

WORKSHOP

BUILDING RESILIENCE TO MEDIA MESSAGES

07 SEPTEMBER 2021



Welcome! at...

Workshop

„Building Resilience to Media Messages”

With you the facilitator:

Cristina Jamschek



The Center for Independent Journalism

The Center for Independent Journalism is a non-governmental organization, active for over 26 years in protecting democracy and those who believe in its values.

26 years in the service of freedom of expression and education. 26 years of activism and training. Over 15,000 media professionals, 2,500 teachers and 25,000 students have crossed our threshold at CIJ over time. They learned from us, we learned from them. We continue promoting fundamental democratic values through our programs for the next generations.

Our vision in education

It is time to educate our children for a future in which every citizen is responsible and acts creatively in his/her interest and with care for the whole society.

- We develop programs that inspire change within the education system, through information and training, and by involving teachers and students in responsible and meaningful actions for their daily lives.
- We work directly with teachers, believing in the role of leaders and mentors of those who create learning contexts.
- We build complex processes, in which teachers, with permanent support, take an active role in school and in the community and share with their students the values of democratic citizenship.



Teaching Media Literacy

Media Culture and Education Lab

Starting with 2017, CIJ, in partnership with the Romanian-American Foundation, has been developing a strategic media literacy program to help young people understand and respect the role of the media in a democratic society, to identify and distinguish information from propaganda and use social media responsibly.

The aim of the program was to inspire change within the education system, integrating media literacy concepts in classroom work for 5 humanities (Romanian Language and Literature, English, French, History, Social Sciences) and developing a set of methods and tools for teachers and students to use in their current activities.

The Media Literacy Program (2020 – 2024)

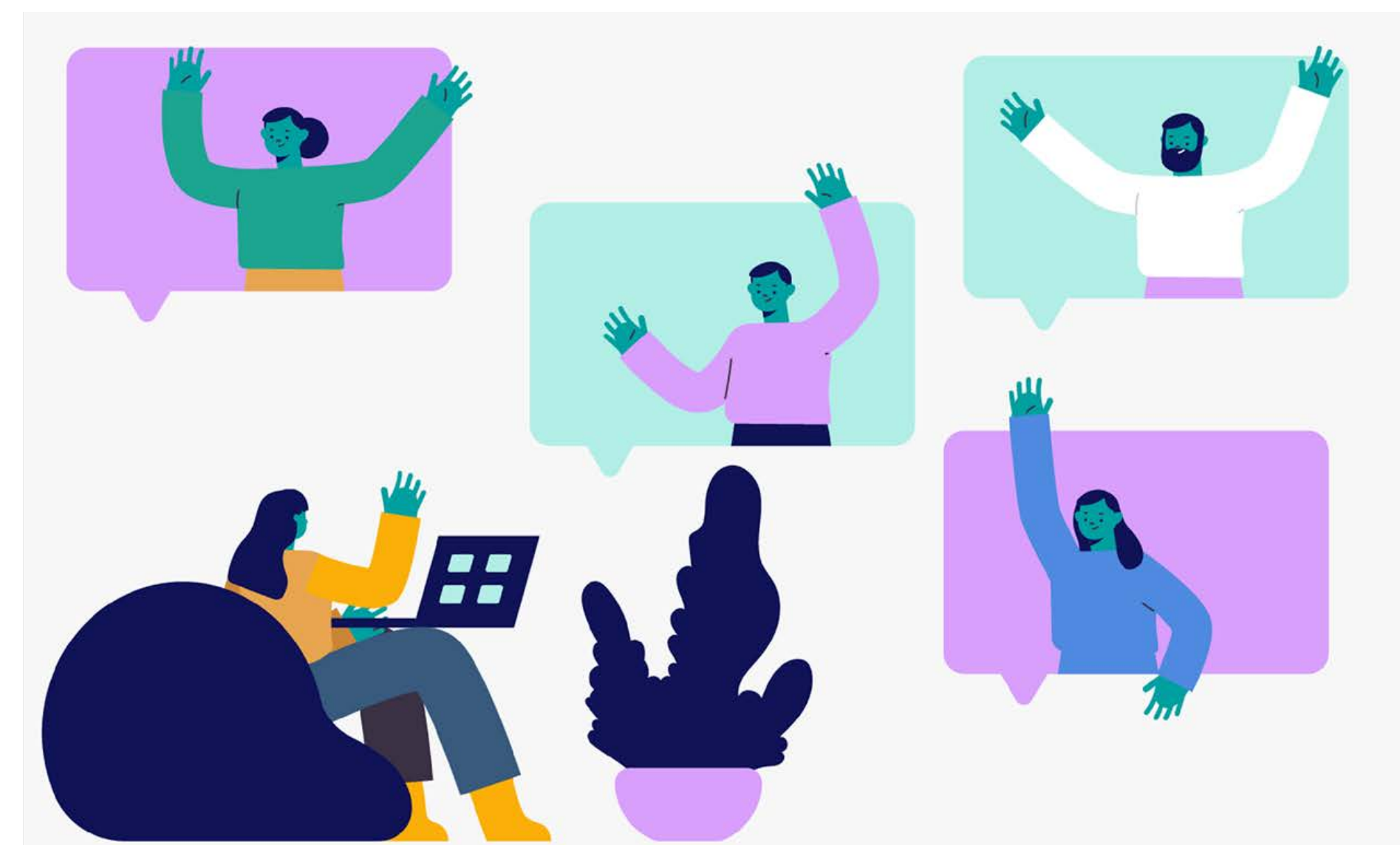
Objective: To grow the national media literacy (ML) community, so that by 2030 at least 30% of high school students (approx. 175,000) acquire the skills that enable them to be informed citizens, able to critically and responsibly interact for the media, creating a partial immunity to the anti-democratic effects of misinformation.

