LINK

LINKING SENIORS TO DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY, DEMOCRACY AND DIVERSITY

KEY CONCEPTS

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AGEING POPULATION IN EUROPE

All EU countries are experiencing accelerated population ageing.

Europe is experiencing the social phenomenon of ageing. Currently 21.1% of the population in Europe is over 65 years of age, which together represents more than a fifth of the total population. Italy is the oldest country with 23.8% of the population over 65 years of age, and they are followed by Portugal (23.7%), Finland (23.1%) and Greece (22.7%). According to the European Commission's demographic projections, the European Union's population is expected to peak at 526 million people in 2050. By then, nearly 30 percent of the total population will be over 65. By 2060, the proportion of people aged 80 or over will be roughly the same as that of people under fifteen.

According to data from Eurostat, of the 27 countries that make up the European Union, only 4 of them have a population over 65 years of age that does not exceed 19%.

This is something of great concern to the European Union and international institutions. In fact, it is being addressed from several areas, in order to respond to the needs that arise with respect to this age group.

Population age structure by major age groups, 2012, 2021 and 2022
(% of the total population)

	0–14 years old			15–64 years old			65 years old or over		
	2012	2021	2022	2012	2021	2022	2012	2021	2022
EU (¹)	15.4	15.1	15.0	66.6	64.1	63.9	18.0	20.8	21.1
Belgium (¹)	17.0	16.7	16.6	65.6	64.0	63.8	17.4	19.3	19.5
Bulgaria	13.4	14.4	14.5	67.8	63.8	63.8	18.8	21.7	21.7
Czechia (¹)	14.7	16.1	16.1	69.1	63.8	63.3	16.2	20.2	20.6
Denmark	17.7	16.2	16.1	65.0	63.6	63.5	17.3	20.1	20.3
Germany (¹)	13.4	13.8	13.9	65.9	64.2	63.9	20.7	22.0	22.1
Estonia (¹)	15.5	16.4	16.4	66.8	63.2	63.2	17.7	20.3	20.4
Ireland	21.6	20.0	19.7	66.6	65.3	65.3	11.9	14.8	15.0
Greece	14.7	14.1	13.7	65.7	63.3	63.6	19.7	22.5	22.7
Spain	15.1	14.3	14.0	67.5	66.0	65.9	17.4	19.8	20.1
France (¹)	18.6	17.7	17.5	64.3	61.6	61.5	17.1	20.7	21.0
Croatia (¹)	15.1	14.2	14.3	67.0	64.3	63.2	17.9	21.4	22.5
Italy (¹)	14.0	12.9	12.7	65.2	63.6	63.5	20.8	23.5	23.8
Cyprus	16.5	16.0	16.1	70.7	67.5	67.4	12.8	16.4	16.5
Latvia	14.3	16.0	16.0	67.2	63.2	63.1	18.6	20.8	20.9
Lithuania	14.8	15.1	14.9	67.1	65.0	65.1	18.1	19.9	20.0
Luxembourg (¹)	17.1	16.0	15.9	68.9	69.4	69.3	14.0	14.6	14.8
Hungary (¹)	14.5	14.6	14.6	68.6	65.1	64.9	16.9	20.3	20.5
Malta	14.8	13.4	13.4	68.8	67.7	67.4	16.4	18.9	19.2
Netherlands	17.3	15.5	15.4	66.5	64.7	64.5	16.2	19.8	20.0
Austria	14.6	14.4	14.4	67.6	66.4	66.2	17.8	19.2	19.4
Poland	15.1	15.5	15.4	70.9	65.8	65.4	14.0	18.7	19.1
Portugal (¹)	14.9	13.4	12.8	66.0	64.1	63.5	19.0	22.4	23.7
Romania	15.8	15.8	16.2	68.0	64.9	64.3	16.1	19.3	19.5
Slovenia	14.3	15.1	15.1	68.9	64.3	63.8	16.8	20.7	21.1
Slovakia	15.4	15.9	16.1	71.8	67.0	66.6	12.8	17.1	17.4
Finland	16.5	15.6	15.4	65.4	61.7	61.6	18.1	22.7	23.1
Sweden	16.7	17.7	17.6	64.5	62.2	62.1	18.8	20.1	20.3
Iceland	20.7	18.7	18.6	66.6	66.6	66.5	12.6	14.7	15.0
Liechtenstein	15.8	14.6	14.6	69.8	66.8	66.3	14.4	18.6	19.2
Norway	18.5	17.1	16.9	66.1	65.0	64.9	15.4	17.9	18.2
Switzerland	15.0	15.1	15.1	67.8	66.1	65.9	17.2	18.8	19.0
Montenegro	19.0	17.9	17.9	68.1	66.2	66.1	12.9	15.9	16.0
North Macedonia	17.2	16.1	17.0	71.0	69.1	65.9	11.8	14.8	17.1
Albania	20.7	16.5	16.3	68.0	68.2	68.0	11.3	15.2	15.7
Serbia	14.4	14.3	14.3	68.3	64.5	64.4	17.3	21.3	21.3

(¹) Break in time series in various years between 2012 and 2022
Italic data: provisional/estimated
Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo_pjanind)

eurostat

The **Green Paper on Ageing**, published in 2021 by the **European Commission** in 22 languages, opens a wide debate on the impact of an ageing population for all of us as a society. It emphasizes the challenges and opportunities associated with demographic ageing, with intergenerational solidarity as a major foundation. The Commission's Green Paper takes a life course perspective, demonstrating how socio-economic inequities amassed over a lifetime have a significant influence in later life. The 24-page report covers a wide range of topics, beginning with health and education, continuing education, and work, and ending with old-age poverty, pensions, and long-term care.

In October 2020, the **European Council** invited the Commission to consider dedicating a chapter of its 'Green Paper on Ageing' to the rights of older persons, including older persons with disabilities, in a published document called "Improving the well-being of older persons in the era of digitalisation". It proposes that the Member States and the European Commission use the financing of the European Social Fund and the measures of regional and structural policies, to promote active ageing, autonomy and participation in all stages of life, especially in the field of digital, improving the quality and affordability of social services and supporting stakeholders, including local and regional public agents and civil society organisations. It highlights 10 measures to improve well-being, including creating a digital platform on participation and volunteering after working life, which could be linked to existing projects aimed at European civic participation.

On the other hand, the **United Nations** - UNECE Standing Working Group on Ageing - has launched in 2021 **Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing** aiming to support member States in the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). They were informed by the methodology of UNECE Road Maps for Mainstreaming Ageing and country experiences gained over the past 20 years of MIPAA implementation. The document outline five stages that support countries in establishing a Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Ageing (i.e., Getting Started; Analysis of the policy context, data situation and existing mainstreaming mechanisms to identify the gaps; Vision and Directions; Identification of Activities, and Monitoring and Evaluation).

"Efforts to protect older persons should not overlook the many variations within this category, their incredible resilience and positivity, and the multiple roles they have in society, including as caregivers, volunteers and community leaders. We must see the full diversity of people within the older persons category".

UN Secretary General Policy Brief – supported by 146 Member States, May 2020

Finally, in December 2020, the **United Nations** endorsed the **Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030)** aiming at improving the lives of older people, their families, and the communities in which they live across the world.

ACTIVE AGEING, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY

Active Ageing integrates activity and participation, representing the core dimensions, along with health, independence, and good ageing (Van Malderen et al. 2013). The adjective "active" refers to two closely related aspects: first, the activity and second, the ability to be the protagonist of one's life and its ageing process (Stenner et al. 2011). The human being is an active agent of his/her own ageing, which is built throughout life in interaction with an active world and through a continuous and dynamic process (WHO 2002). It recognizes that ageing is influenced by environmental, economic, cultural, and social conditions of a concrete context, which provides opportunities and resources or creates barriers for older people.

Older people have the right to enjoy full citizenship and to actively participate in a comprehensive manner in society, claiming to be social subjects and rather than objects of attention and administration. This implies their presence in the social and political dynamics of their community, overcoming the barriers that have been built around Active Ageing. For example, reducing the paradigm to issues, such as health, productive work, homogenization, or limited participation. We need to promote social citizen participation, social co-responsibility, intergenerational relations, and communication, in order to improve the quality of life of elderly.

The subject of how we age is essentially political. We do not all age at the same rate, and the social and economic circumstances in which we live have an impact on how long we live. Life expectancy and quality of life differ between countries and within them, owing to disparities in income and education. As a result, the politics of ageing is a topic that extends beyond an age group's electoral behaviour or policy preferences. Growing older has a lot to do with how societies are structured, what priorities they choose, and what questions they ask themselves.

