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ACTIVATING LESSON SCENARIO
developed as part of the project

‘INNOVATIONS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION’

TOPIC

**How to Check the Source of Information? Practical Tools and
Verification Strategies**
(Evaluating the credibility of media materials and authors)

1. Lesson Objectives

The student:

- Understands why checking the source is crucial in the fight against disinformation.
- Can identify the features of a credible and a non-credible source of information.
- Knows practical tools for verifying online content (PL, CZ, SK, EU).
- Practices analysing sources with concrete examples.
- Develops critical thinking skills and the ability to make informed decisions.

2. Target Group

Primary school students

3. Teaching Methods

- Brainstorming
- Mini-lecture
- Group work
- Moderated discussion
- Practical exercise with a source analysis table



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4. Teaching Aids / Sources

- Projector or interactive whiteboard
- Cards with internet headlines/news (2 reliable, 2 questionable)
- Infographic: “5 Questions for the Source” (Who? What? From where? When? Why?)
- List of fact-checking tools:
 - **Poland:** Demagog.org.pl, Konkret24
 - **Czechia:** Manipulátoři.cz, Demagog.cz
 - **Slovakia:** Demagog.sk, Infosecurity.sk
 - **EU:** EUvsDisinfo.eu, EDMO.eu

5. Lesson Plan (45 min)

1. Introduction – Can Every Source Be Trusted? (5 min)

Form: brainstorming + short teacher input

Procedure:

The teacher initiates the discussion by asking thought-provoking questions:

- Is every piece of information on the internet true and verified?
- Does the popularity of a site or the number of likes make a source credible?
- If a story appears in a newspaper, on TV, or on a social media platform, does that mean we can trust it without question?
- How often do authors provide their personal details, fact sources, links to studies, or official documents?

Students share associations and experiences (e.g., situations where they came across false or doubtful information).

The teacher writes them on the board, creating a list of potential “*credible source*” and “*suspicious source*” features.

Factual information (for the teacher or to share with the class):

Not all information sources are credible. There are basic criteria that help assess their reliability:

1. **Author and responsibility for content:**
 - A reliable source is signed with the author’s full name or identifies the institution responsible for publication.
 - A lack of signature or anonymous authorship may mean the person doesn’t want to be identified because the content is unreliable.
2. **Evidence and facts:**



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- True information is backed by documents, scientific research, statistics, or expert quotes.
 - False sources often cite “secret documents,” “anonymous informants,” or use phrases like “everybody knows that...”.
3. **Possibility of verification:**
- Reliable news can be confirmed in other independent media or on official institution websites (e.g., ministries, international organisations).
 - If only one site reports a shocking story and no one else confirms it – that’s a red flag.
4. **Style and language:**
- Professional sources use factual, neutral language.
 - False sources often use emotional headlines, flashy words, ALL CAPS, exclamation marks (“Shocking!”, “Disaster!”, “You have to see this!”).
5. **Purpose of publication:**
- Credible sources inform and educate.
 - Dubious sources often aim only to provoke emotions, sell a product, get clicks, or cause chaos and distrust.

2. Definitions and Examples (10 min)

Form: mini-lecture + oral quiz

Definitions (to discuss with students):

1. Source of information

A person, institution, or medium (e.g., newspaper, website, organisation) that delivers a message.

The source may be:

- *Primary* – e.g., a scientific report, official government statement, interview with an expert.
- *Secondary* – e.g., a newspaper article based on someone else’s report, or a rumour repeated on social media.

Why important: Knowing the source tells us who is responsible for the content and lets us assess its reliability.

2. Credible source

Meets these criteria:

- Signed with the author’s name or the institution’s name.
- Provides facts backed by evidence (documents, studies, statistics).
- Can be verified – other independent sources confirm the same information.
- Operates transparently without hiding the author or purpose.
- Presents information in a factual, neutral way without manipulation.

Examples: WHO website, official government communications, fact-checking portals.