For this to happen,

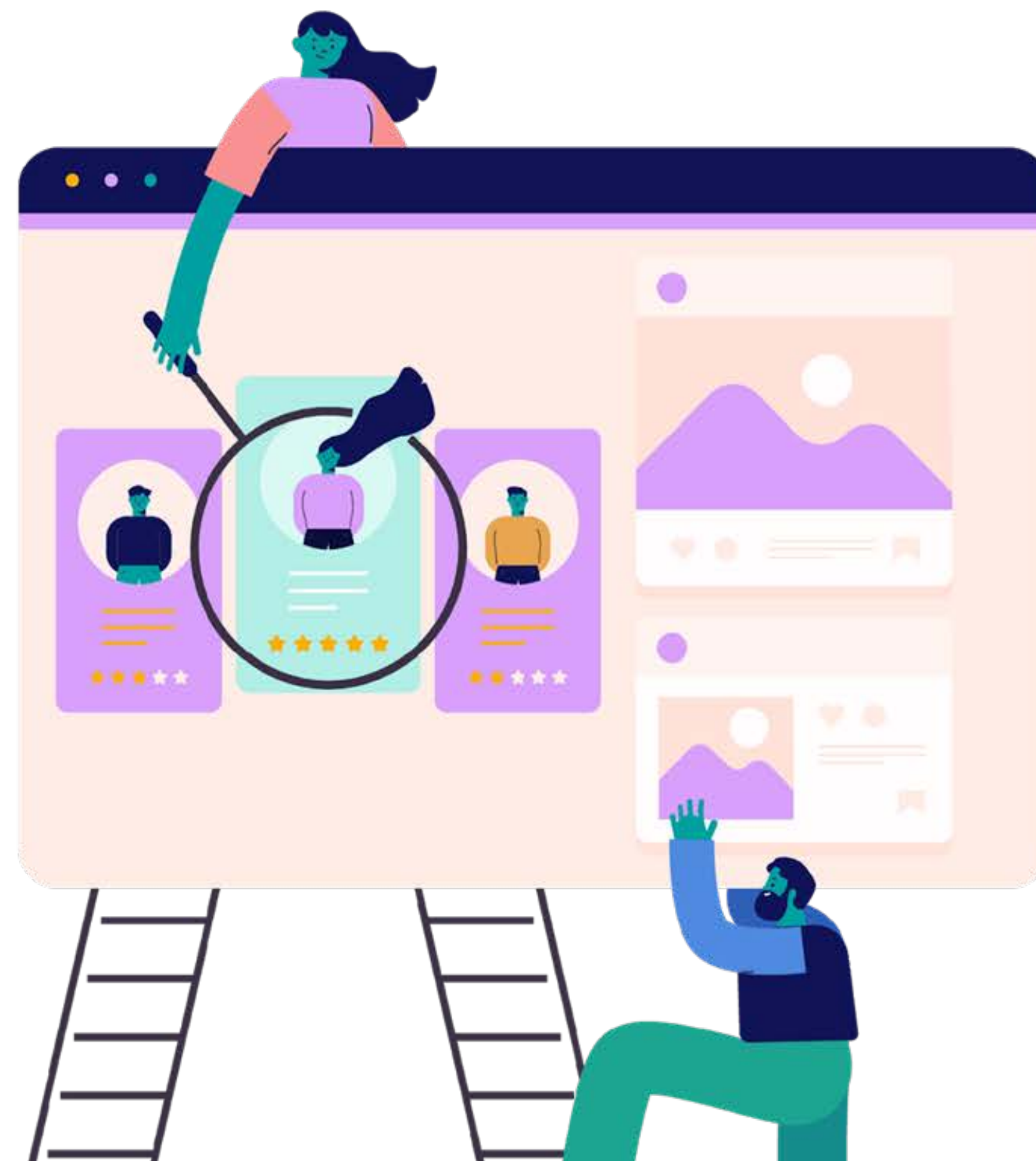
- At least 1,750 teachers will infuse ML into classes and spread the message.
- We include media literacy in the training program for future teachers, at university level.
- We organize additional activities for the educational community and for those interested in media literacy.

