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ACTIVATING LESSON SCENARIO
developed as part of the project

‘INNOVATIONS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION’

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE

1. Purpose of the guide

This guide was developed as a comprehensive methodological support tool for teachers, trainers, and educators implementing a cycle of 20 activating scenarios devoted to the topic of critical reception of information, recognizing fake news and disinformation, and developing students’ media and digital competences.

Its main goals are:

1. **Ensuring methodological consistency** – all classes in the cycle are based on common didactic principles, use repeatable exercise formats (e.g. analysis in tables, group work, moderated discussion), and apply a set of didactic tools (worksheets, fact-checker tool cards, source materials).
2. **Facilitating lesson preparation** – the guide provides the teacher with ready-made instructions on how to plan, conduct, and summarize classes based on each of the 20 scenarios, as well as how to adapt content to the age, experiences, and proficiency level of students.
3. **Standardizing methods of evaluating learning outcomes** – thanks to a set of assessment methods (ongoing evaluation, student self-assessment, group assessment, mini-projects), it is possible to monitor progress and compare results across different classes or groups.
4. **Integrating content into one coherent educational programme** – the guide shows how the topics of individual scenarios are linked into larger modules (e.g. “Introduction to Fake News,” “Mechanisms of Manipulation,” “Specialized Areas of Disinformation,” “Practical Activities and Student Projects”), ensuring gradual competence development from basic to advanced level.
5. **Developing students’ attitudes and skills, including:**
    - critical thinking and source analysis,
    - recognizing manipulation and persuasion techniques,
    - conscious use of social media and the internet,
    - responsible response to disinformation,
    - ability to cooperate in groups and argue one’s position.

6. **Preparing young people for the role of conscious citizens** – the cycle has not only an educational but also an upbringing dimension, shaping competences essential for functioning in an information and democratic society.

2. General assumptions of the cycle

Target group

The cycle was designed for:

- students of upper grades of primary school (11-15 years),
- secondary schools (general, technical, vocational),
- youth groups in non-formal education (community centres, after-school clubs, youth organizations).

The content and methods of work can be flexibly adapted to the age, experience, and proficiency level of participants to maintain a balance between accessibility and depth of analysis.

Lesson duration

- Standard scenario: 45–60 minutes – suitable for one school lesson.
- The teacher may divide a scenario into modules (e.g. theoretical part + practical exercises) and implement them in two separate units.

Forms of work

The cycle is based on activating methods that engage students in the learning process through:

- case analysis – students work on authentic or stylized examples of news, posts, and visual materials,
- group work – tasks requiring cooperation, role distribution, and joint conclusions,
- moderated discussions – teacher-led conversations for argument exchange and critical reflection,
- simulations – role-playing (e.g. journalist, fact-checker, content recipient) in realistic scenarios,
- educational games – e.g. *"Unmask the Fake News!"* as a cycle summary or knowledge consolidation element.

Main didactic goals of the cycle

1. **Recognizing fake news and disinformation mechanisms**
    - identifying warning signals in text, image, sound,
    - knowledge of typical manipulation techniques (clickbait, deepfake, conspiracy narratives, emotional headlines).

2. **Critical source analysis**
    - evaluating credibility of author, source, and material,
    - recognizing reliable fact-checking portals,
    - working with the fact-checker's tool card.
3. **Developing resistance to manipulation**
    - practicing recognition of persuasive and manipulative language,
    - raising awareness of one's own emotions and reactions when encountering information,
    - understanding the impact of algorithms, information bubbles, and digital echoes.
4. **Ability to respond to and counter false content**
    - knowledge of how to report disinformation (on social media, to fact-checking organizations, institutions),
    - creating own mini-educational campaigns (e.g. *"STOP FAKE NEWS"*),
    - promoting responsible content sharing.