The ageing population in Europe is a significant demographic trend that has been gaining attention in recent years. As a consequence of longer life expectancies and lower birth rates, many European countries are witnessing a gradual increase in the proportion of elderly citizens within their populations. **This shift in the age structure of society has several implications for the democratic process and society as a whole.**

One of the most noteworthy effects of an ageing population on the democratic process is the **potential alteration of political priorities**. As older citizens often have distinct needs and concerns compared to younger generations, politicians may need to adapt their policies to address issues like healthcare, pensions, and eldercare more comprehensively. This could lead to a shift in the political discourse and an increased focus on the welfare of senior citizens, potentially affecting the allocation of public resources and social policies.

Furthermore, the **ageing population has implications for the sustainability of social welfare systems**. With a growing number of retirees and a shrinking working-age population, the burden on pension and healthcare systems may increase. This could necessitate reforms in these areas, which, in turn, become critical topics of discussion in the democratic process. How to fund and manage these social programs fairly and effectively becomes a central concern for governments and policymakers.

Moreover, the ageing population can influence electoral outcomes. **Older citizens tend to have higher voter turnout rates compared to younger demographics**. Consequently, they wield significant political influence, and their voting preferences can shape the outcome of elections and the choices made by politicians. As a result, politicians may tailor their campaigns and policies to appeal to the ageing population, which could affect the overall direction of a country's democratic decision-making.

Research and empirical evidence have continuously shown that the elderly is as diverse as any other age group. The political and cultural perspectives of the elderly are more complex than we tend to assume. Older Europeans are more likely than all other age groups to limit their political activity to voting. But 28% of people over 60 combine voting with other forms of political action, roughly the same proportion as people under 30 who do the same. People past the retirement age are divided by the very same social inequalities experienced by younger groups. Specifically, elderly Europeans are divided by differences in attitudes and resources related to gender, health, education and income, among other factors. As occurs with all other age groups, these differences structure not only the social position of older people, but also what they do and want politically.

From Brexit to the rise of Viktor Orbán, Marine LePen and Geert Wilders, Europe's political crisis is often viewed through the lens of an intergenerational conflict. According to this view, the rise of authoritarian political projects, the deterioration of democratic values and hostility to European integration are a consequence of the continent's ageing population. This idea is sustained by a series of myths and deeply held prejudices that depict the elderly as an easily manipulated, fearful and selfish group. But this view is not supported by the facts. **Political analysts have repeatedly shown that there is no relationship between ageing and reactionary politics, and that our views are entirely the result of our political experience and education** (Centre de Cultúra Contemperánia/Open Society Foundations, 2017).

Promoting conscious democratic participation among seniors and raising awareness of democracy threats, such as fake news, is essential to ensure that this age group remains engaged and informed in the democratic process. Seniors, with their wealth of experience and wisdom, have a valuable role to play in shaping the future of their societies. By fostering an understanding of how democracy works and the dangers of misinformation, they can make more informed decisions when participating in elections and advocating for policies that benefit both their generation and those to come.

DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY AMONG SENIOR POPULATION

Digital skills are defined as a range of abilities to use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information. They enable people to create and share digital content, communicate and solve problems for effective self-fulfillment in life, learning, work, and social activities at large.

Digital literacy is the ability to find, sort, evaluate, manage and create information in digital forms. While the exact definition may vary between institutions or universities, the concept of digital literacy can generally be broken down into three main skills:
- How to consume information (this is the ability to complete digital tasks like e.g.: using an e-reader, viewing online banking statements, reading an online news article);
- How to create information (this skill includes everything from making and editing videos to writing articles to creating and editing electronic files);
- How to communicate information (communication can look like many different things, from composing a tweet to sending an email to sharing documents online).

Digital Media Literacy is the ability to critically, effectively and responsibly access, use, understand and engage with media of all kinds.

Following Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's call for greater digital leadership and a common vision for 2030 as well as the European Council's request that the EU develop a Digital Compass, the Commission adopted in March 2021 the 2030 **Digital Compass: the European Way for the Digital Decade Communication**. It sets out the EU's digital ambitions and lays out its vision for digital transformation by 2030. The European Council backed the Commission's approach. As projected in the Communication and in response to a call from the European Council, on 15 September 2021 the Commission adopted a proposal for a Decision on a Path to the Digital Decade, setting out the digital targets the EU as a whole is expected to reach by the end of the decade.

The 2030 target of the Digital Compass is that at least 80% of citizens have at least basic digital skills. While 84% of people used the internet regularly in 2019, only 56% possessed at least basic digital skills. The Netherlands and Finland are the frontrunners in the EU, while Bulgaria and Romania are lagging behind. A large part of the EU population, however, still lacks basic digital skills. Moreover, the 56% is only a slight increase – two percentage points – since 2015, or a yearly growth rate of only 0.9%. This growth rate needs to increase threefold to reach the 2030 target of 80%.

All EU countries are experiencing accelerated population ageing. It means that NGOs, social organisations and local and regional public bodies should be ready to respond to the educational needs that arise with respect to this age group.

In terms of content of the trainings, initiatives including or targeting specifically older adults tend to cover more systematically skills related to the basic uses of digital devices (often provided by associations or Third Age Universities), digital content creation, online safety and problem solving than initiatives intended to other social or age groups. The starting point for the training should be the individual's lifeworld and their experience. This means that the older people who are to be trained should be involved in the conception and planning of the training courses.

A very recent study about "Promoting Media Literacy Among Older People" (Päivi Rasi, Hanna Vuojärvi, Susanna Rivinen - University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland) published in May 2020 offers a systematic overview about understanding of how to foster media literacy among older people and underlines some critical points and open questions which affect the perception of the needs expressed by older people regarding their media literacy.

According to the review, topics like creativity and digital participation of older people are not yet in the focus of the research regarding media literacy interventions. Instead, focus has largely been on older people's competencies in using digital technologies while almost no research has been done regarding older people's capacity to understand online information or to create digital content for a better participation in society.

Additionally, the review stressed the importance of a needs-based approach. This would include fostering older people's self-efficacy as the users of digital technologies and media while providing social support for learning. In this regard, the review confirms the advantages of peer-to-peer teaching and intergenerational approaches in media and digital literacy trainings for older people. The chosen approach to develop older people's digital and media literacy also differs from the initiatives targeting other age and social groups.

Although the need for digital literacy among older people is evident as it is for other age groups, very few initiatives address older adults, with the vast majority of the existing examples focusing on children.

# MEDIA LITERACY, DISINFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION

Media are all around us. From the TV we watch and the advertisements we see to the social media sites we use and the news we read. Our digitally connected world is constantly changing how we play, learn and interact with each other.

Media refers to any channel of communication where large numbers of people receive information and entertainment, that is television, radio, newspapers, and the Internet. This can include anything from printed paper to digital data, and encompasses art, news, educational content and numerous other forms of information. That's where **digital media literacy** comes in. To survive and thrive in a digital age, we all need to know how to access digital media and how to use it, understand it and engage with it to our full potential.

- **Access** means being able to access devices in order to use and consume media and to find content with tools such as search engines, databases, wikis and streaming services. As represented in the graph, it is indeed the first requirement in order to achieve digital media literacy.
- **Use** is the technical skills needed to use digital and media tools like cameras, computers, mobile devices, software and online platforms.
- **Understand** means thinking critically about how and why media are made; examining the impact that media have on us and on society; and reflecting on how we use digital and media tools.
- **Engage** means using media effectively and responsibly to participate in our online and offline communities as engaged and responsible citizens.

Digital Media Literacy is the ability to critically, effectively, and responsibly access, use, understand and engage with media of all kinds.
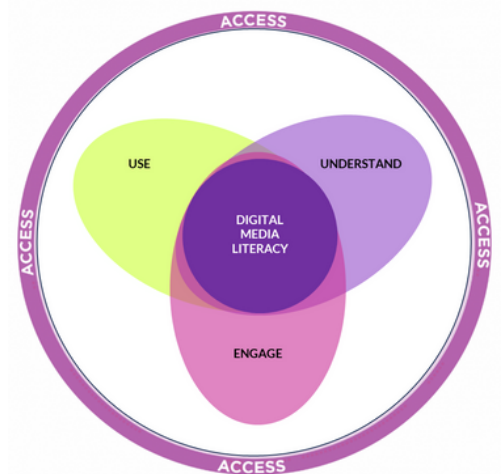
According to recent research, elderly individuals are a demographic that is particularly vulnerable to fake news online. For instance, those 65 and older were twice as likely as 18-29 year olds to be exposed to false news on Twitter and seven times more likely to spread fake news on Facebook during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign. In some studies, older persons consumed fake news to a far greater extent than younger people during a roughly 3-year period after analyzing media consumption across mobile, desktop, and television for a nationally representative sample.

