
E-citizenship: Social Media and Information Literacy. a School Toolkit

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Abstract – In the following article we define the different dimensions (and connected implications) that the digital evolution entails, in the perspective to define the relevant skills and competences that education should elect as goals and targets when defining school curricula. The digital citizenship will then be approached from an operative point of view, by means of activities on the theme of media literacy that facilitators may use both in formal and non-formal contexts to increase civism in the virtual space, to develop critical thinking and selective skills, to recognize fake news and manipulative dynamics.

Keywords – Ethics, Truth, Post Truth, Fake News, Digital Civic Education, Critical Thinking.

I. INTRODUCTION

Today a large amount of news passes through social networks. Often, however, the news is undermined by distortions and biased interpretations that weaken the value of "truth" in favor of "opinion".

This paper aims at promoting awareness and increasing civism in the virtual space, through the development of digital citizenship skills, critical thinking and selection skills in choosing information sources.

The objective is to recognize the characteristics of false news and manipulative dynamics, which can have a pervasive impact and encourage radicalization and populism.

The keywords of digital civic education that we intend to assume as a starting point of our reflection are digital revolution, competences, truth. Inspired by the philosopher K.R. Popper who questioned the status of truth in contemporary societies, we can argue that the question appears to be central to the modern era of digital communication, since a series of interacting phenomena have made truth "opaque" and emphasized the value of opinion. Truth seems to have lost its boundaries towards opinion for the benefit of the latter, in a way that objective truth is hard to discern, because it is melted in views and interpretations, it is fragmented into bits of deduced facts.

Passing to the second key concept, digital competences, to clarify the difference between digital competence and digital citizenship we may refer to how we behave in a digital framework of communication. In fact, we can be excellent users of various software and tools, but we can ask ourselves how many people read the terms of conditions, when they find themselves pushing the button "send", to confirm an operation, or update a program. From the same perspective, how many are those who read the privacy regulation, the terms of use or the license when downloading a software or installing an app. That same unconditional reflex moves people in insensate actions such as clicking to share an apparently sensational news without having checked it. We may argue that a form of citizenship, in the digital dimension, is this moment of taking time and considering the impact that our digit can have on the "enter key".

As for the third concept, that is digital revolution, our reaction to it can be inspired by two paradigms: resistance or passive acceptance, on the one hand, active participation, on the other. We are confronted with three possible choices: we can be overthrown by the evolution, we can try to make our way out of it, being passive users and consumers, and we can actively take part into the process being at the same time conscious and competent consumers and producers of digital products.

II. AN HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

To define an historical framework of analysis of the digital revolution we should refer to two fundamental revolutions in communication. While the first, which is the invention of the printing press, aimed at spreading culture throughout Europe, the digital revolution that we are experiencing nowadays seems rather to put knowledge into question, feeding the multiplication of interpretations.

The invention of the printing press (Gutenberg, 1449) allowed the Scriptures to exit from the monasteries and from the hand-copies of the amanuenses and to spread throughout Europe in different languages and translations. The Protestant Reform was fueled by the reading and interpretation of the Bible, thus mining the certainties of the secular Church, in a way that the intention of the first revolution of communication was to spread knowledge and culture by taking it out of the fences of the Church, thus redeeming and preserving knowledge.

Looking at the present situation, the internet adventure is allowing the global propagation of information to guarantee the right of knowledge to all. Yet, this revolution in communication tends to redefine, question and investigate truth in a way that truth itself results weakened in favor of interpretation. It results that knowledge seems to be continuously submitted to a process of redefinition.

Nowadays, many European countries are debating the strengthening of Civic Education in the school curriculum, emphasizing the importance of digital citizenship whose prodrome is the Digital Competence of the European Recommendation dated 2006, in which the European Parliament and the Council set the basemen, for the exercise of digital skills (in particular how to use digital tools), as well as for a digital ethics, that is to say how to behave in the digital world, and what should be taught to the next generation about it.

