

RFCDC – LEARNING ACTIVITIES BASED ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Identifying and deconstructing Covid-19-related misinformation



Target group:
**Learners in
secondary schools**

**DEALING WITH
PROPAGANDA MISINFORMATION
AND FAKE NEWS**



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Identifying and deconstructing Covid-19-related misinformation

RATIONALE

With the Covid-19 pandemic, a huge amount of correct and incorrect information has spread across the world. This flood of information is called an 'infodemic'. Due to the excessive amount of information, it is difficult for people to find reliable information when needed. We must rely on scientific advice and verify any information to limit the circulation of false and potentially dangerous claims.

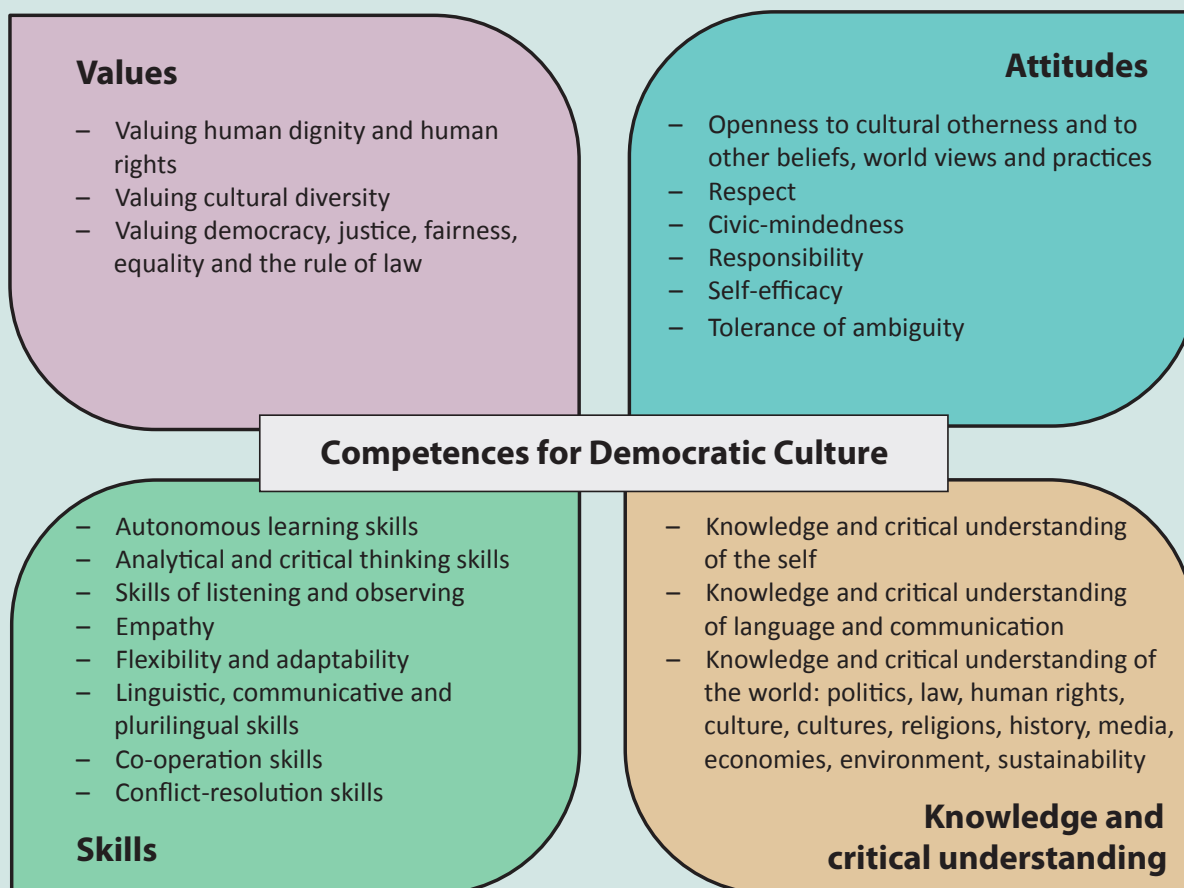
Misleading information can be divided into different categories. **Misinformation** refers to unintentionally disseminated incorrect communication without an intent or attempt to cause harm. **Disinformation** means intentionally misleading communication with

the purpose of causing harm to a person, community, group of people or government. Fact-checkers around the globe have been fighting against mis- and disinformation related to Covid-19. The Coronavirus Alliance database <https://www.poynter.org/coronavirusfactsalliance/> already contains more than 7,000 Covid-19 fact-checks.