Older persons' low digital literacy may account for their increased vulnerability to online fake news. According to research, older folks generally have lower levels of digital and internet-related skills than younger people. This pattern most likely results from a number of variables. For instance, older people are not "digital natives," in contrast to younger people, and may have less expertise using modern media technologies and platforms because they did not play a significant role in their professional and personal lives. Additionally, the design of technology itself frequently makes it more challenging for older folks to use them (e.g., small text sizes, reliance on touchscreen inputs).

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MISINFORMATION, DISINFORMATION, AND FAKE NEWS?

Online Disinformation refers to intentionally false or misleading content, often masquerading as news content, and is used to influence people through online channels. Its dissemination is facilitated by social media and an anti-establishment current in European politics that fuels a demand for alternative narratives. It may be produced to obtain advertising profit or for political purposes.

Its threat to democracy lies in its ability to sway public opinion based on untruths. This type of content does not have to abide by standards of accuracy or truthfulness because it operates primarily on independent websites that are not subject to the regulatory framework that governs traditional media. Instead, regardless of the empirical veracity of the story, it preys on readers' anxieties, insecurities, societal divisions, and ideological polarisation and gives them the satisfaction of reading something that supports their worldview. By doing this, it solidifies their opinions and pushes them closer to the extremes.

Everyone has heard of the term "fake news," but do you actually understand what it means? Are you aware of the distinction between misinformation and disinformation? It's crucial to understand the numerous ways that false information is spread, as well as the motivations and appeals behind it, in order to prevent and counteract it.

MISINFORMATION "False information that is spread, regardless of whether there is intent to mislead."
DISINFORMATION "Deliberately misleading or biased information; manipulated narrative or facts; propaganda."
FAKE NEWS "Information that is purposely created, sensational, emotionally charged, misleading, or completely invented in the style of mainstream news."
DEEPFAKES Are a new and challenging type of audio, video, or image deception that is typically used for hostile purposes.

The European Commission's definition of disinformation — "all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit" — captures the two main motives that drive its creation and distribution.

First, the commercial motive: to obtain advertising revenue or market share, typically by attracting readers with sensational claims.

Second, the political motive: to shape public opinion according to particular interests. Both present a political problem, and the line between the two is often blurred, especially when profit-driven disinformation becomes 'useful' to political actors.

WHAT TYPES OF "FAKE NEWS" CAN WE FIND?

There are different types of fake news, depending on the motivation of those who create it. For example:

Clickbait	Sensationalism is appealing, and internet clicks and shares are fueled by bizarre or shocking claims and distorted visuals. Clickbait is a term used to describe articles that are purposefully written to generate website traffic and advertising revenue for the website owners, frequently at the expense of accuracy and truth.
Propaganda	This refers to false or distorted stories written to mislead audiences and promote a political agenda or biased perspective.
Poor quality journalism	When journalists don't have enough time to thoroughly check their facts before posting, real errors turn into fake news. However, reputable new sources will make corrections to their stories and be open and honest with readers when they make mistakes.
Misleading headlines	Sometimes a story may be broadly true, but a sensationalist or misleading headline is used to entice readers to click on it. This can lead to fake news – since usually only the headline and small snippets of the article are displayed on social media, where it can quickly spread.
Imposter content	This is when genuine news sources are impersonated with false, made-up stories to deceive or mislead audiences.

WHY ARE WE VULNERABLE TO FAKE NEWS?

Cognitive biases affect the way we use information. Cognitive biases are detours or shortcuts in reasoning, remembering, or evaluating something that can lead to mistaken conclusions. They're universal. Everyone has them. Four types of cognitive biases are especially relevant in relation to fake news:

First, we tend to focus on headlines and tags without reading the article they're associated with.
Second, social media's popularity signals affect our attention to and acceptance of information.
Third, fake news takes advantage of partisanship, a very strong reflex.
And fourth, persistence - there's a weird tendency for false information to stick around, even after it's corrected.
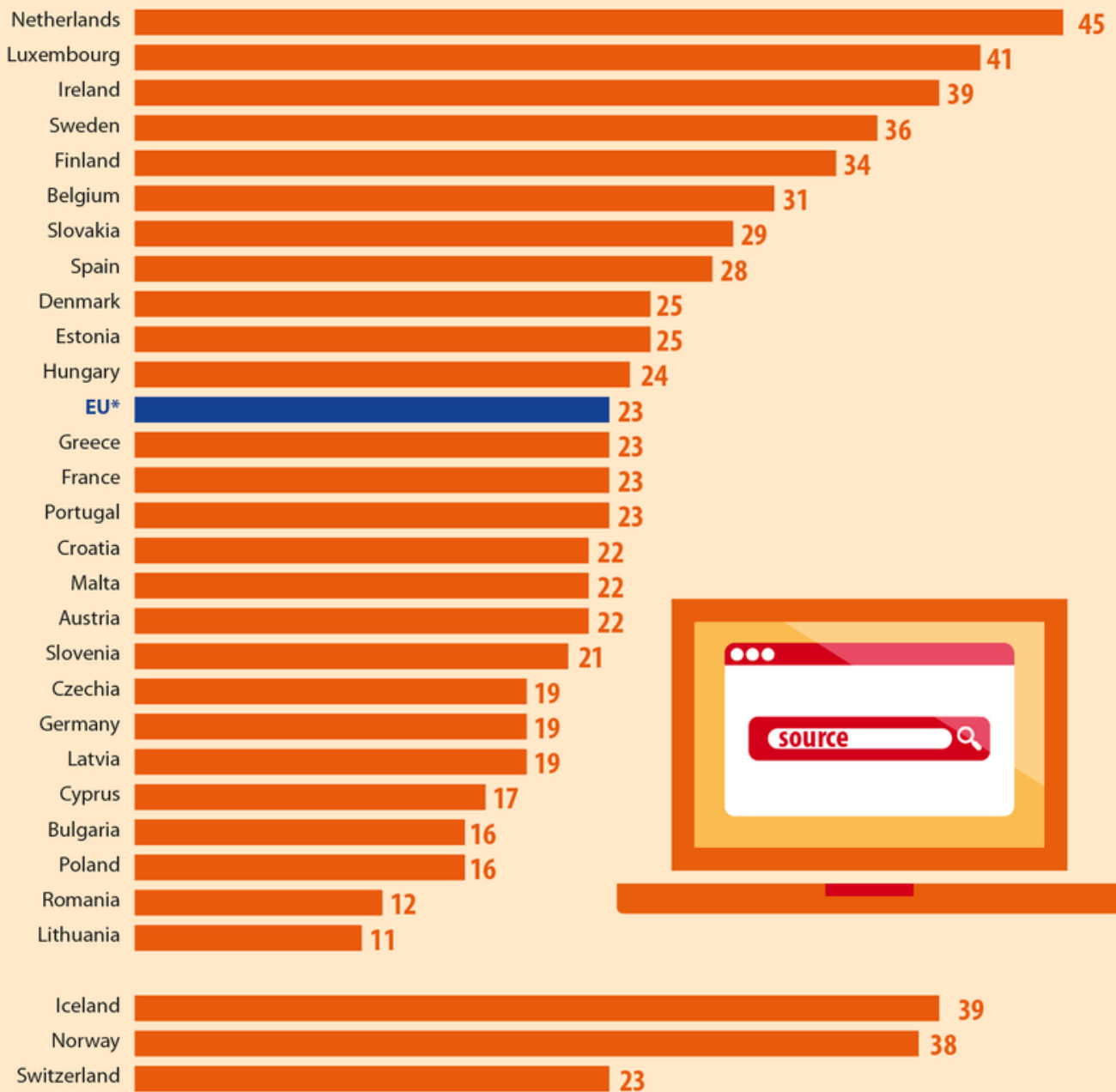
HOW MANY PEOPLE VERIFIED ONLINE INFORMATION IN 2021?

In 2021, a significant portion of individuals within the European Union, specifically 47% of those aged 16 to 74, encountered information on news websites or social media that they suspected to be either false or uncertain within the three months leading up to the survey. However, it is noteworthy that a notably smaller percentage, approximately 23%, actually took the initiative to confirm the accuracy of the information or content they came across.

This data underscores the prevalence of potentially unreliable information online and highlights the importance of critical thinking and fact-checking when consuming content from digital sources. It also reveals that a substantial portion of the population may still be susceptible to misinformation without actively verifying the information they encounter.