In the European framework, among the most important documents the Digital Agenda for Europe pays particular attention to the relationship between technological development and economic growth, implying that digital skills must be acquired to enable professional development and to empower economic stability, these being complementary conditions to social inclusion and success of each individual. From the educational viewpoint European policies assume that the creation of “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world,” is based on the relation between school and work.

This was already announced in the 1990’s by J. Delors and E. Cresson, who gave start to a series of strategies insisting on this interdependence between education and professional dimensions, as facilitating conditions for human, economic, social and cultural progress.

If the framework seems to be quite well defined, an outlook on the status of competences and skills in active population shows a rather complex situation.

For instance, the recent OECD-PIAAC Survey, on literacy and numeracy of adults aged between 16 and 65, shows a rather intricate situation, with high percentages of functional illiteracy. Functional illiterate people are

able to understand simple texts but cannot process and use their information. They do not show the skills required in various situations of daily life, whether working or relating to leisure, or linked to the languages of new technologies. In addition, the impact of disinformation campaigns on politics, economy, social issues confirm that the situation must be put on top in the agenda. The PIAAC survey highlights how the problem of functional understanding of texts and of selection of sources of information, concerns both adolescents and adults and has consequences on various levels.

III. ETHOS, ETHICS AND MEDIA

The dimension of self-representation and reputation in the internet implies that identity is not based on a dominant model, since the virtual "I" hides a fragmented self, made of latent stimuli whose identity is linked to an eternal present isolated from the past and uninterested in the future. It is a self that does not exist before the experience, which adapts to contexts and moments. Identity plays a key role in virtual communities.

As Judith S. Donath argues, the identity of our interlocutor is necessary to understand and evaluate an interaction. In the virtual space, many of the basic cues about personality and social role we are accustomed to in the physical world are absent, as a result, in the disembodied community, identity is also ambiguous. In the framework of uncertain political, legal, religious, economic values, identity and self-representation are not based on a dominant model because many coexist. This excess of alternatives reflects the uncertainty of collective culture. Thus, this suspended "I" blends into a plural identity. It is easily manipulated and appears to be weak to populism, radicalization, and post-truth. On the contrary, the real, pre-modern "I" expresses a saturated self, which builds its own identity from the memory of the past being guided by the reason preceding experience.

On the level of ethics in the virtual space, we might first remark the meaning that assumes the concept of "immortality" in relation to the digital individuals.

It appears to exist a sort of resistance of digital life after physical death, as well as the presence of faded limits between real and virtual, which expose people to serious danger. Connected to this, another big question is that of data treatment which also include the resistance of virtual life after physical death: passwords, emails, blogs and socials will continue to exist somewhere in the internet space. An example over all: there are plenty of Facebook commemorative pages that keep on existing after someone's death.

From the professional and working perspective, citing some data from the Digital Agenda for Europe, we can remember that the Internet economy has created five jobs for every two 'offline' jobs lost. The EU digital economy is growing at 12 % each year and is now bigger than the Belgian national economy. There are 7 million jobs in the ICT sector in Europe. It is estimated that half of productivity growth derives from investment in ICT.

Moreover, according to the US Department of Labor 65 % of today's schoolchildren will eventually be employed in jobs that have yet to be created. The major breakthroughs will produce new employment opportunities in Big Data, Nano science, 3-D printing, advanced Robotics. The report (WEF) estimates that redundancies, automation and disintermediation will lead to a loss of 7.1 million jobs. At the same time, 2.1 million will be created, in more and more specialized sectors.

Leaving apart the tough and articulated dimension of the legal level, concerning especially the emerging cybercrimes involving young people and children, such as sexting, happy slapping, cyber bullying, child

pornography, child grooming, we will go straight on a reflection regarding the focus of the workshop that will follow in the next pages: the info-sphere.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the following documents, our attention will be centered on the effects of mystified information on collective behaviors. These may influence general choices, as in the case of politics, they may release collective hysterias (terrorism, public health), or degenerate into racial intolerance, radicalization, populism. In fact, digital communication exists in a sort of eco-system of information, which is conditioned by such phenomena as disintermediation, echo chambers, filter bubbles, to name a few. They strongly influence the reliability of information, through mystified and subliminal messages that feed themselves through viral sharing.

