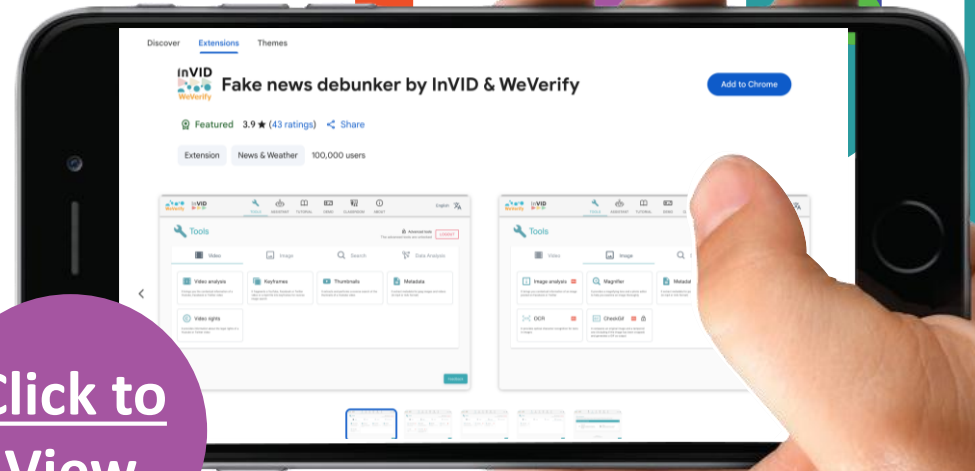
Digital Tool

NewsFeed Defenders

Description: media literacy game teaches players how to detect and disregard disinformation and misinformation in today's chaotic environment

Apply to Topic 3: Universities and Media Education: Strengthening Digital Citizenship in Europe.

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Exercise

Topic 1: Group Discussion



Task:

Discuss the current European guidelines set by self-regulatory bodies and evaluate their implementation in the context of digital news on current events, such as the war in Gaza and Ukraine.



Discussion:

Are the current guidelines sufficient to handle the challenges posed by modern digital journalism? Are there notable examples of misinformation or bias in the coverage of these events? How can self-regulatory bodies improve the enforcement of these standards?

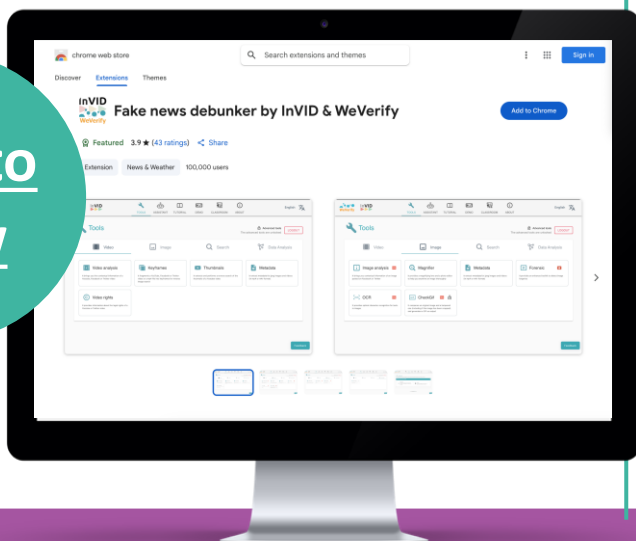


Exercise

Task:

Use fact-checking tools (i.e Fake News Debunker) to analyse and verify news content related to a popular current event or issue.

Click to View



Topic 2: Fact-Checking Exercise: Verifying Online Content



Steps:

1. Choose a trending topic (e.g., political event, global news).
2. Use fact-checking tools to evaluate the accuracy of online content related to this topic.
3. Cross-reference information from multiple trusted sources.
4. Determine whether the news is reliable or misleading based on your findings.

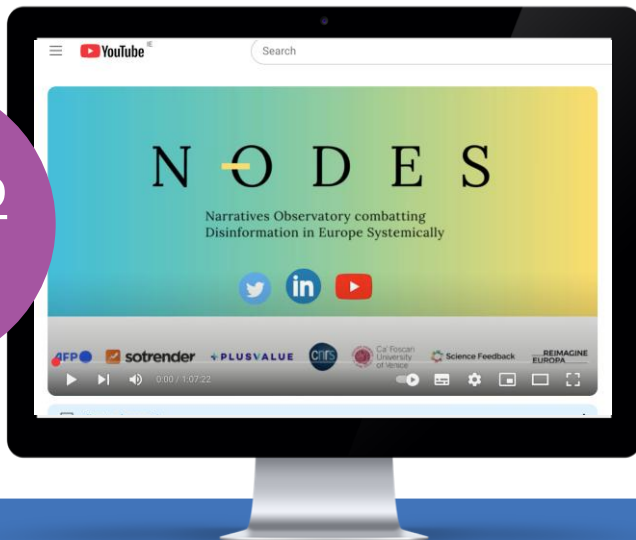


Resources

Finding from Narratives Observatory combatting Disinformation in Europe Systemically (NODES).

Narratives that Shape Our World - NODES Results Launch - Climate, COVID-19 and Migration Narratives in Public Discourse

[Click to View](#)



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Prompt: A project by The European Narrative Observatory

Romania: How a disinformation campaign prevented free suffrage -In the first round of Romania's 2024 presidential elections, 23% of voters chose Călin Georgescu, a candidate with no formal campaign, largely boosted by TikTok influencers. For details click the link!



Resources

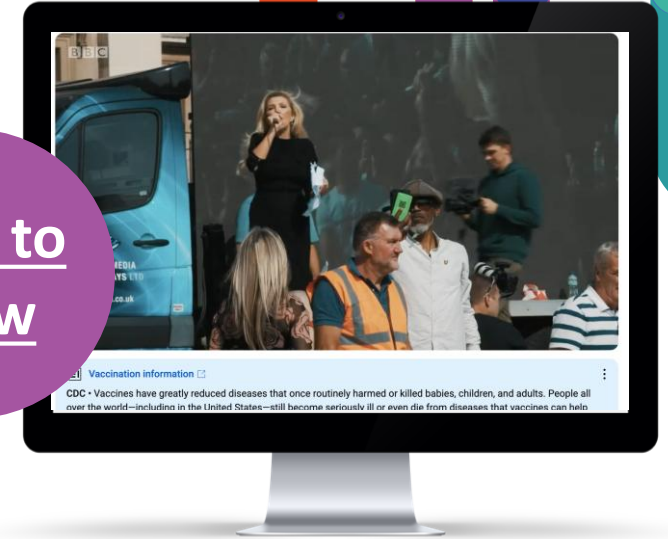
A UNESCO Report

Platform Problems and Regulatory Solutions -
Findings from a comprehensive review of existing studies and investigations

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BBC Panorama: Anti-Vaccine Movement (2019) - (Documentary)

Panorama Vaccines The Disinformation War - The BBC Panorama programme/documentary was criticised for spreading misinformation and contributing to public confusion around COVID-19 vaccines

Module 7: Making the Internet a Safer, Fairer, & Honest Space

You have completed Part 4 (Topic 4)

Making the Internet a Safer,
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