People who verified information found on online news sites or social media in previous 3 months, 2021
(% of individuals aged 16-74)

Country	%
Netherlands	45
Luxembourg	41
Ireland	39
Sweden	36
Finland	34
Belgium	31
Slovakia	29
Spain	28
Denmark	25
Estonia	25
Hungary	24
EU*	23
Greece	23
France	23
Portugal	23
Croatia	22
Malta	22
Austria	22
Slovenia	21
Czechia	19
Germany	19
Latvia	19
Cyprus	17
Bulgaria	16
Poland	16
Romania	12
Lithuania	11
Iceland	39
Norway	38
Switzerland	23

*Italy: data not available. As a result, the EU aggregate has been estimated.

ec.europa.eu/**eurostat**

Source: Eurostat

HOW TO IDENTIFY, MONITOR AND VERIFY DISINFORMATION?

Identifying, monitoring, and verifying disinformation on the internet has become increasingly important in today's digital age. Fortunately, a number of tools have been created in response to the spread of misinformation with the goal of assisting people and organisations in tracking and confirming misinformation that is disseminated online. There are numerous online resources available worldwide that provide tools and cover misinformation.

There are different types of online tools for tracking disinformation: some of them analyse and visualise the spread of disinformation and allow for fact-checking (e.g. Hoaxy), others allow users to browse and search for fact-checks in relation to, for example, a specific topic or a politician's statement (e.g. Google Fact Check Explorer).
Please check Annex 1 to know some of these tools.

These tools not only assist in recognizing the extent of misinformation but also empower individuals to cross-verify the accuracy of the information they come across. To explore and learn more about these valuable resources, we recommend consulting the Annex of the LINK document 'Key Concepts' which provides information about some of these tools and their functionalities.

In addition to the mentioned tools, it's crucial to emphasize the role of media literacy and critical thinking in combating disinformation. Developing the skills to evaluate information sources, identify bias, and apply fact-checking techniques is essential for individuals to become more resilient against the spread of false information.

Some organizations and educational institutions offer resources and courses aimed at enhancing media literacy, helping people become more discerning consumers of online content. By combining these skills with the use of dedicated tools, individuals can actively contribute to a more informed and trustworthy digital landscape, reducing the impact of disinformation on society as a whole.

DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY TOOLKIT

To be a literate citizen everyone has to "think critically and click wisely" UNESCO has postulated in its recent publication on digital media literacy.
We are going to summarise some tools that will be explored in the activities of LINK Program:

Five Key Questions of Media Literacy that citizens must ask when confronted with any kind of media message:

- Who created this message?

- What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

- How might different people understand this message differently than me?

- What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?

- Why is this message being sent?

These five key questions lead to Five Core Concepts of Media Literacy that citizens need to understand:

Who created this message? All media messages are 'constructed.'

1

The first is the obvious but deep realisation that although appearing "genuine," media materials are not "natural." Media texts are constructed in the same manner that highways and buildings are: a plan is formed, the necessary components are gathered, and common people are paid to perform various tasks.

The second realisation is that decisions are made during the creative process. When a story's finale is written one-way, other possible endings might not have been considered, just as when some words are said while others are cut out, one picture is chosen when dozens may have been rejected. However, as viewers, we are not given access to the phrases, images, or conclusions that were dropped. All that we see, hear, or read has been approved!

Furthermore, no one ever explains the rationale behind certain decisions. As a result, whatever is "built" by a small group of individuals ends up being "normal" for the rest of us.

What creative techniques are used to attract my attention? Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.

2

This second message invites us to investigate the "format" of a media message and looks at how a message is put together, including the creative elements such as text, music, colour, movement, and camera position.

It is quite complex, but it can be useful if citizens are aware of the fundamentals of visual communication, including lighting, composition, camera angle, editing, use of props, body language, and symbols, as well as how these techniques affect the various meanings we can derive from a message. This is important because so much of today's communication, including the news, is visual. Understanding the grammar, syntax, and metaphor structure of media, especially visual language, promotes our comprehension of and enjoyment from media as a produced "text" and makes us less vulnerable to emotional manipulation.

How might different people understand this message differently than me? Different people experience the same media message differently.

3

No two individuals watch the same movie, listen to the same music on the radio, or even watch the same TV show together and interpret the same way! Each viewer brings to every media experience a distinct set of life experiences (age, gender, education, cultural upbringing, etc.) that, when applied to or combined with the text, provide distinct interpretations.

Understanding how media producers "target" various demographic groups in order to sway their opinions or, more frequently, sell them something, depends on our shared experiences.

What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message? Media have embedded values and points of view.

4

Subtle messages about who and what are significant are present in every media. All media messages are created, thus decisions must be taken. These decisions inexorably reveal the beliefs, attitudes, and values of those who are constructing. The judgments made on which stories air first, how long they run, what kinds of images are picked, and other aspects of the news reflect values.

Why is this message being sent? Most media messages are organised to gain profit and/or power.

The majority of global media outlets were founded as for-profit organisations and are still in operation today. Newspapers and magazines arrange their pages such that the adverts are on the left and the news is on the right. Similar to how they are a standard feature of most TV viewing ads. Many individuals are unaware of the fact that what is actually being sold through commercial media is not just the audience to the advertisers, but also the audience to the advertised products.

5

Since the Internet became a global platform where groups, organisations, and even individuals have ready access to effective tools that can persuade others to a certain point of view, whether positive or negative, the issue of message motivation has undergone a significant transformation.

The Internet offers numerous benefits for all users to be able to distinguish between reputable websites and phoney, hateful, or hoax websites, identify propaganda, understand rhetorical tactics, and validate sources.

STEPS TO IDENTIFY FAKE NEWS AND MISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

1

CHECK THE SOURCE

Check the web address for the page you're looking at. Sometimes, fake news sites may have spelling errors in the URL or use less conventional domain extensions such as ".infonet" or ".offer". If you are unfamiliar with the site, look in the About Us section.

2

CHECK THE AUTHOR

Research them to see if they are credible – for example, are they real, do they have a good reputation, are they writing about their specific area of expertise, and do they have a particular agenda? Consider what the writer's motivation might be.

3

CHECK OTHER SOURCES

Are other reputable news or media outlets reporting the story? Are credible sources cited within the story? Professional global news agencies have editorial guidelines and resources for fact-checking, so if they are also reporting the story, that's a good sign.

4

MAINTAIN A CRITICAL MINDSET

A lot of fake news try to provoke strong emotional reactions such as fear or anger. Maintain a critical mindset by asking yourself – why has this story been written? Is it promoting a particular cause? Is it trying to make me click through to another website?

5

CHECK THE FACTS

Credible news include facts – data, statistics, quotes from experts, and so on. If these are missing, question why. False information often contain incorrect dates or altered timelines, so it's a good idea to check when the article was published. Is it a current or old news story?

6

CHECK THE COMMENTS

Even if the article or video is legitimate, the comments below may not be. Often links or comments posted in response to content can be auto generated by bots or people hired to put our misleading or confusing information.

7

CHECK YOUR OWN BIASES

We all have biases – could these influence the way you respond to an article? Social media can create echo by suggesting stories that match your existing interests, and opinions. The more we read from diverse perspectives, more likely we can draw accurate conclusions.

8

CHECK WHETHER IT'S A JOKE

Satirical websites are popular, and sometimes it is not always clear whether a story is just a joke or parody. Check the website to see if it's known for satire or creating funny stories.

9

CHECK IF IMAGES ARE AUTHENTIC

Images could have been edited or manipulated. Possible signs include warping , strange shadows, jagged edges, etc. Bear in mind, too, that an image may be accurate but simply used in a misleading context. You can use tools such as Google's Reverse Image Search.

10

USE A FACT-CHECKING SITE

Fake news relies on believers reposting, retweeting, or otherwise sharing false information. If you're not sure whether an article is authentic or not, pause and think before you share.

THE IMPACT OF DISINFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

Only a few years ago, the internet was widely seen as a force for good in supporting democracy. There were even situations where it was defended that was a mean to allow to give media's power to ordinary citizens, giving them a voice and even effect real change.

However, in recent years, a number of high-profile political events have shattered our faith in the internet's democratic potential. Beginning with the British electorate's decision to leave the European Union in the 'Brexit' referendum and Donald Trump's election as President of the United States, followed by elections in several European countries where radical illiberal parties performed well, 'fake news' has become a source of intense political concern for the role it may have played in influencing these outcomes.

Disinformation affects the integrity and fundamental health of democratic processes. As evidenced by Resolution 2326 (2020) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), which expressed concern "about the scale of information pollution in a digitally connected and increasingly polarised world, the spread of disinformation campaigns aimed at shaping public opinion, trends of foreign electoral interference and manipulation." Public discourse in a democratic environment must be of high quality and be based on shared narratives and information.