Our purpose, in the attached BOOKLET (and annexed “HEADLINES FOR FACILITATORS”, is to approach the digital citizenship from an operative and laboratorial point of view, by means of activities on the theme of media literacy that facilitators may use both in formal and non-formal contexts of education, to increase civism in the virtual space, to develop critical thinking and selective skills, to recognize fake news and manipulative dynamics, thus preventing Post-truth victimization.

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- [2] Eurydice has just released its latest publication: Citizenship Education at School in Europe – 2017. It allows getting a full picture of what policies exist to regulate citizenship education across Europe.
URL: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/home_en
- [3] Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning. The Commission launched the Review of the 2006 Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in June 2016 with the aim to update the 2006 Recommendation and further support key competences development across Europe. The perspective of the technological and digital innovation clearly appears in the renewed version. Key competences include literacy and languages; maths, science and engineering; digital competence; personal, social and learning competence; civic competence; entrepreneurship and cultural awareness and expression.
URL: https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/competences_en
- [4] The declared purpose of this agenda is to help Europe's citizens and businesses to get the most out of digital technologies rebooting Europe's economy. URL: http://eige.europa.eu/resources/digital_agenda_en.pdf
- [5] The importance of digital competence is recognized in various current European political initiatives that link the society of knowledge with sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Among them: *A New Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment, Connected Digital Single Market, Rethinking Education, Opening up Education, Grand Coalition for digital Jobs*.
- [6] Following the objective of Lisbon's strategy as updated in Europe 2020. URL: <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%2007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>
- [7] The transition towards the digital citizenship is being facilitated by the common framework of reference Dig Comp 2.1, whose 5 areas and 21 skills draw a map to build a sense of direction and awareness in the digital ecosystem.
URL: [http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC106281/web-digcomp2.1pdf_\(online\).pdf](http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC106281/web-digcomp2.1pdf_(online).pdf)
- [8] The OECD PIAAC survey (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) measures adults' proficiency in key information-processing skills, literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments. It gathers information on how adults use their skills at home, at work and in the wider community. URL: <http://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/>
- [9] The most frequently referenced definition of “functional literacy” is from UNESCO's conference in 1978:
“A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development.” The UNESCO definition implies that a functionally literate person possesses a literacy level that equips him or her to flourish in society. A functionally illiterate person, on the other hand, may be able to perform very basic reading and writing, but cannot do so at the level required for many societal activities and jobs.
- [10] Judith S. Donath, *Identity and deception in the virtual community* in Kollock, P. (Ed.), Smith, M. (Ed.) *Communities in Cyberspace*, Routledge, London, 1999.
- [11] Among the “games” that have spread in the latest years, Pokémon catching (and Blue whale, are worth mentioning because of the number of dead people they involved. 154 people committed suicide after blue whale gaming in 2016.
- [12] The recently enforced GDPR, approved by the EU on 14 April 2016 is meant to protect and empower all EU citizens' data privacy and to reshape the way organizations approach data privacy.
- [13] Google permits to endorse someone (up to 10 people) with authority to delete a Google account and to download all the stored photos after someone's death. In addition, the account becomes inactive via its inactive account manager feature. On its part, Facebook provides a legacy contact, that is to say a person who is able to write a post that will remain at the top of the profile, to update the profile photo and to answer to requests from friends.

- [14] In this scenario Facebook's crossover date, that is the date when the dead outnumber the living, will be 2065 URL: <https://what-if.xkcd.com/69/>
- [15] *The Future of Job*, World Economic Forum. URL: <http://reports.weforum.org/future-of-jobs-2016/chapter-1-the-future-of-jobs-and-skills/>

