Co-funded by the European Union

ACTIVATING LESSON SCENARIO
developed as part of the project

‘INNOVATIONS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION’

TOPIC
What Are Fake News? Identifying False Information Step by Step
(Introduction to the topic of disinformation – definitions, examples, contexts)

1. Lesson Objectives

The student:

- explains what fake news, disinformation, clickbait and deepfake are,
- can indicate the differences between true and false information,
- knows tools for verifying information in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and the EU,
- understands how emotions work in information messages,
- develops critical thinking and teamwork skills.

2. Target Group

Primary school students.

3. Teaching Methods

- Brainstorming
- Discussion
- Group work
- Quiz
- Analysis of texts and headlines

4. Teaching Aids / Sources

- Projector or interactive whiteboard
- Cards with article headlines (2 fake news + 2 true news)
- Infographic: “The Life Cycle of a Fake News”

- Flipchart and markers
- Fact-checking platforms:
    - Poland: Demagog.org.pl – the largest Polish fact-checking portal,
      Konkret24 – verification editorial team of TVN24.
    - Czech Republic: Manipulátoři.cz – Czech portal tracking manipulation and conspiracy theories,
      Demagog.cz – Czech equivalent of the Polish Demagog portal.
    - Slovakia: Demagog.sk – Slovak equivalent of the Polish Demagog portal,
      Infosecurity.sk – Slovak Institute for Security Policy, focusing on disinformation analysis.
    - EU: EUvsDisinfo.eu – project of the European External Action Service analysing disinformation,
      EDMO.eu – European Digital Media Observatory, a hub for fact-checkers and researchers.

5. Lesson Procedure (duration: 45 minutes)

1. Introduction – What Do You Know About Fake News? (5 min)
Form: Brainstorming
Procedure:
The teacher asks:

- What does the term “fake news” mean?
- Have you come across it on social media?
- What examples come to your mind?

Background information (for the teacher / slide / oral presentation):
A fake news is a false or manipulated piece of information created and presented in such a way that it looks like a genuine news story. Its authors deliberately want to mislead audiences, provoke emotions, or encourage them to quickly share the content – without stopping to consider whether what we read or watch is actually true.
A fake news can take many forms:

- an online article,
- a social media post,
- a manipulated photo or graphic,
- a short video,
- even a funny meme that seems harmless.

The aim of fake news is not to inform, but to manipulate – that is, to influence our thinking, decisions, and especially our emotions, such as fear, anger, outrage, sadness, or delight. Such

stories may surprise or amuse us, but they often mislead us.

Fake news are often created to:

- gain clicks (high website traffic),
- earn money from advertising,
- influence public opinion, for example before elections,
- undermine trust in important institutions such as governments, health organisations or the media.

Just because something looks professional or "is on the internet" does not mean it is true. That's why it's worth verifying information in reliable sources, thinking independently, and not blindly believing everything we see online.

2. Definition and Examples (10 min)

Form: Mini-lecture + oral quiz

Procedure:

The teacher presents short definitions and shows various examples:

Definitions

Fake News

Fake news are false pieces of information created deliberately to mislead audiences. They usually look very credible – like genuine news from newspapers, news portals, or social media. Sometimes they are entirely fabricated, while other times they are only partially true but presented in such a way that the meaning is changed or the reality distorted.

Fake news often has a specific purpose – for example, to provoke fear, outrage, encourage voting for a certain person, discredit a group, or simply attract attention and earn money from clicks. They are most often encountered on social media, where they are shared quickly and widely – often by people who do not even realise they are passing along something untrue.

Typical features of fake news:

- no source, or only a vague reference to "experts" without names,
- strong emotions: fear, anger, surprise,
- unverified numbers or charts,
- an apparently "sensational discovery" that no one else reports.

Example: "Scientists discovered that drinking three cups of coffee a day makes a person immune to all diseases."

Disinformation

Disinformation is a broader phenomenon than fake news. It means the deliberate spread of false, manipulated, or incomplete information in order to mislead someone, harm them, or trigger a specific reaction – e.g., fear, chaos, or distrust.

Disinformation may look like:

- an entirely fabricated story (i.e., fake news),
- a true piece of information taken out of context or shown only partially,
- distorted data suggesting something different from reality,
- repeating one version of events while ignoring others (message manipulation).

Disinformation is often used in politics, the media, and online – especially during wars, crises, or election campaigns – in order to influence people's behaviour or destabilise society.

Example: "The city authorities announced that tomorrow all grocery stores will be closed for two weeks. People should immediately stock up on food."