In this regard, **the European Parliament sees disinformation as exerting a "increasing systematic pressure" on the democratic stability of European societies.** According to the Shaping Europe's Digital Future strategy of the European Commission, " disinformation erodes trust in institutions along with digital and traditional media and harms our democracies by hampering the ability of citizens to take informed decisions.". Disinformation, by escalating tensions and undermining democratic pillars like electoral systems, is also foreseen to polarise democratic societies, the report adds.

In any case, internet watchdogs, academics, and the general public are concerned about disinformation. According to a 2017 Freedom House report on internet freedom, "online manipulation and disinformation tactics played an important role in elections in at least 18 countries over the past year... [contributing] to a seventh consecutive year of overall decline in internet freedom". According to a Eurobarometer survey conducted in February 2018, 83% of Europeans consider fake news to be "a danger to democracy."

Disinformation thus aims to disprove the very idea that a reliable fact exists, which is the cornerstone of any sound democracy. Democracy is about making decisions, which calls for informed discussion. It takes the concept of "truth" to hold politicians responsible. The media has historically played a number of roles, including informing the public and holding authorities accountable. The internet, however, may now play the most significant role in the media. Therefore, one of the structural pillars of democracy is challenged by the proliferation of unreliable information online. Disinformation is therefore more than just a moral issue; it actively undermines democracy. Therefore, democratic societies must be alarmed enough by its consequences to take action to stop it.

It can also lead to political indifference by fostering uncertainty and confusion to the point where citizens are overwhelmed and unable to determine with certainty what is truly true. When determining the difference between fact and fiction requires too much effort or expertise, numerous people avoid politics completely. Citizens who have become disillusioned may even lose trust in democracy.

Figure below suggests that around 80 % of people believe that disinformation has negative impacts in their own countries' politics, in other countries' politics and in political discussions among families and friends, which increases polarisation.
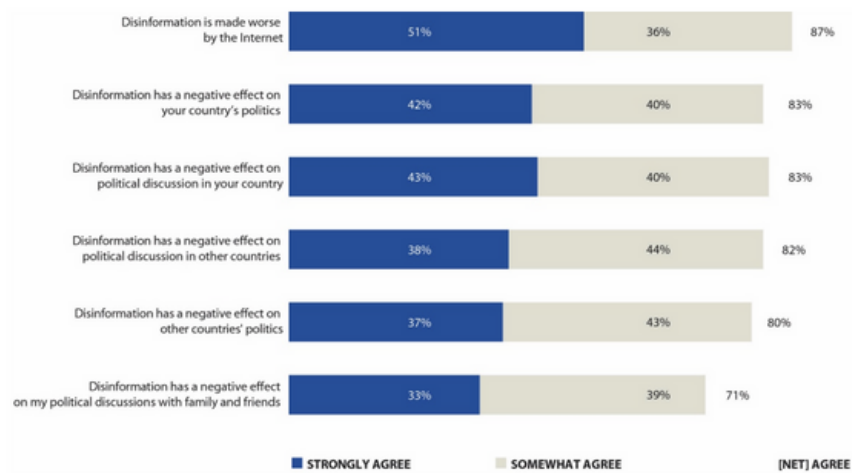
Source: Colomina, C., Margalef, H. S., Youngs, R., & Jones, K. (2021). The impact of disinformation on democratic processes and human rights in the world. Brussels: European Parliament.

POLICIES AND MEASURES AT THE EU LEVEL

Since the beginning of 2019, several European legal and policy instruments have addressed the information ecosystem, and each made mention of disinformation. Evaluation of the Code of Practice against Disinformation found that self-regulation is insufficient to deal with this complex issue efficiently. The European Democracy Action Plan defined various types of disinformation, and identified certain strategies to be applied:

- Improving EU and Member State capacity to counter disinformation
- More obligations and accountability for online platforms
- Empowering citizens to make informed decisions
  - Strengthen media literacy
  - Create common guidelines for teachers and educational staff
  - Involvement of journalists in media literacy activities
  - Support for civil society (including funding)

Everyone has a role to play in combatting disinformation and misinformation.
Media literacy, including critical thinking, is an effective capacity helping citizens of all ages to navigate the news environment, identify different types of media and how they work, have a critical understanding of social networks and make informed decisions.
Media literacy skills help citizens check information before sharing it, understand who is behind it, why it was distributed to them and whether it is credible.
Digital literacy enables people to participate in the online environment wisely, safely and ethically.

ACTIONS:
- Support new innovative projects to fight disinformation under various EU programmes, in particular by civil society organisations and higher education institutions, with journalists' involvement.
- Increase support and funding for and diversifying initiatives, including by civil society organisations, to promote media literacy and help citizens identify disinformation, within the EU and beyond.

THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union (EU) is a political and economic union of 27 European countries that are located primarily in Europe. The EU traces its origins to the aftermath of World War II with the aim of fostering economic cooperation and preventing further conflicts. Over time, it has evolved into a complex institution with its own currency, the euro, and a range of policies and regulations that cover areas such as trade, competition, agriculture, and more.

The aims of the European Union within its borders are:

- Promote peace, its values and the well-being of its citizens
- Offer freedom, security and justice without internal borders, while also taking appropriate measures at its external borders to regulate asylum and immigration and prevent and combat crime
- Establish an internal market
- Achieve sustainable development based on balanced economic growth and price stability and a highly competitive market economy with full employment and social progress
- Protect and improve the quality of the environment
- Promote scientific and technological progress
- Combat social exclusion and discrimination
- Promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, and protection of the rights of the child
- Enhance economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among EU countries
- Respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity
- Establish an economic and monetary union whose currency is the euro

The aims of the EU within the wider world are:

- Uphold and promote its values and interests
- Contribute to peace and security and the sustainable development of the Earth
- Contribute to solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights
- Strict observance of international law

The EU's aims are laid out in article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty.

The European Union is founded on the following values:

The EU's values are laid out in article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Human dignity

Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected, protected and constitutes the real basis of fundamental rights.

Freedom

Freedom of movement gives citizens the right to move and reside freely within the Union. Individual freedoms such as respect for private life, freedom of thought, religion, assembly, expression and information are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Democracy

The functioning of the EU is founded on representative democracy. A European citizen automatically enjoys political rights. Every adult EU citizen has the right to stand as a candidate and to vote in elections to the European Parliament. EU citizens have the right to stand as a candidate and to vote in their country of residence, or in their country of origin.

Equality

Equality is about equal rights for all citizens before the law. The principle of equality between women and men underpins all European policies and is the basis for European integration. It applies in all areas. The principle of equal pay for equal work became part of the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

Rule of law

The EU is based on the rule of law. Everything the EU does is founded on treaties, voluntarily and democratically agreed by its EU countries. Law and justice are upheld by an independent judiciary. The EU countries gave final jurisdiction to the European Court of Justice - its judgments have to be respected by all.

Human rights

Human rights are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. These cover the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, the right to the protection of your personal data, and the right to get access to justice.

European institutions

The institutional organisation of the European Union reflects the values upon which it was founded. The 7 European institutions, 7 EU bodies and over 30 decentralised agencies are spread across the EU. They work together to address the common interests of the EU and European people.

There are 4 main decision-making institutions which lead the EU's administration. These institutions collectively provide the EU with policy direction and play different roles in the law-making process:
- The European Parliament (Brussels/Strasbourg/Luxembourg) represents the citizens of EU countries and is directly elected by them. It takes decisions on European laws jointly with the Council of the European Union. It also approves the EU budget.
- The European Council (Brussels) which consists of the Heads of State or Government of the EU Member States, defines the general political direction and priorities of the European Union. The European Council is chaired by a president who is elected for a 2.5-year term, renewable once. It does not adopt laws except for possible EU Treaty amendments.
- The Council of the EU (Brussels/Luxembourg) is where national ministers from each government meet to adopt laws and coordinate policies. Ministers meet in different configurations depending on the topic to be discussed. The Council of the EU takes decisions on European laws jointly with the European Parliament.
- The European Commission (Brussels/Luxembourg/Representations across the EU) represents the common interests of the EU and is the EU's main executive body. It uses its 'right of initiative' to put forward proposals for new laws, which are scrutinised and adopted by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. It also manages EU policies (except for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, which is conducted by the High Representative for CFSP, Vice-President of the European Commission), and the EU's budget and ensures that countries apply EU law correctly. Representation offices act as the Commission's voice across the EU. They monitor and analyse public opinion in their host country, provide information about EU policies and the way the EU works, and facilitate the Commission's cooperation with the host member country.