APPENDIX

TEACHERS' HEADLINES FOR THE WORKSHOP
THEMES Media education, selection of source of information, fake news, info-sphere.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES <p>Today a large amount of news passes through social networks. Often, however, the news is undermined by distortions and biased interpretations that weaken the value of "truth" in favor of "opinion".</p> <p>The workshop aims at promoting awareness and increasing civism in the virtual space, through the development of digital citizenship skills, critical thinking and selection skills in choosing information sources.</p> <p>The objective is to recognize the characteristics of false news and manipulative dynamics, which can have a pervasive impact and encourage radicalization and populism.</p>
TARGET GROUP Adults, Educators, University and High school students. Groups of 4/5 people.
DURATION 3 to 5 hours. Each step of the workshop should start and finish in one session.
MATERIALS AND RESOURCES <p>The activity is carried out with the "BOOKLET" which must be provided to each student.</p> <p>The steps are divided into pair work, class work and group work, as indicated in the booklet.</p> <p>A power point presentation to be used by the teacher (including notes for the various slides) allows to lead the class in carrying out the various phases and to deepen the thematic context with notional "pills".</p> <p>For the activity in "group work" it is necessary to provide a copy of the "DOCUMENTS" resource, preferably in A3 colour format, in order to allow a clearer use of the images on which the activities are developed.</p> <p>You need: coloured post-it for the focus group, a LIM with projector, WLAN and Wi-Fi connection for BYOD (bring your own device) activity on:</p> <p>Todaysmeet: https://todaysmeet.com/</p> <p>Kahoot: https://kahoot.com</p>
STEP BY STEP DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY <p>Step 1: After a brief introduction on the main topics of digital citizenship (Power Point presentation, slides 1 to 9), a brainstorming is launched in BYOD mode, which allows to gather everyone's ideas on the topic: "Internet as a tool of information: opportunities and risks". Sharing ideas.</p> <p>Step 2:</p> <p>Activity 1: historical hoaxes</p> <p>Quick online search to identify <i>some</i> hoaxes, in various fields (social studies, science, culture, economy);</p>

Activity 2:

Definition of a glossary of terms and expressions that mark the digital information world, to draw a useful map in the second part of the workshop.

Group focus:

The impact of a false news in the pre-digital era compared to the impact of false news in the current era.

What are the differences?

Which dynamic triggers a false news today?

Step 3: Group work on the booklet

Reading the DOCUMENTS 1 (a, b, c), 2 and 3 (activities 1, 2)

Activity 1: observing the images reporting false news and defining the possible manipulative intentions of the authors. What do they want to get with this fake news?

Activity 2: Finding some fake news on the indicated topics and comparing them by filling the grid in the booklet. Are there characteristic recurring traits?

Step 4: group work: activities 1 and 2 discussion and brainstorming

(For a track on the discussion refer to slide 14 of the PPT PRESENTATION)

Step 5: group work: in-depth study (activity 1 & 2)

Read documents 4 and 5

Activity 1: defining precise examples of distorted information (and false news) specifying the forms of populism and radicalism they have caused.

Activity 2: pointing how European countries (and/or non-European countries) are trying to control the phenomenon of spreading false information on the network.

TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

Read carefully the notes in the Presentation PPT that may support the facilitators to lead the groups in the activities.

It is suggested to evaluate the activities both by direct observation in the classroom and by taking into consideration the contents and ideas proposed by the students in the work on the booklet.

It could be motivating to carry out a QUIZ game to establish a positive class atmosphere and to trigger the dynamics of competition in the ludic dimension, in order to reactivate the acquired knowledge and, possibly, deepen some of the contents on the proposed theme.

The Quiz game can take place in BYOD activities, using the KAHOOT platform. Here is the direct link to the quiz prepared for this workshop:

<https://play.kahoot.it/#/?quizId=d3ef9a3b-ead1-4687-bb8a-fae3b76a97f8>

ANNEXES: power point presentation, documents for group work, individual booklet for activities.

BOOKLET

E-citizenship: social media and information literacy

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EIP ITALIA SCUOLA STRUMENTO DI PACE



The workshop we are about to start is aimed at promoting awareness and increasing civism in the virtual space through the development of digital citizenship skills, critical thinking and selection skills in choosing information sources.

The objective is to recognize the characteristics of false news and manipulative dynamics, which can have a pervasive impact and encourage radicalization and populism.