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3. Suspicious source

Features:

- Anonymous author or no creator data.
 - Refers to “secret documents” or “acquainted experts” without evidence.
 - Sensational, emotionally charged language full of exclamation marks.
 - No way to verify in other media.
 - Frequent publication of conspiracy theories or unverified rumours.
- Warning sign:** If something seems too shocking to be true and no one else reports it – check it carefully.

4. Fact-checking

The process of verifying the truthfulness of information using:

- Independent fact-checking portals (e.g., Demagog, EUvsDisinfo, Manipulátoři.cz, Demagog.sk).
- Official institutional websites (WHO, Eurostat, European Commission).
- Scientific reports, databases, reliable media.

Purpose: Separate truth from falsehood and stop the spread of fake news.

Oral quiz examples:

The teacher reads examples; students decide “credible or suspicious source?” and explain why.

1. **True:** “WHO published a report on vaccine effectiveness – available on the official website.”
 - *Why credible:* Signed institution, publicly available document, confirmed by other sources.
2. **Suspicious:** “An anonymous doctor reveals that vaccines are poison – governments are hiding the truth!”
 - *Why suspicious:* No author, emotional tone, no evidence, contrary to scientific consensus.
3. **True:** “Eurostat publishes inflation data for EU countries – report available online.”
 - *Why credible:* Official EU institution, public statistical data.
4. **Suspicious:** “Secret documents from the internet prove the EU will abolish cash in 2025.”
 - *Why suspicious:* No source, unverified claim, reliance on “secret” materials without confirmation.

3. Exercise – Checking Sources (15 min)

Purpose of the exercise:

- Make students aware that not every piece of information online can be trusted.
- Teach practical steps for analysing a news source to distinguish reliable content from potential fake news.

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- Develop critical thinking, teamwork, and the ability to use available fact-checking tools.

Procedure:

1. Group division and materials preparation (2 min)

- Students form groups of 3–5.
- Each group receives **4 printouts or screenshots of news items**:
 - 2 from reliable sources (e.g., WHO, European Commission, fact-checking portals, major news agencies).
 - 2 from questionable or unverified sources (blogs, anonymous social media posts, “sensational leaks”).
- Sets include various formats: article headline, Facebook post excerpt, tweet, message from a messenger app, YouTube video thumbnail.

Set of news items for group work:

1. Reliable sources (true, confirmed information)

A. Headline from a news portal:

“WHO: Children should play outdoors for at least one hour a day”

(Article published on the official WHO website, confirmed by doctors’ studies)

Thumbnail: photo of children playing football on a field.

B. Excerpt from a Ministry of Health Facebook post:

“This week, free vision screenings for students have started in many schools. If you want your school to participate, check details here: [link]”

Thumbnail: photo of a nurse examining a student’s eyesight.

2. Questionable or unverified sources

C. Tweet from an anonymous user:

“I heard that starting next month all schools in Poland will begin classes at 10:00! A teacher told me it’s already decided!”

(No confirmation link, no information source)

Thumbnail: icon of an alarm clock and a bed.

D. Message from a messenger app:

“My friend saw a fox in the park wearing... glasses! 🦊 🕶 It must be a circus animal that escaped!”

(No photo, story sounds like a joke or a fairy tale)

Thumbnail: drawing of a fox wearing glasses (illustration, not a real photo).

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Formats in the set:

- Article headline (WHO)
- Facebook post (Ministry of Health)
- Tweet (anonymous user)
- Messenger message (private, WhatsApp/Messenger style)

Instructions for groups:

1. Read all 4 messages.
2. Decide which ones seem true and which could be made up or exaggerated.
3. Fill in the table:
 - What are the sources?
 - Are there any proofs (photos, links, research)?
 - Does it sound like something that could really happen?