The work of these 4 main EU institutions, which covers the legislative and executive tasks of the EU, is complemented by the work of another 3 EU institutions which are responsible for managing the judicial, financial and external audit aspects of the European Union:

- the Court of Justice of the European Union (Luxembourg)
- the European Central Bank (Frankfurt)
- the European Court of Auditors (Luxembourg)

In addition to the institutions, there are a number of bodies which play specialised roles in helping the EU to fulfil its tasks. Some bodies have the task of advising the institutions (the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Committee of the Regions); others ensure that the institutions comply with EU rules and procedures (the European Ombudsman, the European Data Protection Supervisor). The European External Action Service is an external policy body that supports the EU on foreign affairs matters.

The national parliaments of the Member States also play a role in taking decisions and making laws, as do two advisory bodies. These are: the European Committee of the Regions, which consists of representatives of regional and local government; and the European Economic and Social Committee, comprising representatives of employees' and employers' organisations and stakeholders' groups.

Generally, it is the Commission that proposes new laws and the Parliament and the Council that adopt them.

In a nutshell, the European Commission proposes new initiatives, then both the Parliament and the Council review it and can propose amendments. A proposal is adopted into law when the Parliament and Council agree on a joint text, and it is published in the EU's Official Journal. The citizens can have a saying in frequent public consultations in the platform "Have your say".

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) is a European Union (EU) mechanism aimed at increasing direct democracy by enabling "EU citizens to participate directly in the development of EU policies", introduced with the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007. This popular initiative enables one million citizens of the European Union, who are nationals of at least seven member states, to call directly on the European Commission to propose a legal act (notably a Directive or Regulation) in an area where the member states have conferred powers onto the EU level. This right to request the commission to initiate a legislative proposal puts citizens on the same footing as the European Parliament and the European Council. You can know more about this at https://citizens-initiative.europa.eu/_en

In the official pages of the European Commission all this information as well as the EU decision-making process and some training materials that you can adapt for your target group:

https://european-union.europa.eu
https://learning-corner.learning.europa.eu/learning-materials_en
https://op.europa.eu/webpub/com/eu-and-me/en/index.html

EU CITIZENSHIP

EU citizenship is sustained and based on the common values expressed in Article 2 of the Treaty, which identifies them as respect for democracy, the rule of law, equality and fundamental rights. Eurobarometer polls show that European citizens choose almost the same values that best represent the EU, namely democracy, human rights, rule of law and peace.

European identity is defined by two key layers:

- Europe as a cultural community of shared values (cultural identity);
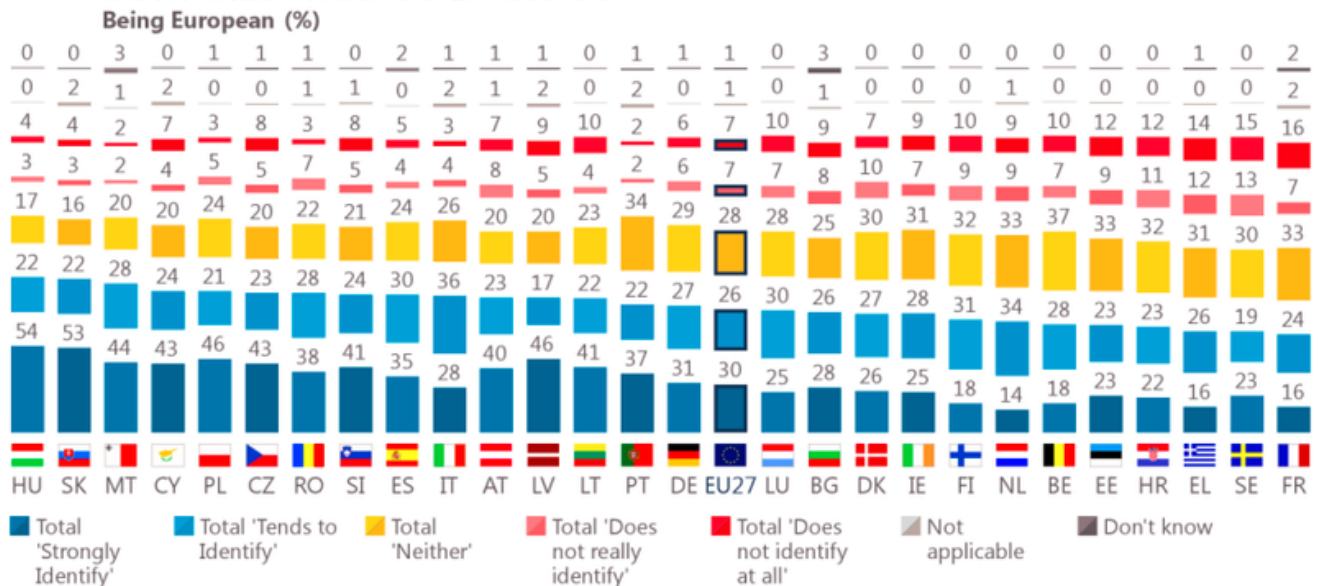- Europe as a political community of shared democratic practices (political identity).

More than half of EU citizens identify with being European. To be precise, 56% of respondents across the EU indicate that they identify with being European, 28% do not engage, and 14% indicate that they do not identify. Europeans seem to be much more likely to identify with their family (81%), nationality (73%), gender (72%), age and stage of life (71%). Less important, however, are religion (53%) and political orientation (54%).
To promote an EU identity, we need first to understand the aim, values and functioning of the European Union.

Some variation can be found among different EU member states. A higher than average percentage of respondents indicate that they identify with being European in Hungary (76%), Slovakia (75%), Malta (72%), Cyprus and Poland (both 67%), Romania and Czechia (both 66%), Spain and Slovenia (65%), Italy (64%), and Lithuania, Latvia, and Austria (all 63%).

Respondents in Greece and Sweden (both 42%), Croatia (45%), Belgium and Estonia (both 46%), the Netherlands (48%) and Finland (49%) are less likely to identify with being European. In Sweden (28%), Greece (26%), France and Croatia (both 23%), Estonia (21%), Finland (19%), and the Netherlands (18%), people are more likely to say they do not identify with being European.

QC4.10 In general, how much do you identify yourself with each of the following? Please answer using a scale from "0" to "10", where "0" means "not at all" and "10" means "a lot".

Being European (%)

	HU	SK	MT	CY	PL	CZ	RO	SI	ES	IT	AT	LV	LT	PT	DE	EU27	LU	BG	DK	IE	FI	NL	BE	EE	HR	EL	SE	FR
Don't know	0	0	3	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Not applicable	0	2	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	2	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total 'Does not identify at all'	4	4	2	7	3	8	3	8	5	3	7	9	10	2	6	7	10	9	7	9	10	9	10	12	12	14	15	16
Total 'Does not really identify'	3	3	2	4	5	5	7	5	4	4	8	5	4	2	6	7	7	8	10	7	9	9	7	9	11	12	13	7
Total 'Neither'	17	16	20	20	24	20	22	21	24	26	20	20	23	34	29	28	25	30	31	32	33	37	33	32	31	30	30	33
Total 'Tends to Identify'	22	22	28	24	21	23	28	24	30	36	23	17	22	27	26	26	30	27	28	31	31	34	28	23	23	26	19	24
Total 'Strongly Identify'	54	53	44	43	46	43	38	41	35	28	40	46	41	37	31	30	25	28	26	25	18	14	18	23	22	16	23	16

Legend: ■ Total 'Strongly Identify' — ■ Total 'Tends to Identify' — ■ Total 'Neither' — ■ Total 'Does not really identify' — ■ Total 'Does not identify at all' — ▨ Not applicable — ■ Don't know

Wanting to analyze the respondents from a socio-demographic point of view, we can note that:

- young people who identify as European are only 54% (ages 15-24), compared with 59% of respondents aged 55 and older.
- people who enjoyed education up to or beyond the age of 20 feel more European (59%), compared to those who left school between the ages of 16 and 19 (52%).
- members of the upper class are more likely (64%) to identify with being European than respondents from the upper and middle class (both 60%), working class (54%) and lower class (52%).
- people in rural villages are slightly less likely (55%) to identify with being European than those living in large cities (60%).
- respondents who have a positive image of the EU are also more likely (70%) to identify with being European than those who have a neutral (50%) or negative (35%) image.

EU VALUES

EU values are shared across all European countries, with more than half of respondents saying they agree with all the values listed, namely independence of the judiciary, democracy, respect for human rights, the role of the law, equality, non-discrimination and solidarity. In fact, most respondents have high (64%) or medium-high (22%) agreement with EU values. Only 8% have a low-medium agreement score and 6% low. In almost all member states, nearly half or more have a positive attitude toward these values.