It is important to be able to find, analyse and verify information carefully before acting or sharing it. This is especially important for teenagers who are more reliant on the use of social media and the internet for finding information and communicating their knowledge with others.



THE RFCDC COMPETENCES



COMPETENCES PROMOTED BY THE ACTIVITY

Autonomous learning skills; Analytical and critical thinking skills; Co-operation skills; Knowledge and critical understanding of media.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Completing this activity will help learners to:

- ▶ Gather information about Covid-19 effectively using a variety of techniques and sources
- ▶ Use information technology effectively to access, research, organise and integrate information
- ▶ Select the most reliable sources of information or advice from the range available
- ▶ Analyse all the information which he/she has about the different choices before making a decision
- ▶ Evaluate information about Covid-19 critically
- ▶ Make judgments about whether or not the materials under analysis are persuasive
- ▶ Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information and evidence
- ▶ When working as a member of a group, keep others informed about any relevant or useful information



DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

— The exercise can be conducted either by individual learners alone or in small groups. Ask learners to do their own Covid-19 information fact-check, following these steps:

1. Choose any Covid-19-related claim you can find on social media
2. Examine the claim by asking the following questions:
 - ▶ Who has produced this information and what expertise do they have?
 - Can you find the writers' names or a reliable web address?
 - When and where has the information been published? Is it still up to date?
 - What viewpoint does the source represent (that of a journalist, researcher, policymaker, public authority, lobbyist, what is the political leaning?)

- ▶ Why is the claim made? What are the motives of the disseminator?
 - Is it an advertisement, a piece of news, or someone's opinion?
 - Does anyone benefit from this? Is it sponsored by someone?
 - At whom it is targeted? How did you get it?
 - ▶ Does the message aim to elicit a strong emotional response?
 - Are there strong story elements attached to the message?
 - Are there striking images in the message? Are the pictures authentic, untouched and unmanipulated?
3. Verify the information from another source known to be reliable.
 4. Share your findings with your peers and teacher

— This exercise can be localised and expanded to cover other topics by inserting links to national fact-checking organisations' materials.

MATERIALS OR RESOURCES REQUIRED

The definition of the key terms, guidance for fact-checking, check-lists, links, and examples will be given. Some useful hints for teachers:

- ▶ Use several search engines and avoid using Wikipedia or any other single source as the only source of information.
- ▶ The domain owner information can be found from, for example, WHOIS-service: <https://www.whois.com/>
- ▶ Verify the authenticity of the images by using e.g. Google reverse image search.
- ▶ First Draft has an excellent toolbox to help you to verify images, links and videos: <https://start.me/p/vjv80b/first-draft-basic-toolkit>
- ▶ Check also the free verification tools offered by InVid: <https://www.invid-project.eu/>
- ▶ Check if the fact-checking organisations have already examined the case, for example: <https://www.poynter.org/ifcn-covid-19-misinformation/>



REFLECTION ON THE ACTIVITY AND THE LEARNING OUTCOMES THAT HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED

— Hold a reflection session after the exercise, in which learners share their experiences about the fact-checking process with others, discussing the following questions:

- ▶ What have they learnt from this activity?
- ▶ Was it a useful activity to have engaged in?
- ▶ Will they use this type of questions when encountering doubtful information on social media in the future?

FURTHER READING

- ▶ Finnish FactBarEDU site:
<https://www.faktabaari.fi/en/edu/>
- ▶ Fact-checking for educators and future voters:
https://www.faktabaari.fi/assets/FactBar_EDU_Fact-checking_for_educators_and_future_voters_13112018.pdf
- ▶ 'Information disorder: Teaching critical media literacy and citizenship in a digital age', Teaching Citizenship Journal, Issue No. 51, 2020:
<https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/journals>

www.coe.int/education

www.coe.int/en/web/education/covid-19

www.coe.int/free-to-speak-safe-to-learn

www.coe.int/rfcdc

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.