Step 1 - Warm up: work in pairs Internet and information:

Today a large amount of news passes on internet through information sites and social networks. Discuss in pairs this QUOTE:

"Getting information off the Internet is like taking a drink from a fire hydrant". (Mitchell Kapor)

highlighting the opportunities and risks it opens to. Then post your idea on the board

Step 2, activity 1 - The fake news of the analogical era:

The phenomenon of hoaxes is quite old. Let us do a quick online search, in various fields, to identify some historical hoaxes (social studies, science, culture, economy). Here below you can find some ideas to work on or to go deeper into some false news dating from the pre-digital era.

Eva takes an apple from the tree and gives it to Adam?

Was the attack on the Twin Towers of 11 September 2001 really an attack?

S'ils n'ont plus de pain, qu'ils mangent de la brioche?

On July 8, 1947, a UFO crashes near Roswell, one or more dead aliens are brought to Area 51?

Is the Bermuda triangle cursed?

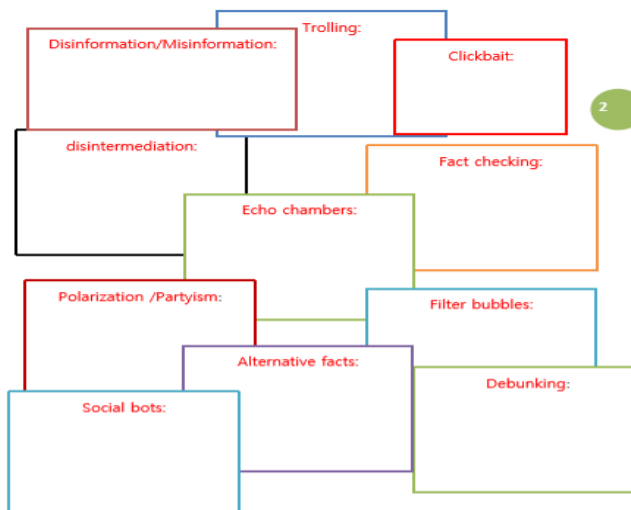
Step 2, activity 2: The terminology framework of digital information :

The development of the internet and digital communication has involved a strong movement of the language towards contaminations from English and neologisms.

One of the paradoxes of the advent of the digital is this: the Internet is the outpost of the democracy of knowledge but, paradoxically, it develops a language that tends to exclude progressively those who are not involved in the dynamics of communication on the net! Think of the difficulties that elderly people can have when they meet such words as "like" or "tag"! Also, think of the difficulties that contemporaries can encounter with respect to words like "bitcoin" or "big data", which allude to great transformations taking place at a macro systemic level. If we do not master this new vocabulary, these new phenomena can be incomprehensible and therefore we could be cut off!

Here you find a number of words and expressions that dot the world of digital information and that will allow us to understand this "technical idiom".

In a group, using the sources on the net, try to give clear and complete definitions of these terms.



Class focus:

Let's think about the impact of a false news in pre-digital age compared to the impact of fake news in the current era.

- What are the differences?
- What dynamics triggers a false news today?

Write down your considerations on blue post-it ("differences") and pink post-it ("dynamics triggered by false news today").



Step 3 Activity 1: - Read the documents 1 (a, b), 2 & 3 and share your ideas to define the Identikit of fake news