Clickbait

The term *clickbait* comes from English and literally means "a lure for clicks." It is a catchy, often exaggerated and sensational headline designed to make us click on a piece of content – even if the actual content has little to do with the title.

Example of clickbait:

"Shocking! See what students did during class – no one expected this!"

After clicking, it turns out the story is about an ordinary school project.

The aim of clickbait is usually to attract attention and increase website traffic, which translates into advertising revenue. Although not every clickbait is false information, it is often the first step towards manipulation or disinformation.

Example of clickbait:

"Shock! See what the students did during class – no one expected this!"

After clicking, it turns out to be just a regular school project.

The goal of clickbaits is usually to grab attention and increase website traffic, which translates into ad revenue. While not every clickbait is false information, it often serves as the first step towards manipulation or misinformation.

Deepfake

A deepfake is a fake video or audio recording created using artificial intelligence. In such materials, someone's face and voice can be inserted into content they never actually said or did.

At first glance, a deepfake can look very realistic – like a real film or interview. This makes it particularly dangerous because it:

- can impersonate politicians, teachers, celebrities,
- can be used to spread lies, blackmail, or cause confusion,
- is difficult to recognise immediately as fake.

Deepfake technology is becoming more advanced and accessible, so it's important to learn

how to spot it and not trust every video simply because “you can see it with your own eyes.”
Example: Imagine a video recording in which the president of a country announces their surrender during a war. – In reality, this person never said that; their face and voice were artificially generated to make it look like a real speech.

Fact-checking

Fact-checking is the process of verifying facts, data, quotes, and media content to confirm their accuracy. It is usually carried out by independent organisations or journalistic portals specialising in verifying information that appears in the public space – especially online, in social media, and in statements by politicians and celebrities.
Fact-checkers compare a given piece of information with reliable sources (e.g., reports, scientific studies, official statistics) to determine whether it is:

- true,
- partially true (manipulated or taken out of context),
- false.

The goal of fact-checking is to reduce disinformation, improve the quality of public debate, and strengthen trust in credible sources of knowledge.

Example: An article appears online: "Drinking warm water every 15 minutes kills the virus causing COVID-19."
Fact-checking would look like this:

1. **Source verification** – No scientific studies and no recommendations from the WHO to support this claim.
2. **Consultation with experts** – Doctors and epidemiologists clearly state that drinking water does not protect against infection.
3. **Conclusion** – The information is FALSE.

Information Bubble

An information bubble is a phenomenon in which a person receives and sees mainly information that matches their existing views and interests. It arises mainly due to the algorithms in social media and search engines that tailor content to a user’s behaviour – what they like, watch, or comment on.
As a result:

- the user has limited exposure to diverse opinions and data,
- they see fewer and fewer alternative viewpoints,
- their own beliefs become reinforced and strengthened, even if they are wrong.

Information bubbles can lead to a lack of understanding of other people and viewpoints, deepen social divides, and make it easier to accept fake news – as long as it confirms what

the user already “knows.”

Example: Imagine that Ania really loves horses. She watches horse-related videos on YouTube, reads books about horses, and talks about them with her friends. When she goes online, she mostly sees ads featuring horses, videos about horseback riding, and suggestions for new horse books.
Over time, Ania starts to believe that horses are the coolest animals in the world and that everyone loves them. When a classmate says he prefers dinosaurs or robots, Ania is surprised – after all, she’s never seen anything like that!
This is exactly what an **information bubble** is – when the internet mainly shows us what we already like, and as a result, we don’t see other interesting things or different perspectives.

Confirmation Bias

Confirmation bias is a natural human tendency to believe information that agrees with one’s prior beliefs and to ignore information that contradicts them – even if it is true. This process happens unconsciously and often causes us to reject data that could change our minds.
Example of confirmation bias in action:
A person who distrusts vaccines will be more likely to believe stories about their harmfulness (even if false) and ignore scientific data about their effectiveness.
This effect is one of the main reasons why fake news spreads so effectively – they confirm what we want to hear, so we easily believe them and pass them on without checking.
Example: Kacper believes that dogs are smarter than cats. When he watches a video online where a dog performs tricks, he thinks:
"See? Dogs are really smart!"
But when he sees a video of a cat doing something clever, he says:
"Probably just a coincidence. Cats just got lucky."
What’s happening here?
Kacper believes something (that dogs are smarter), so he pays attention only to the information that confirms his opinion and ignores or downplays the ones that contradict it.
This is called the **confirmation bias**.

