

## Break the Chain

### Providing Ways to Fight Fake News and Disinformation Online

Rapid advancements in social networking technologies have revolutionized the possibilities of person-to-person communication, particularly by making obsolete the geographical boundaries that once divided cultures and nationalities. Communication, of ideas as well as of information, arguably has now become the most powerful form of action (Henrikson, 2006). Many people turn to online media to get the information they want (European Commission, 2018). The spread of both disinformation and fake news can have a range of consequences, such as threatening our democracies, polarising debates, and putting the health, security and environment of EU citizens at risk. Large-scale disinformation campaigns are a major challenge for Europe and require a coordinated response from EU countries, EU institutions, social networks, news media and EU citizens (European Commission).



While fake news and disinformation is a problem for several years now, after the breakout of COVID-19, the amount of fake news has increased substantially, creating serious consequences to public health. Some examples can be found in the so-called cures that affected a lot of people and made them harm themselves, such as drinking bleach, eating garlic, wearing warm socks and spreading goose fat on one's chest (DW.COM, 2022). Based on these facts, we can conclude that fake news and disinformation can create several behavioral patterns and affect someone's decisions.



According to a Flash Eurobarometer study (Fake News and Disinformation Online) 37% of the respondents believe that they come across fake news every day or almost every day. A large majority of respondents think that the existence of fake news is a problem in their country, at least to some extent (85%). Additionally, many Europeans (71%) are at least 'somewhat confident' that they are able to identify fake news or disinformation, only 15% say they are very confident.

In this situation the most vulnerable are senior citizens. People aged 65 and older are almost four times more likely to share fake news on social media than younger people (US. News, 2019). For instance, the study implemented by the researchers from New York University's Social media and Political Participation Lab and Princeton University showed that only 3 percent of those aged 18-29 shared links from fake news sites, compared with 11 percent of those older than age 65. Critically, the association with age appears to be independent of respondents' ideological or partisan affiliations (Princeton University, 2019).

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Since the senior's lack of the media literacy and ICT skills, a few NGOs research centres and organisations have initiated the project in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme to improve the media literacy of older citizens and fight against disinformation and fake news.



Break The Chain is an Erasmus+ funded project that aims to help adults identify the impact that fake news and disinformation have on their behaviour and find ways to alternate the situation. The project started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2021 and will last until the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2023.

The partnership includes organizations from from 6 European countries: EDUcentrum (Czech Republic), E-Seniors (France), Komicha (Bulgaria), Atermon (the Netherlands), iCmedia (Spain), HeartHands Solutions (Cyprus).



The project provides a holistic approach, focusing on introducing all the relevant information about fake news and disinformation, their impact on our decisions and ways to detect them. Three main results that will be produced during the project's lifetime are the following:

- **Creation of the training manual.** With the help of this training manual you can introduce the topics of fake news and disinformation to adults to help them improve their media literacy skills and to be critically engaged with the information.

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- **Web application.** This web app introduces several activities on the topic of fake news and disinformation to improve your skills and knowledge with quizzes, texts and videos.
- **Dynamic demonstrator.** An online learning platform that provides opportunities to enhance learning experience. It will display real-life interactive scenarios so the target group can gain further understanding of the concepts of fake news and disinformation.

The kick-off meeting of the project was held online on the 18th of January 2022. Partners discussed their responsibilities and the first activities and deadlines of the project. All partners are now working on the identification of the knowledge and skills of adult trainers on fake news and disinformation and the documentation of their current educational practices. National reports will be then prepared according to this data in the framework of the project's result 1. The next meeting will be held in Rotterdam in December 2022.



For more information, please, visit:

**Project's website:** <https://break-the-chain.eu/>

**Facebook page:** <https://www.facebook.com/Break-the-chain-113686904554703>

**Twitter account:**  
<https://mobile.twitter.com/breakthechain1>



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union