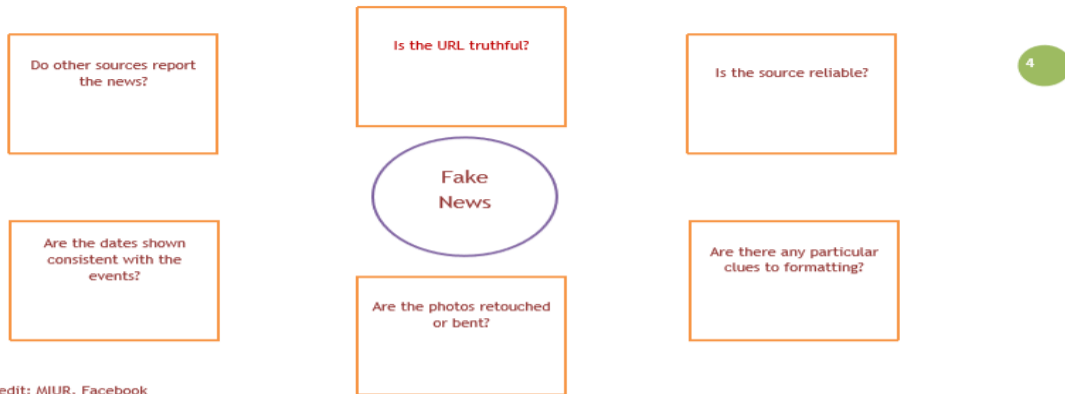
The expression "fake news" means false information or news published on the Internet, on TV, on the radio or on the press. In fake news, the falsification is desired and intentional: who makes fake news wants to make false statements. Who spreads fake news is not in good faith, does not make a mistake, nor is he the author of a misunderstanding! He can have several different motivations: propaganda, politics, commercial advertising, desire for fame, provocation, profit, discredit.

A fake report has recurring features. Let us go over the fake news proposed above and define the possible manipulative intentions of the authors. What do they want to get with such false news?:

What do they want to achieve with this news?	What emotions are called into question?	What themes does it touch? What kind of events does it describe?	What tone does it use in reporting the news?	What features does the title have?	What kind of effects can it generate in terms of post-truth and post-factualism?
1)					
2)					
3)					
4)					
5)					

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**Step 3 - Activity 2: We look for fake news on one of the proposed themes
and compare each item to trace an identikit:**

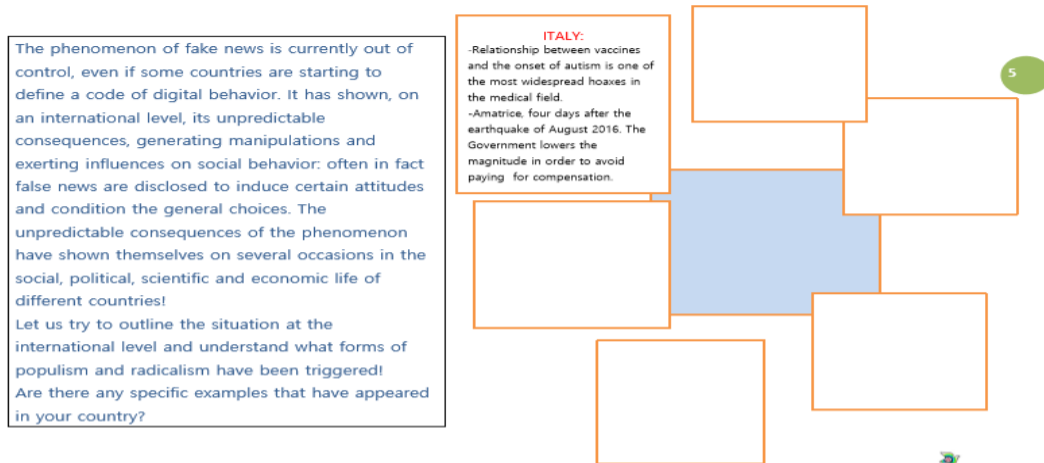


Credit: MIUR, Facebook

<http://www.miur.gov.it/-/scuola-boldrini-e-fedeli-presentano-decalogo-anti-bufale-il-progetto-riguarda-4-2-milioni-di-ragazzi>
<http://www.ilsole24ore.com/pdf2010/Editorie/ILSOLE24ORE/ILSOLE24ORE/Online/Gadget/Embedded/Documenti/2017/04/07/facebook-italian-1.pdf>

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Step 4 - Group work (activities 1 & 2): activity 1: What happens in Europe?



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Step 4- Group work (activities 1 & 2): activity 2. What happens in Europe?

Some countries in Europe have shown to take very seriously the phenomenon of mystified information in the network, by adopting legislative measures to ensure the quality and truthfulness of information sent online. Below we show you two resources related, respectively, to Italy and Germany.