Let's know each other better!

Please tell us your name, institution and country, as well as an expectation that you enter with in this workshop.



Our relationship with information in the online environment



Internet and Social Networks – Our relationship with online information

- In our online activity, we develop a **complex digital footprint**, through presence (profile, declared interests etc.) and activity (cookies, posts, comments, opinions, interactions etc.).
- Our personal data and those resulting from our activity on the Internet are very valuable for advertisers and online merchants, institutions and groups with diverse interests, who aim to convince us through their campaigns.
- Large technology players, search engine companies and social networks, such as Google or Facebook, use algorithms to collect and store our data and build statistics on our online behaviour.

Internet and Social Networks – Our relationship with online information

- Although search engine services or an account on a social network do not involve a financial cost for the individual user, they are NOT FREE.
- Personal filters do not cover only objectives limited by business relationships, but our entire information universe.
- They personalize the online information experience, based on our previous behaviours, and establish a flow of information that might interest us, which they deliver to us with priority.

Internet and Social Networks – Our relationship with online information

IMPORTANT!

Risks associated with **personal algorithmic filtering**:

- Someone else decides for us
- It can restrict the interest to access, but also the actual access to various sources of information and can lead to disconnection from information and debates in the mainstream media
- It can cause cyber migration
- It favours the polarization of the members of a society and the cyberbalkanization

Internet and Social Networks

- Definitions and Concepts -

DEFINITIONS!

- **Selective exposure:** different or contrasting points of view are omitted from our horizon; we no longer see them, we no longer hear them, and this strengthens the confidence that what we know is the truth we seek.
- **Information bubble** (filtering bubble): a situation in which the person is exposed only to news and information that supports what he/she believes and likes, with the risk of isolating him in their own cultural and ideological systems. Term introduced by Eli Pariser (2011).
- **Echo chamber:** a situation in which, by communicating and repeating news and information, beliefs are amplified and strengthened within a closed cultural and ideological system shared by a group of people, and information that contradicts these beliefs is rejected. Term introduced by Cass Sunstein (2001). Information bubbles lead to the creation of echo chambers.