Looking at countries specifically, the highest scores are in Cyprus (77%), Sweden and Greece (both 75%), Croatia, Denmark and Spain (72%), Austria (66%), the Netherlands and Ireland (70%), Latvia (69%), and Germany and Bulgaria (both 67%). Lower scores are found in France (56%), Poland and Slovenia (both 57%) Hungary (58%), Luxembourg (61%) and Estonia (63%), and even lower scores in Italy (46%), Romania (47%), Lithuania (49%), Czechia (50%), Slovakia (51%), Belgium (52%) and Finland (55%).

QC3 Attitudes to EU values index **(% – EU27)**

Low agreement
6

Medium-Low agreement
8

Medium-High agreement
22
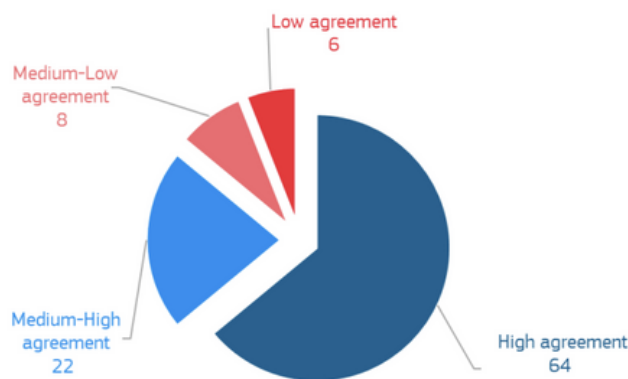
High agreement
64

(Oct – Nov 2020)

Again, differences can be seen based on demographics:

- older respondents are in greater agreement with EU values than younger respondents (67% aged 55 and older vs. 61% aged 15-24).
- respondents who attended education until the age of 20 or older (68%) are more likely to show high agreement with EU values than those who stopped education when they were 15 or younger (60%).
- those who belong to the upper-middle class (68%) are the most likely to agree with the EU values, especially when compared with those who consider membership in the upper-middle or lower class (both 60%).
- respondents on the left side of the political scale are more likely to agree with EU values (73%) than those in the center (62%) or right (57%).
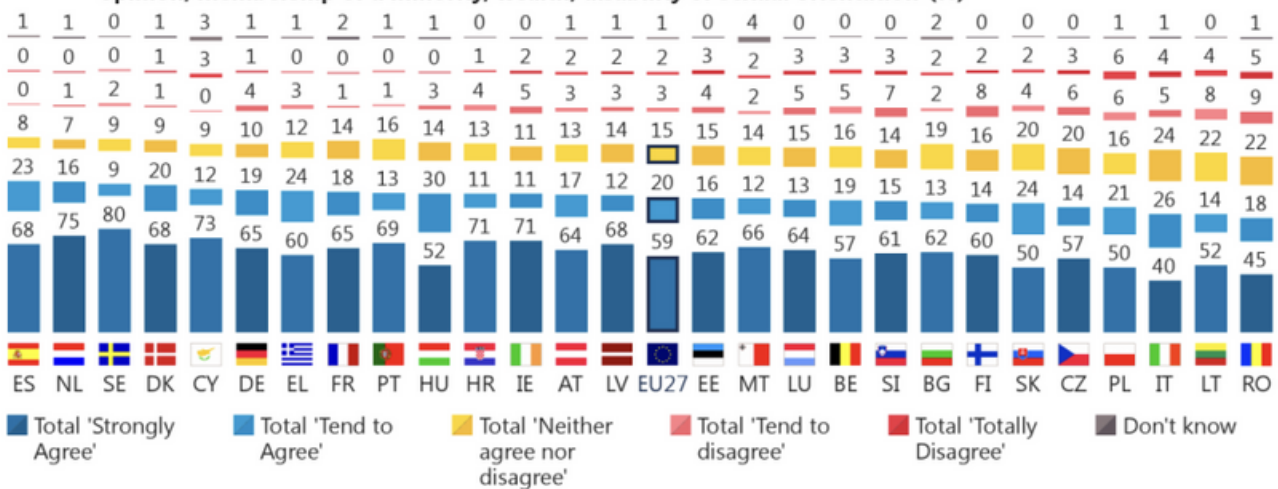
Non-discrimination

Wanting to focus on the value of non-discrimination, most EU citizens reject discrimination for any reason. On average, 79% of respondents across the EU agree that there should be no discrimination for any reason, 15% neither agree nor disagree, and 5% disagree.

Again, slight variations are present among different EU member states. The Netherlands and Spain (91%), Sweden (89%), Denmark (88%), Cyprus (85%), and Germany and Greece (84%) have the highest percentage of citizens rejecting discrimination of any kind. Respondents in Romania (63%) and Italy and Lithuania (both 66%) are less likely to agree.

QC3.10 The following is a list of principles that may be important in our society. Using a scale from 0 to 10, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? '0' means that you "totally disagree" and '10' means that you "totally agree"
There should be no discrimination on any grounds, including sex, age, ethnicity, religion, political or other opinion, membership of a minority, wealth, disability or sexual orientation (%)

Regarding the socio-demographic analysis, it can be seen that:
- respondents who are still studying or left education when they were 20 years old or older (both 84%), are more likely to reject discrimination than those who went to school until the age of 16-19 (77%), and respondents who received education until the age of 15 (75%).
- members of the upper-middle class are more likely (84%) to reject discrimination for any reason than respondents from the working class (80%), middle class, and lower-middle class (both 78%).
- those on the political left are more likely (87%) to reject discrimination than centrists (78%) and right-leaning respondents (73%).
- respondents who consider religion important are less likely (77%) to reject discrimination than those who consider religion unimportant (83%).

One discriminatory practice present in the Union is **discrimination among individuals on the basis of age, a phenomenon known as ageism**. This phenomenon often intersects with and exacerbates other forms of prejudice and disadvantage, including those related to sex, race, and disability. As for the other forms of prejudice, differences in treatment often depend more on generalized assumptions or random stereotypes that do not allow a person to be analyzed for who they really are and often infringe on the fundamental right to respect for human dignity, as equal treatment and respect are denied. The consequences are obviously negative, leading age groups to social exclusion, high levels of poverty, and denial of access to basic goods and services.

One in three people in Europe has been the victim of ageism. Such attitudes lead to worse physical and mental health and lower quality of life. For the elderly in particular, ageism is also associated with greater social isolation and loneliness, greater financial insecurity, lower quality of life and premature death.

Among EU countries, perceptions of discrimination against older people are particularly high in the eastern part, with more than 60% of people in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania reporting widespread or fairly widespread discrimination.

On the other hand, is also important to reflect on the fact that the **senior population in the European Union, plays a significant role in shaping the region's European identity and upholding its core values**.

As Europe becomes more multicultural with each passing day, there is an increasing need for senior citizens to be educated about the importance of tolerance and acceptance of diversity. This education can help prevent the perpetuation of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination that may have been ingrained in past generations.

Fostering an environment of understanding and inclusivity among senior citizens is essential to ensure that they embrace the richness of different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. Educational programs and initiatives aimed at this demographic can help seniors recognize the shared values that unite them with people from diverse backgrounds while appreciating the unique contributions that each individual brings to the European mosaic.

These educational efforts are not only about imparting knowledge but also about instilling empathy and a sense of unity in diversity. By breaking down stereotypes and challenging preconceived notions, senior citizens can become ambassadors of tolerance, setting a positive example for younger generations. This proactive approach contributes to the development of a more harmonious and inclusive Europe, where the values of respect, understanding, and acceptance are upheld and celebrated by all age groups.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Adware** - unwanted software designed to launch advertisements on the screen and allow automatic downloads, often within a web browser.

- **Broadcasting media** - With the help of an electronic broadcasting medium, audio and video content is distributed to a dispersed audience. Television, radio, video, and games appeal to heterogeneous audiences, people who differ in age, background, views, goals, and interests.

- **Camfecting** - it occurs when a cyber criminal causes a user to install malware on the device that can provide him with permissions to access the webcam. The webcam, then, is remotely activated by the hacker and can be used to watch anything within the field of view.

- **Cyber attack** - any process that targets a computer system. It is usually generated by a person, called a hacker, and can include different methodologies and techniques depending on the effect you want to achieve.

- **Digital literacy** - the ability to find, sort, evaluate, manage and create information in digital forms.

- **Digital Media Literacy -** the ability to critically, effectively and responsibly access, use, understand and engage with media of all kinds.