After reading the articles, we fill the grid. Then, we do a search to see how other countries (even extra-European) are moving to keep the phenomenon of spreading fake news on the net under control.

Country	Source	Measure adopted or being adopted	Objective of the measure and expected protections	Punishment and penalties
Italy	https://steemit.com/news/@quaffonfridi/italy-the-new-law-against-fake-news			
Germany	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/the-dc-epi-stop-fake-news-in-germany-act-as-ten-2017-04-05/?hpid=hp-top-table-border:1000-1107-1000-2017-04-05%3A_story&utm_term=.08e3f6a099e			

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https://www.huffingtonpost.com/george-mocharko/the-filter-bubble-review_b_929551.html

https://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles/transcript

La disinformazione online e quello che possiamo fare. Quattrociocchi, Pariser, Menczer, Fournier, Quelch, Rietveld
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Generazioni connesse

<http://www.generazioniconnesse.it/site/it/home-page/>

Decalogue Fake news Facebook

http://www.ilsol24ore.com/pdf2010/Editrice/ILSOLE24ORE/ILSOLE24ORE/Online/_Oggetti_Embedded/Documenti/2017/04/07/facbook-Italian-1.pdf

Declaration of internet rights (Italy)

http://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/commissione_internet/testo_definitivo_inglese.pdf

List of Declarations Bill of Rights for the Internet

<http://www.sharingperspectivesfoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/WEEK-4-Claudia-Padovani-List-of-Declarations-Bill-of-Rights-for-the-Internet.pdf>

The Future of Jobs

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs.pdf

OECD-Pisa Global competence test

<https://www.oecd.org/education/Global-competency-for-an-inclusive-world.pdf>

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DOCUMENTS FOR BOOKLET

References:

Document 1A

Credit:

Corriere della Sera <http://www.iodonna.it/attualita/in-primo-piano/gallery/e-una-bufala-ci-credo-lo-stesso/7img=5>

Vanity Fair <https://www.vanityfair.it/lifestyle/hi-tech/16/12/18/internet-bufale-in-rete-2016>

Focus <https://www.focus.it/tecnologia/innovazione/la-lingua-segrete-dei-bot-di-facebook-intelligenza-artificiale-robot>

Document 1B

Credit:

Tagli magazine <https://taglimagazine.it/la-bufala-dei-550-e-gratis-agli-immigrati/>

Pinterest <https://www.pinterest.it/pin/66639269466662212/>

Victurus libertas <http://victuruslibertas.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Hillary-mother-of-isis-smaller.jpg>

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Document 1C

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Butac <https://www.butac.it/niente-servizorio-dal-2016/>

Il fatto quotidiano <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/alieno-avvistato-monza-la-montagna-manda-segnali-continui-parla-lesperto/>

Ilmessaggero.it <http://www.ilmessaggero.it/e-morto-maradona-alleta-di-56-anni-stroncato-da-un-infarto-tutto-nel-mondo-dello-sport>

Document 2

Fanpage.it <https://gossip.fanpage.it/migranti-che-fanno-shopping-coi-nostri-35-euro-ma-sono-samuel-l-jackson-e-magic-johnson/>

BMC <https://blogs.biomedcentral.com/on-biology/2017/07/18/vladimir-putin-and-the-empty-chair-can-people-spot-fake-pictures/>

Butac <https://www.butac.it/la-qualita-della-controinformazione-ubuntu-e-carlo/>

AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Daniela Vicca (Italy) has PhD in French literature, second PhD in Comparative Languages and Cultures, National Scientific Qualification (ASN). He is a Professor at the TFA (High School Teacher Qualification) and examiner in state teacher's selections. Since 2017, he has been appointed by the Ministry of education (MIUR) in the ONG Ecole Instrument de Paix Italy (DARE network board member), for school staff training projects on System Quality Evaluation (SNV), digital and didactic innovation, methodology, soft skills. He is an author of articles on global citizenship, new technologies for the classroom, school management processes and CLIL (Content language integrated learning).