Structure of the whole cycle
The cycle consists of 20 scenarios grouped thematically into four modules:

1. Basics of recognizing fake news – topics 1–5
2. Mechanisms and techniques of manipulation – topics 6–10
3. Fake news in various areas of life – topics 11–15
4. Practical activities and student projects – topics 16–20

Each module ends with a practical task consolidating knowledge (case study analysis, mini-debate, educational game, group project).

3. Structure of the thematic cycle

Scenario topics (1–20):

1. What are fake news? Recognizing false information step by step
   Introduction to disinformation – definitions, examples, contexts.
2. How are fake news created and who makes them? Behind the scenes of manipulation
   Analysis of intentions (political, economic, ideological) and mechanisms of fake news creation.
3. Fake news in politics – when lies change democracy
   Impact of disinformation on elections, political campaigns, public opinion.
4. When information lies – how do they manipulate our emotions?
   Influence of emotional messages on our perception of information.
5. Truth or opinion? How to distinguish information from commentary
   Developing skills of analyzing informative and opinion texts.

6. Bots, trolls and fake accounts – who are the real senders of information?
   Recognizing inauthentic profiles and automated online activity.
7. Clickbait – when the headline lies more than the content
   Analysis of linguistic and visual tricks aimed at attracting attention.
8. Phishing and fake websites – how do fake news become fraud tools?
   Disinformation as a way to steal data and money.
9. Deepfake – can we trust what we see and hear?
   Visual and audio manipulation – risks and recognition methods.
10. Conspiracy theories – how to recognize them and defend against them?
    Features of conspiracy narratives and their impact on social attitudes.
11. Disinformation in medicine – fake news that harm health
    Analysis of examples (vaccination, pandemic, alternative treatments).
12. Russian fake news against Ukraine and the EU – information war
    Examples of disinformation as part of geopolitical strategy.
13. Celebrities and gossip – how do fake news function in showbiz?
    The role of entertainment media in shaping opinions and spreading fake news.
14. How to check a source of information? Practical tools and verification strategies
    Assessing credibility of media materials and authors.
15. Report it! Where and how to respond to disinformation?
    Ways of reporting fake news and the role of internet users.
16. Fact-checking – how do verification organizations work?
    Working methods, sources, social responsibility.
17. Algorithms, information bubbles and digital echo – how does the internet show only what we want to see?
    Content personalization and its impact on views.
18. Resistance to manipulation – how to be a conscious information recipient?
    Development of digital and civic competences.
19. Student campaign *"STOP FAKE NEWS"* – educational project
    Students create their own social actions raising awareness.
20. Disinformation simulation – educational game *"Unmask the Fake News!"*
    Practical classes based on media simulation and case analysis.

Summary of scenario topics

The 20 topics presented are arranged in a logical didactic sequence where students move from learning basic concepts and understanding disinformation mechanisms (topics 1–5), through analysis of manipulation tools and techniques (topics 6–10), to recognizing fake news in specific areas of life (topics 11–15).
The subsequent scenarios (topics 16–20) focus on practical activities – verifying information, responding to disinformation, understanding the impact of algorithms, and developing resistance to manipulation.

Each topic can be implemented as a separate lesson, but in the cycle they form a coherent educational programme in which:

- the first modules emphasize awareness and recognition of threats,

- the middle ones – analysis and understanding of tools,
- the final ones – action and conscious participation in information circulation.

Flexibility of implementation:
The teacher may:

- implement the entire cycle in the proposed order,
- choose thematic blocks depending on class needs,
- combine scenarios into thematic modules (e.g. “Fake news in politics and social life,” “Manipulation techniques,” “Digital resilience”).

Final effect for the student:
After completing the cycle, the student:

- can independently assess the credibility of information,
- recognizes the most common forms of disinformation,
- knows verification tools,
- knows how to respond to fake news and how to limit its spread,
- understands their influence as a media user on shaping information circulation.

4. Planning implementation

Order of implementation
It is recommended to conduct classes in order from 1 to 20, because each scenario develops and deepens content introduced earlier. This layout allows students to gradually acquire knowledge – from basic definitions and mechanisms to advanced verification and response strategies.