3. Exercise – Spot the Fake News (15 min)
Activity: Spot the Fake News
Duration: 15 minutes
Form: Group work (3–5 students)
Goal: Develop skills in analysing information, critical thinking, and collaboration.
Instructions for the teacher:

- Divide the class into groups of 4–5 students.

- Give each group a set of 4 news headlines (e.g., printed on cards).

Task for the group:

- Read each headline,
- Decide which ones are fake news,
- Justify their choice – e.g., based on the language used, the source, emotional tone, lack of facts, etc.

(Optional) Students can use phones or computers to try to confirm/debunk the information on websites such as:

- Demagog.org.pl – largest Polish fact-checking portal, verifying political and social statements.
- Manipulátoři.cz – Czech portal tracking manipulation, conspiracy theories, and fake news.
- Demagog.sk – Slovak equivalent of the Polish Demagog portal, verifying politicians' statements.
- EUvsDisinfo.eu – EU project analysing and countering disinformation.

After completing the task, each group presents its choices and reasoning.

Example set of headlines for analysis (in Polish):

1. Headline A (fake news):

"The European Union bans the sale of paper books – only e-books allowed from 2026!"
Hint: No source, sensational, disinformation. The EU has made no such decision.

2. Headline B (true news):

"Students from Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland took part in an international media project"
Hint: Neutral tone, verifiable, a realistic educational initiative.

3. Headline C (fake news):

"Vaccines cause body magnetism – proof on video!"
Hint: Example of a popular conspiracy theory. Scientifically disproven, no scientific source.

4. Headline D (true news):

"Czech authorities launch a new portal to fight disinformation"
Hint: Real government initiative, verifiable in official sources.

Post-exercise discussion questions for the class:

- What helped you identify false information?
- What "warning signs" did you notice in the headlines?
- What mistakes can be made when reading news without checking the source?

4. Discussion: Why Do Fake News Work? (8 min)
Form: Guided conversation
Procedure:
The teacher invites students to a moderated class discussion or circle talk. The goal is to make students aware of why fake news is effective and difficult to spot, and how we ourselves might fall into their trap.
Questions for students (encouraging reflection):

- Why do some people believe fake news even though it's untrue?
- Are all fake news stories very strange, or can some look very realistic?
- What emotions do you feel when you come across a sensational, shocking news story?
- Have you ever shared something that later turned out to be untrue?
- How can you protect yourself from hastily sharing fake news?

Background information (for the teacher, to be presented orally or on a slide):
Fake news works effectively for several reasons — this is not accidental. They are crafted to influence our thinking and emotions.
Key mechanisms:

1. Simplicity and apparent credibility
   Fake news is often written in simple language, with strong slogans that are easy to remember.
   Example: "Scientists confirm: the vaccine changes DNA!" – short, simple, convincing… and false.
2. Eliciting strong emotions
   Authors deliberately use emotional language: fear, anger, surprise. This makes the content more likely to grab our attention.
   Emotion → impulsive action → sharing without thinking.
3. Ease of sharing
   Fake news is easy to pass on – just one click: "share," "forward," "post in the class group."
4. Confirmation bias
   We are much more likely to believe something that confirms our prior beliefs than something that challenges them – even if the new information is false.
   Example: someone who distrusts doctors will more readily believe a fake news story about an "internet cure" than scientific data.
5. Authority and presentation style
   Some fake news stories look highly professional: they have logos, images, fabricated

quotes from well-known figures. For many audiences, *form = truth*.
Students may therefore mistake a professional-looking fake news story for genuine information.

5. Summary and Reflection (7 min)
Form: Individual work
Procedure:
The teacher hands out small slips of paper or asks students to write a short reflection in their notebooks.
Students choose and complete one of the following sentences:

- "The most important thing I learned today is…"
- "From now on, before sharing information, I will check…"
- "I was surprised that fake news can…"
- "I realised that emotions in news can…"
- "In the future I will try to…"

Volunteers can read their sentences aloud (or the teacher can select a few anonymously if they were collected in writing).
Students can also write their reflections on slips of paper and stick them to a "knowledge board" (e.g., flipchart or wall) that remains in the classroom.

Extended teacher summary (with substantive conclusions):
Fake news is not just about funny memes or strange internet stories. It is a real threat to our knowledge, safety, and trust between people. False information can lead to wrong decisions, such as not treating an illness, engaging in verbal aggression online, or spreading intolerance.
We often don't realise that we ourselves – even without bad intentions – can be part of this problem if we share unverified information or react emotionally to something that hasn't been fact-checked.
That's why, in the 21st century, one of the most important skills is critical thinking:

- the ability to verify sources,
- to recognise manipulation,
- to ask questions instead of blindly accepting information.