- **Digital media**. There are around 4.66 billion active internet users worldwide in 2021, which means that the world is dependent on digital media. Today, brands promote their goods and services through sites, YouTube, podcasts, and more. Besides, companies often implement Instagram marketing and Facebook advertising to pitch their products.

- **Digital skills** - defined as a range of abilities to use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information.

- **Disinformation -** false information which is intended to mislead, especially propaganda issued by a government organization to a rival power or the media.

- **EU citizenship** - EU citizenship is sustained and based on the common values expressed in Article 2 of the Treaty, which identifies them as respect for democracy, the rule of law, equality and fundamental rights.

- **Fake news -** false or misleading information presented as news.

- **Malware** - software that is designed to damage the information on other people's computers, and prevent the computers from working normally

- **Malware or "malicious software"** - generic term that describes a malicious program/code that puts a system at risk.

- **Mass Media - communication** - whether written, broadcast, or spoken - that reaches a large audience. This includes television, radio, advertising, movies, the Internet, newspapers, magazines, and so forth.

- **Misinformation -** false information that is spread, regardless of intent to mislead.

- **Outdoor media** - Ambient marketing is an excellent example of modern outdoor media. Brands use unusual locations and items to promote their products. Let's take Folgers, for instance. This brand of coffee used manhole covers to promote coffee in a unique and eye-catching way. Therefore, places like bus stops, public transport, and buildings can serve creative companies as places for promotion.

- **Phishing** - the fraudulent practice of sending emails or other messages purporting to be from reputable companies in order to induce individuals to reveal personal information, such as passwords and credit card numbers.

- **Print media** - It can range from billboards to coupons and is one of the easiest and oldest ways to reach the masses. Originally, print media referred to newspapers, which were the primary sources of information. Further, this type of media expanded to journals, books, and magazines.

- **Ransomware** - is a type of malware that blocks access to users' systems or personal files and asks for a ransom payment to make them accessible again.

- **Session Hijacking** - it is a cyber attack that allows the hacker to track activities and obtain credentials to access a web page, using session cookies.

- **Sniffing**: this refers to the monitoring and analysis of the network for control and testing purposes carried out by a software called sniffer. The main goal of these activities is to be able to intercept email addresses, credentials, and unencrypted passwords trying to acquire as much private information as possible.

- **Spam** - Spam is any kind of unwanted, unsolicited digital communication that gets sent out in bulk.

- **Spam Bot**: they aim to collect email addresses from the victims' social network profiles, websites or databases that are open and hacked. Thanks to the large amount of addresses collected, hackers can use them to send spam mail and for cracking credentials.

- **Spyware -** it's any malicious software that infects PCs and mobile devices in order to collect user information and browsing habits data, acting in the background.

- **Trojan horse -** it's a program that looks safe, but once downloaded into your computer, it will download other malicious malware.

- **Virus** - a form of malware that replicates itself and can spread to different computers via Network.

- **Worm** - a malicious executable code attached to another executable file which can be harmless or can modify or delete data.

RESOURCES

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Annex: Online tools for identifying, monitoring and verifying disinformation

Tracking and analysing disinformation online					
Name	Owner	Platforms checked	URL	Description	Languages
Google Fact Check Explorer	Google	All	Link[a]	Aims to facilitate the work of fact-checkers, journalists and researchers. Allows you to easily browse and search for fact-checks. For example, you can search for a politician's statement, or for a topic. You can also restrict results to a specific publisher. Using the tool allows you to consult fact-checkers around the world to see if they have written about a certain image, claim, or content.	All languages
Global disinformation index	Veracity.ai	News outlets	Link[b]	The Global Disinformation Index is a web-based tool that rates news outlets based on the "probability of disinformation on a specific media outlet." This rating system covers all types of media, and provides a real-time score.	English
Hoaxy	Indiana University Bloomington	Twitter, online articles	Link[c]	Visualises the spread of claims; fact-checking; A platform for tracking online misinformation. It is an open platform for the automatic tracking of both online fake news and fact-checking on social media. The goal of the platform is to reconstruct the diffusion networks induced by hoaxes and their corrections as they are shared online and spread from person to person. Hoaxy allows researchers, journalists, and the general public to study the factors that affect the success and mitigation of massive digital misinformation.	Arabic, Bengali, Bulgarian, Chinese, English, Farsi, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Malay, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish
BotSlayer	Indiana University Bloomington	Twitter	Link[d]	An application that helps track and detect potential manipulation of information spreading on Twitter; uses an anomaly detection algorithm to flag hashtags, links, accounts, and media that are trending and amplified in a coordinated fashion by likely bots. It lets users explore the tweets and accounts associated with suspicious campaigns via Twitter, visualise their spread via Hoaxy, and search related images and content on Google. BotSlayer can be used by journalists, corporations, and political candidates to discover in real time new coordinated campaigns in their domains of interest, without any prior knowledge of these campaigns.	English
Botometer	Indiana University Bloomington	Twitter	Link[e]	Botometer is a tool to detect and remove likely social bots from your list of Twitter followers or friends; checks the activity of a Twitter account and gives it a score.	All languages
Twitter twXplorer	Northwestern University	Twitter	Link[f]	Social media research tool; TwXplorer allows users to search for a word or phrase and automatically see the most commonly used words and hashtags and the mostly frequently shared links; designed as a tool for researchers and journalists.	English
Iffy Quotient	Michigan University	news and information sites	Link[g]	The Iffy Quotient is a metric for how much content from sites that frequently publish misinformation ('iffy') has been amplified on Facebook and Twitter.	English
CrowdTangle	Facebook	Facebook, Instagram and Reddit	Link[h]	A tool that publishers use to track how content spreads around the web; allows users to follow, analyse, and report on what's happening with public content on social media; allows users to follow public content across Facebook, Instagram and Reddit, to benchmark and compare performance of public accounts over time, and track referrals and find larger trends to understand how public content spreads on social media.	All languages

Factchecking and investigative journalism					
Name	Owner	Platforms checked	URL	Description	Languages
Google Fact Check Explorer	Google	All	Link[i]	Aims to facilitate the work of fact-checkers, journalists and researchers. Allows you to easily browse and search for fact-checks. For example, you can search for a politician's statement, or for a topic. You can also restrict results to a specific publisher. Using the tool allows you to consult fact-checkers around the world to see if they have written about a certain image, claim, or content.	All languages
Snopes	Snopes Media Group	N/A	Link[j]	A fact-checking website; a source for validating and debunking urban legends.	English
Efe Verifica	Agencia EFE	N/A	Link[k]	Information verification service that identifies, fact-checks and provides correct information and context in relation to the most pervasive (viral) disinformation narratives that polarise public opinion in Spain.	Spanish
Factuel	Agence France-Presse (AFP)	N/A	Link[l]	Scrutinises and verifies disinformation in several languages for a number of key topics and in different areas of the world, benefitting from a global presence and the expertise of AFP's investigative journalists.	Several different languages
NewsGuard	NewsGuard Technologies	news and information websites	Link[m]	A journalism and technology company that rates the credibility of news and information websites and tracks online misinformation; Gives detailed trust ratings for 6 000+ news websites that account for 95% of online engagement with news.	English

Social media monitoring				
Name	Platforms checked	URL	Description	Languages
Talkwalker	All social media channels and online media	Link[n]	Provides real-time insights into what's happening on all social channels and online media, across 187 languages; enables users to quickly identify issues and complaints before a crisis hits.	187 languages
Hootsuite	All social media channels and online media	Link[o]	Search streams in the Hootsuite dashboard let users monitor conversations relevant to their business, industry, and products; users can monitor what people are saying based on keywords, hashtags, locations, and even specific users.	N/A
Brandwatch	All social media channels and online media	Link[p]	Social listening and analytics tool that helps you dig out relevant data from blogs, forums, as well as social media and news or review sites; this tool tells you what/how your customers talk about your brand online.	can collect data written in any language; can analyse data for sentiment and key topics in 44 languages

[a] https://toolbox.google.com/factcheck/explorer
[b] https://disinformationindex.org/
[c] https://hoaxy.osome.iu.edu/
[d] https://osome.iu.edu/tools/botslayer
[e] https://botometer.osome.iu.edu/
[f] https://twxplorer.knightlab.com/
[g] https://csmr.umich.edu/projects/iffy-quotient/
[h] https://www.crowdtangle.com/
[i] https://toolbox.google.com/factcheck/explorer
[j] https://www.snopes.com/
[k] https://www.efe.com/efe/espana/efeverifica/
[l] https://factuel.afp.com/
[m] https://www.newsguardtech.com/
[n] https://www.talkwalker.com/
[o] https://www.hootsuite.com/
[p] https://www.brandwatch.com/