Possibility of dividing cycle into modules
If needed, scenarios can be carried out in thematic modules, keeping internal order within each module:

- Introductory module (topics 1–5) – basics, concepts, first analytical skills.
- “Manipulation techniques” module (topics 6–10) – tools, methods of influence, recognition of manipulation forms.
- “Specialized areas of disinformation” module (topics 11–15) – fake news in specific life areas.
- “Practice and actions” module (topics 16–20) – workshops, simulations, educational campaigns, practicing reactions to disinformation.

Duration
Each scenario is planned for 45 minutes. In extended mode (90 minutes) additional exercises, source analysis or summary discussions can be included.

Flexibility
Classes can be adapted to the number of hours allocated for the cycle, but it is recommended to maintain thematic consistency within one school year. If the cycle is interrupted, a short review of previous content is advisable before moving on to the next module.

5. Methods and forms of work

Activating methods
Method selection is based on maximum participant engagement in learning through action, analysis, and reflection. Applied techniques allow development of both cognitive and social skills.

- Case studies – working on authentic or reality-inspired fake news examples, including texts, graphics, audio/video recordings.
- Group work with role division – simulation of fact-checking newsroom work, where participants are responsible for different verification stages.
- Brainstorming – generating possible solutions, verification strategies, or ways to respond to disinformation.
- "For and against" debate – confronting different positions based on facts and sources, practicing argumentation and critical evaluation.
- Simulations and educational games – role-playing scenarios as fake news creators, recipients, and fact-checkers to better understand manipulation mechanisms.
- Mini student projects – creating educational campaigns, posters, infographics, or short films promoting reliable information.
- Using digital tools – practical use of reverse image search, fact-checking databases, verification portals, and source analyzers.

Forms of work
To ensure diversity and dynamics, varied work forms are applied to individualize the teaching process and develop cooperation skills.

- Individual work – independent content analysis, filling worksheets, creating lists of credibility criteria.
- Pair work – mutual source-checking, real-time information verification, preparing short reports.
- Small group work (3–5 people) – joint material analysis, discussion of warning signals, preparing presentations.

- Whole-class work – moderated discussions, brainstorming, joint mind maps, "good information recipient" principles, public project presentations.

6. Materials and tools

To make classes engaging, practical, and based on real examples, each scenario should be supported with a prepared set of materials and tools enabling students to practice critical thinking and information analysis in different forms of communication.

Basic package for each scenario:

- News cards – set containing different types of content: true, false, manipulated, satirical, clickbait.
  - Minimum 6 per group (recommended 8–10 for selection and deeper analysis).
  - Paper format (printout) or digital (PDF, presentation).
  - Sources: authentic articles, social media post fragments, examples generated for lesson purposes.
- Analysis table – A3 or A4 format, clear column layout.
- Fact-checker tool card – checklist questions for verifying content, e.g.:
  - Does the news have an author and publication date?
  - Is the source known and credible?
  - Are links to original data provided?
  - Can the information be confirmed in at least two independent sources?
  - What emotions does the content evoke – is it an attempt at manipulation?
- List of fact-checking portals and verification databases:
  - Poland – Demagog.org.pl, Konkret24, Fakenews.pl
  - Czechia – Manipulátoři.cz, Demagog.cz
  - Slovakia – Demagog.sk, Infosecurity.sk
  - EU & international – EUvsDisinfo.eu, EDMO.eu, Snopes.com, FactCheck.org
- Internet access or prepared printouts with:
  - search results (Google, Bing, Yandex Images),
  - reports from fact-checking organizations,
  - press articles, reports, academic publications,
  - social media screenshots (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X/Twitter) showing context and form.
- Auxiliary materials (optional):
  - Simple instructions for verifying photos and videos (e.g. reverse search).
  - "Before and after" examples – original vs manipulated content.
  - Poster, post, infographic templates for creative exercises.
- Recommended digital tools:
  - Image search engines: Google Images, TinEye, Yandex Images.
  - Portals analyzing social media accounts and content.