Filter bubbles	Echo Chambers
They exclude information by omission, sometimes accidentally.	They manipulate the trust and the beliefs of members in order to convince them to actively refuse other voices . They do so by undermining and discrediting those sources and their messages.
The sources are diverse, but the messages that the user receives fall under the same register and are to the user's liking.	They increase the dependence on one single source of information and the resistance to other sources.
The messages don't necessarily come from opinion leaders, but the users receive recurring messages from the same people that they follow and with whom they interact regularly on social media. The messages are often in accord with the existing beliefs and opinions of the user.	They are built around charismatic leaders , who train the members to blindly trust only their messages and to express mistrust towards "the Others" , sistematically isolating the members from the outside world and from any contrary points of view.
The discourse that the user is exposed to supports (and reinforces) the user's likings, their beliefs.	The discourse is characterized by a private language , alternative expressions and a jargon specific to the group, which increases the trust and closeness levels among members and strongly fences out anybody from the "outside world" that would want to intervene , discrediting their message by default. If the message does not use the same language, the group will deem the source as "the Other" , not part of the group, and thus – unworthy of trust.

Internet and Social Networks

- Definitions and Concepts -

DEFINITION!

Polarization: a situation in which the opinions, beliefs or interests of members of a community or society are at opposite and irreconcilable extremes.

How does personalization happen?

IMPORTANT!

1. Search engine indexing

Google and Bing customize user search results based on previous search history, geographic location, and search behaviour.

How does personalization happen?

IMPORTANT!

2 Cookies

Cookies are text files with small data sets labeled with a unique identity (IP - Internet Protocol address - unique numeric address assigned by the internet service provider, username, password, etc.), used to identify the computer when we are connected to the internet

Cookies are mainly used for:

- Session administration
- Personalization
- Tracking our actions

Personal data means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (European Union). This information refers to name, address, date of birth, characteristics, signature, account data, etc., stored alone or associated with each other.

How does personalization happen?

IMPORTANT!

3. Social networks

Their algorithms are so evolved that they not only collect data about us, from personal to social, but build a personalized user profile with fidelity and make very accurate predictions about our future behaviours.

Psychography is a qualitative research methodology, used to identify and describe the patterns of behaviour and psychological attributes of people. Psychography is applied in the study of personality, values, opinions, attitudes, interests and lifestyles.

How does personalization happen?

3. Social networks (continued)

Elements of construction of these platforms that increase risks for the user:

- Monocultural feeds
- Thematic pages, and especially groups
- Hashtag sites

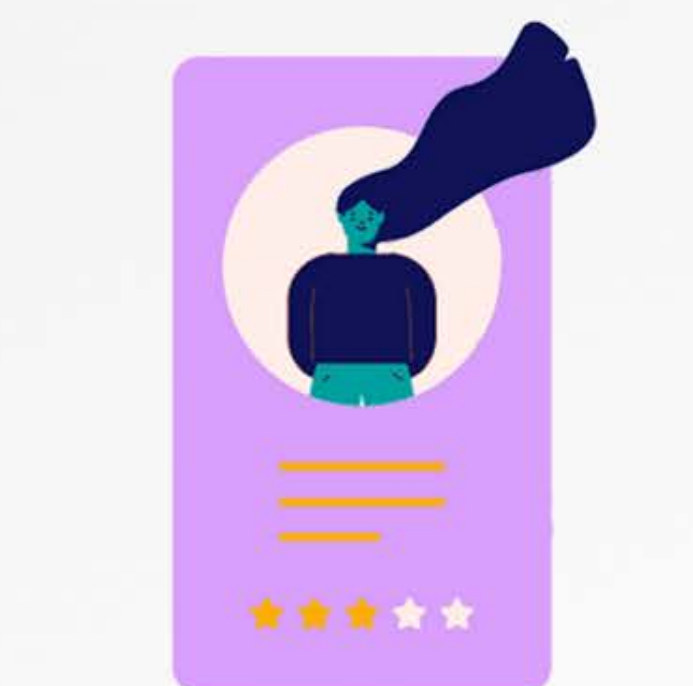
Profilul tău

Cine suntem pentru Facebook

Toate informațiile noastre de pe Facebook și Instagram contribuie la construirea unui profil de utilizator.

Facebook se uită și la:

- Cât de des interacționăm cu postări de la oameni, pagini sau grupuri;
- Cât de des interacționăm cu un tip specific de postare – de ex.: videoclipuri, fotografii sau link-uri;
- Dacă suntem de acord, activitatea noastră pe site-urile web și aplicațiile la care ne legăm cu contul de Facebook;
- Comenzi rapide, cum ar fi See First, Unfollow, Preferințe pentru fluxuri de știri.