News Analysis Table

| Message content | True or false? (✓) | Why do you think so? (e.g., has a source, sounds like a fairy tale) | Where does it come from? (e.g., WHO, blog, friend) | Any evidence? (photo, link, research) |
|-----------------|--------------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
|-----------------|--------------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|

☐ True ☐
False

☐ True ☐
False

☐ True ☐
False



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| Message content | True or false? (✓) | Why do you think so? (e.g., has a source, sounds like a fairy tale) | Where does it come from? (e.g., WHO, blog, friend) | Any evidence? (photo, link, research) |
|-----------------|--------------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
|-----------------|--------------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|

☐ True ☐ False

Instructions for students:

1. Read each of the 4 messages carefully.
2. Mark in the table whether you think it is true or false.
3. Write why you think so.
4. Identify where the message comes from.
5. Consider whether there is evidence supporting it.

4. Presentation and Discussion of Results (3 min)

- Each group selects **1 credible** and **1 suspicious** example, explaining their choice.
- The teacher writes on the board the most frequently mentioned red flags, e.g.:
 - no author, no evidence, sensational tone, no confirmation in other sources, strange web address.
- Students jointly create a mini-list: *“How to Check a Source in 3 Steps”*.

Teacher’s summary:

- A credible source is signed, fact-based, and confirmed in multiple places.
- Suspicious messages are often anonymous, emotional, without evidence, and appear only in one channel.
- Checking the author and sources is the first line of defence against fake news.
- Use fact-checking tools (Demagog, Manipulátoři.cz, Demagog.sk, EUvsDisinfo, EDMO) to verify if a message is true.

5. Discussion – Is It Easy to Check Who the Author Is? (8 min)

Purpose of the discussion:

- Make students aware that authorship is one of the key elements of information credibility.

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- Understand why so much content online is anonymous and how that affects evaluation.
- Learn basic strategies and tools that help verify authorship.

Questions for students:

1. Why is there so much anonymous information online?
 - Does anonymity make it easier to spread lies without consequences?
 - Are there situations where anonymity is justified (e.g., protecting a source in investigative journalism)?
2. Does a large number of shares mean the source is credible?
 - Does “popular” always mean “true”?
 - Can the number of likes, comments, and shares be manipulated? (e.g., bots, fake accounts).
3. Which elements of a site or article make you trust it, and which raise suspicion?
 - **Trust:** author’s full name, link to the source, contact details, references to research, reputable editorial office.
 - **Suspicion:** no author, vague “experts say,” typos, sensational headlines, unknown domain.
4. Which tools can help verify information?
 - Fact-checking portals (Demagog.org.pl, Manipulátoři.cz, Demagog.sk, EUvsDisinfo.eu).
 - Reverse image search (Google Images, TinEye) – checking if a photo is used in another context.
 - Official organisation websites (WHO, European Commission, ministries).
 - Checking the author in search engines – are they a journalist, expert, or an anonymous account?

Extra discussion prompts:

- Have you ever shared something without checking the author?
- Should an anonymous forum or social media post be taken seriously if there are no sources?
- How easy is it to create a fake but convincing-looking website or profile online?

Teacher’s conclusions (extended):

- Lack of an author or unknown source is a first red flag that content may be false.
- Post popularity, likes, and shares are **not** proof of truth – these metrics can be bought or artificially generated.
- Checking the author and the source is one of the simplest ways to protect yourself from disinformation.



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- Verification tools help quickly determine if an author is credible and if the facts are confirmed by other media or official institutions.

6. Summary and Reflection (7 min)

Format: individual work + joint list

Students complete the sentences:

- “I understood that checking the source of information helps...”
- “The most suspicious thing about anonymous messages is...”
- “Before I share a message, I will check...”

Joint list: “5 Rules for Checking a Source”

1. Look for the author’s name or the institution’s name.
2. Check whether data sources or links to studies are provided.
3. Compare the message across several credible media outlets.
4. Use fact-checking websites (Demagog, EDMO, EUvsDisinfo).
5. Do not trust anonymous, emotional, and evidence-free information.