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7. Teacher's role

The teacher's role in implementing the cycle is multifaceted and requires flexibly combining several functions depending on the stage of the lesson, group level, and scenario topic. Effectiveness largely depends on whether the teacher can create an atmosphere of trust, openness, and curiosity while ensuring quality of content.

1. Moderator

- Leads and directs discussion, ensuring each student has space to speak.
- Asks deepening questions ("Why do you think so?", "Can this be checked another way?").
- Ensures conversation does not become personal conflict – keeps group focused on facts and arguments.
- Reacts when unverified or harmful content arises, showing ways to check it.

2. Instructor

- Demonstrates step by step how to use fact-checking tools, reverse image searches, internet archives, verification portals.
- Provides practical tips: how to recognize credible sources, analyze article structure, assess photo/video manipulation.
- Adjusts difficulty level of tools to student age and skills – simpler for younger groups, advanced for older.
- Reinforces habit of verifying information before sharing.

3. Coach

- Motivates students to think independently, ask questions, seek alternative sources.
- Strengthens confidence in using digital tools and in forming fact-based opinions.
- Encourages initiative in teamwork – anyone can lead part of a task.
- Shows value of critical thinking as a life skill, not just school skill.

4. Animator

- Maintains class dynamics by changing activities (individual → group → presentation).
- Introduces gamification: points, badges, group competition, "who verifies news faster" challenges.

- Ensures engaging form – uses current media examples, short videos, memes, online quizzes.
- Creates positive atmosphere encouraging activity – rewards creativity and unconventional thinking.

5. Content guardian (additional role from topic specificity)

- Ensures accuracy of presented content – checks if examples/materials are current and factual.
- Reacts to hate speech, stereotypes, prejudice appearing during discussion.
- Provides emotional safety, especially when analyzing sensitive/controversial topics (e.g. war, health, politics).

8. Tips for conducting classes

Start with examples close to students

- Use materials from everyday life in first minutes: popular memes, TikTok clips, Instagram posts, local news, messenger screenshots.
- Humorous or surprising examples work well – break barriers, open conversation.
- Add element "Is this true?" and ask for quick vote/gesture (e.g. thumbs up/down) before analysis.

Balance theory and practice

- Theoretical part should be concise (max 15–20% of lesson time), based on examples and student questions.
- Focus mainly on exercises: case analysis, group work, simulations.
- Apply "explain briefly – check immediately in practice" rule (e.g. after presenting 3 fake news features, students instantly look for them in sample materials).

Provoke questions and self-verification

- Avoid giving correct answers immediately – instead ask: "How can we check this?", "Where could we find confirmation?"
- Encourage students to use fact-checker tool cards, propose recording each verification step.
- Emphasize uncertainty is natural – the key is searching for data, not instant "yes/no."

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Support teamwork

- Organize groups with different roles: leader, content analyst, source verifier, presenter.
- Rotate roles between scenarios so everyone tries different tasks.
- Build interdependence – e.g. each group analyzes different material set, then shares conclusions.

Gradually increase difficulty

- Start with simple, obvious examples (clickbait headlines, memes with wrong date) to build confidence.
- Next, introduce more complex content – context manipulation, cherry-picked fragments, mixing truth/falsehood.
- End with complex cases: conspiracy theories, deepfakes, geopolitical disinformation.
- Clearly discuss what made examples harder and how students managed.

Maintain pace and activity variety

- Change work forms every 10–15 minutes to prevent concentration loss.
- Insert short quizzes, online polls (Mentimeter, Kahoot), mini-debates, or "3-minute fact-checking" tasks.
- Use gamification – points, badges, group ranking – but ensure content remains priority.

Create safe discussion space

- State at start: mistakes are part of learning.
- React calmly if student presents fake-news-based view – treat it as analysis opportunity, not criticism.
- Ensure conversation is respectful, free from personal attacks.