Profilul de utilizator

How does personalization happen?

IMPORTANT!

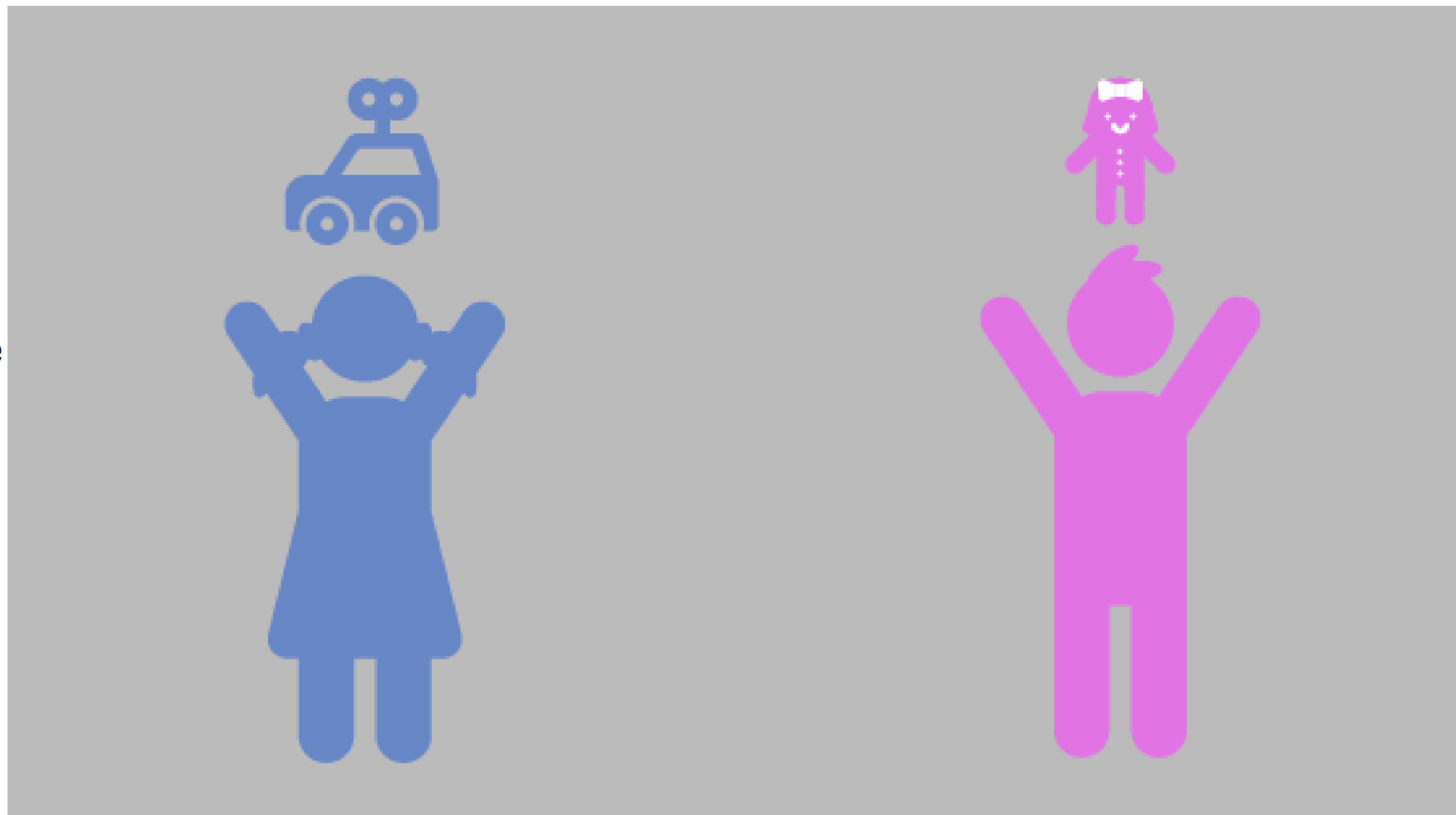
4. Blogs and Vlogs

Blog: an informative website that consists of text entries (posts) in diary style, in an often informal style.

Vlog: a blog that consists of video logs.