7. Glossary – Verification of Information Sources

| Term | Definition |
|------------------------------|---|
| Source of information | A person, institution, or medium from which a given message originates. |
| Credible source | A checked, signed source backed by facts and possible to confirm. |
| Suspicious source | Anonymous, emotional, without evidence, referring to “secrets.” |
| Fact-checking | The process of verifying facts, data, and content in independent sources. |
| Cross-verification | Checking the same information in several independent media outlets. |

8. Teacher’s Methodological Guide

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1. Examples to use:

- Prepare fictional headlines and short articles that look realistic but contain traits of dubious sources (e.g., no author, citing “secret experts,” anonymous quotes).
- Use international, neutral topics (e.g., weather, science, sports, EU activities) to avoid political or local conflicts.
- Also show contrasting examples of credible sources (WHO reports, Eurostat, European Commission communications) so students have a reference point.

2. Teaching materials:

- Printouts of headlines/posts – two credible and two suspicious for each group.
- Source analysis table (Author? Links/evidence? Can it be confirmed? Credible: YES/NO).
- Infographic “5 Questions to Ask a Source”:
 1. Who is the author of the information?
 2. Are there facts or evidence provided?
 3. Can the message be found in other, independent sources?
 4. Is the tone of the text neutral or emotional?
 5. Does the site look professional (URL, no typos, contact details)?
- (*Optional*) Multimedia presentation with examples of credible websites (fact-checking portals) and false ones (anonymous blogs, clickbait).

3. How to conduct the lesson:

- Ask open-ended questions, e.g.:
 - “Why do you think this source is reliable?”
 - “Can an anonymous author still provide true information? How can you check?”
- Allow space for mistakes – show that anyone can be fooled and that source-checking skills need practice.
- Demonstrate step-by-step how to verify a piece of information yourself (e.g., type the headline into a search engine, check the author, analyse official websites).

4. Building a safe atmosphere:

- Avoid directly judging students (“that’s a wrong answer”), instead ask:
 - “What made you think this message is true?”
 - “What evidence would convince you that it’s credible?”
- Emphasise that everyone can be tricked by a false source, which is why group analysis is an exercise in developing critical thinking.

5. Lesson extension:

- Mini class project “*Map of Credible Sources*”:



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- Students in groups search for 3–4 portals or institutions (PL, CZ, SK, EU) that publish reliable information.
- These can be fact-checking portals, official ministry websites, or international organisations (e.g., WHO, European Commission).
- Create a joint poster or digital presentation – a list of verified sources to use when you want to confirm a message.

9. Scientific and Educational Sources (International and EU)

EDMO – European Digital Media Observatory

<https://edmo.eu>

– Knowledge base on disinformation, fact-checking tools, studies on source credibility in Europe.

EUvsDisinfo – project of the European External Action Service

<https://euvsdisinfo.eu>

– Examples of false news, tools for analysing sources and online propaganda.

UNESCO – Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000192971>

– Global guidelines on assessing credibility of information, verifying sources, and media education.

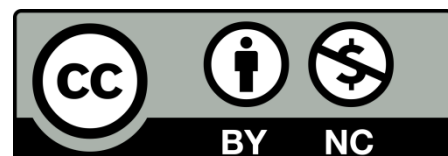
Polish fact-checking and educational sources

- **Demagog.org.pl** – <https://demagog.org.pl> – Fact-checking tools, guides “How to assess an information source?”, analysis of false content in Polish media.
- **Konkret24 (TVN24)** – <https://konkret24.tvn24.pl> – Analyses of false news, verification of authors and sources of publications on social media.
- **Niebezpiecznik.pl** – <https://niebezpiecznik.pl> – Materials on online security, recognising fake websites, phishing, and online manipulation.

Czech and Slovak fact-checking sources

- **Manipulátoři.cz** – <https://manipulatori.cz> – Czech educational-analytical portal, guides on recognising false sources and disinformation.
- **Demagog.cz / Demagog.sk** – <https://demagog.cz> / <https://demagog.sk> – Verification of politicians’ statements, analysis of sources and manipulation techniques.
- **Infosecurity.sk – Inštitút pre bezpečnostnú politiku** – <https://infosecurity.sk> – Reports on disinformation in the region, including false sources and propaganda campaigns.

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