Glossary – Fake News and Disinformation

Term	**Definition**
Fake news	**A false or manipulated piece of information that looks like genuine**

Term	Definition
	news. Its goal is to mislead, provoke emotions, or gain popularity.
Disinformation	**The deliberate spread of false, partial, or manipulated information in order to influence audiences. May be political, social, or ideological in nature.**
Clickbait	**An emotional, exaggerated headline aimed at attracting attention and encouraging clicks, regardless of the truthfulness of the content.**
Deepfake	**A fake video or audio created using artificial intelligence, imitating someone's speech or actions.**
Fact-checking	**The process of verifying facts and the truthfulness of information by independent organisations or portals. Used to fight disinformation.**
Information bubble	**A phenomenon where a person sees mainly content that matches their views, limiting exposure to diverse opinions and reinforcing existing beliefs.**
Confirmation bias	**The tendency to believe information that confirms prior beliefs and ignore information that contradicts them, making it easier for fake news to spread.**

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE FOR THE TEACHER

(supports lesson delivery and allows adaptation to different groups)

General Lesson Objectives

- Develop digital and media literacy skills,
- Strengthen critical thinking skills,
- Raise awareness of the dangers of disinformation and the influence of emotions on how information is received.

Adapting to the Age Group

- Avoid overly technical terms (e.g., "content distribution algorithms") – explain them with simple comparisons.
- Students are active users of social media – make use of examples from TikTok, YouTube, Instagram.
- Select non-polarising examples of fake news that do not concern current domestic politics to avoid disputes or tensions.

Methodological Tips – How to Deliver the Lesson

Introduction:

- Start with concepts familiar to students (YouTube, Instagram, memes).
- Use brainstorming – it encourages students to think and opens them up to the topic.

Group Work:

- Select headlines appropriate to the age group – with humour but without controversy.
- Ensure there is someone in each group who can use a search engine.

Discussion:

- Moderate responses – do not judge, instead ask: "Why do you think so?"
- Show that even adults can be fooled – it's not shameful, but worth learning from.

Reflection:

- End the lesson with a positive message: students have influence over what happens online.

Materials to Prepare / Use

- Sets of headlines for analysis – linguistically adapted (Polish / Czech / Slovak)
- List of fact-checking websites
- Quiz or interactive game (Kahoot, Wordwall) – for reinforcement
- Slips/notes for reflection and building a knowledge board

Possible Extensions / Additional Tasks

- Homework: Find an article/news story and check its accuracy in reliable sources.
- Class Project: Create a poster together with "10 Rules for Not Falling for Fake News."
- Mini-drama: Act out a scene – "A student receives a message: true or false?"

Scientific and Educational Sources

(international and EU)

- EDMO – European Digital Media Observatory – https://edmo.eu
  Source of knowledge on disinformation mechanisms, cooperation between European fact-checking organisations, media literacy resources.
- EUvsDisinfo – project of the European External Action Service – https://euvsdisinfo.eu
  Database of analysed fake news stories, typology of disinformation, educational tools and campaigns countering false information.
- UNESCO – "Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers" – https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000192971
  Definitions and global context of fake news, deepfakes, algorithms, and information bubbles.

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(Polish fact-checking and educational sources)

- Demagog.org.pl – https://demagog.org.pl
  Poland's largest fact-checking portal. Definitions of fake news, disinformation, clickbait, fact-checking; analyses of specific cases.
- Konkret24 – https://konkret24.tvn24.pl
  Verification editorial team of TVN24; analyses of misleading information in education, health, politics, and science.
- Niebezpiecznik.pl – https://niebezpiecznik.pl
  Portal on online security and digital education; materials on deepfakes, social engineering, and online scams.

(Czech and Slovak fact-checking sources)

- Manipulátoři.cz – https://manipulatori.cz
  Czech educational-analytical portal specialising in exposing manipulation, conspiracy theories, and disinformation.
- Demagog.cz / Demagog.sk – https://demagog.cz / https://demagog.sk
  Czech and Slovak equivalents of the Polish Demagog portal; verification of political statements and media content.
- Infosecurity.sk – Institute for Security Policy – https://infosecurity.sk
  Analyses on disinformation in Slovakia and the Central and Eastern European region, including reports on youth and fake news.