Task:

Let's look at the
image and analyse it 😊



Automatic reactions of the brain to media

- Cognitive biases and logical fallacies -



Confirmation bias

When looking for information, people are inclined to seek and accept information that supports their current beliefs and also to reject those that contradict their views. For people, the natural tendency, when navigating through an avalanche of information, is to choose the things they are familiar and comfortable with. Thus, the good opinion that each individual has about himself/herself is validated.

The **confirmation bias** also applies when several people consume the same message. In the end, everyone can leave with a completely different point of view, because they retained only the information that confirmed what they strongly believed, even before exposing themselves to that message.

False memories (1)

When it does not remember all the details of an event, the brain tries to cover the missing areas with plausible details. The line between memories and imagination is sometimes too thin for the person to realize if the event has really happened.

In order to function properly, the human brain needs order and always tries to "see" the whole image (a situation, an event etc.) and, if information is missing, it fills the empty space with information that does not really exist.

False memories (2)

The human brain is resistant to change, because, throughout our evolution, change and the unknown were equivalent to the existence of danger. Thus, it is easier to create a memory than to change it. When a person first encounters falsified information, there is a good chance that they will retain it and be reluctant to change and correct it when they then encounter the correct information.

This resistance becomes even stronger if at first the information was stored through an emotional call. As falsified information or conspiracy theories are characterized by dramatic and emotional content, using inflammatory words, their effectiveness is very strong.

Heuristic fluency

The more professionally presented, the more elegant, the more attractive an idea is, the more likely we are to consider it as serious and true, even if it is not logical.

This also happens with websites that mimic professionalism through design, although the content is full of misinformation or conspiracy theories, or with some charismatic characters who appear in public and, behind attractive speeches that seem professional, they mask their lack of expertise.

Authority bias

- When people associate someone with the label of "expert", or when they trust a certain institution or source of information, this credibility or expertise is translated to other areas, even when it is not true.
- When information is shared through social media, this bias of authority can extend to our friends, who we automatically credit when sharing materials or information through their social accounts.

Attraction to stories

People love stories, over time, stories have been tools through which people have passed important information from one generation to another, they are tools that help to understand the world.

That's why narratives built around stories are very effective. If it's simple, easy to understand and fills in the gaps, people are ready to believe the story. When something is complex and difficult to understand, and the media turns it into a familiar narrative, it is much easier to receive. Even if it's fake.

Also, the human mind is programmed to respond more strongly to emotional calls and lively presentations than to dry facts and statistical analysis. When faced with a difficult question for which only a slow and time-consuming deliberation will give an answer, we are prone to fall back on emotional judgments; in other words, we use the heuristic effect.

DISINFORMATION

HOW CAN WE KEEP PROTECTED

VERIFICATION TECHNIQUES



Fake news?!

Fake news – Most of the times, *fake news* does not refer to actual news, but to fake information, rumors, conspiracy theories, memes, photos, videos etc.

The term has become politically charged, being used as weapon against journalistic content that is disagreeing with a certain person.

Falsified or counterfeit information



"Information chaos"

Three main typologies, depending on the falsity and the intention to do harm:

- **Misinformation** - when false information is disseminated, but there is no intention to harm
- **Disinformation** - when false information is disseminated, knowing that it is false, in order to do harm
- **Malicious information** - when true information is disseminated in order to do harm. Most of the time it can be information that is private, but is taken out in the public space (revenge porn, harassment, hate speech etc.).

NEWS IN PHOTOS

Major Biden In Trouble Again After Burying Antony Blinken In Rose Garden

Yesterday 12:54PM



SHARE THIS STORY



GET OUR NEWSLETTER



MORE FROM G/O MEDIA

READ ON the **ONION**

Girlfriend's Back Too Knotted And Gnarled For Massage To Turn Sexy

READ ON the **ONION**

Major Things Your Teacher Glossed Over In Sex Ed

READ ON the **ONION**

White House Officials Watch In Horror As Major Biden Pulls Marine One Straight Out Of Sky

READ ON the **ONION**

Quiet City Streets Allow Neighborhood Residents To Hear The Natural Sounds Of Couples' Blow-Out Fights

Satire and parody

It may seem extreme to include satire in this classification. Disinformation agents label disinformation as a parody or satire in order to escape verification.

Snopes.com (an American information verification website) believes that it is important to look carefully at satire, because the original context can be lost and people redistribute a satire as true information.

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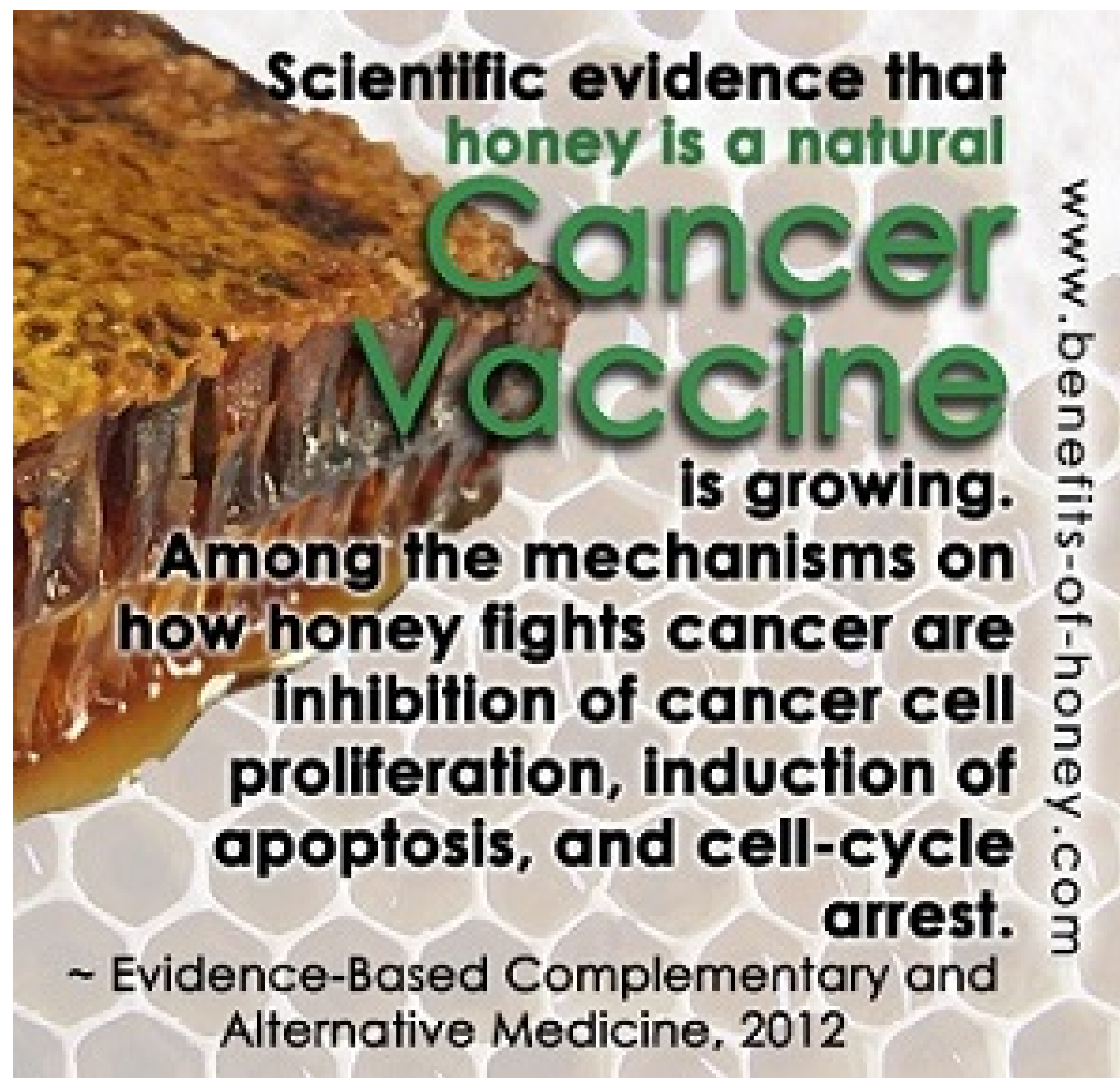
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**Scientific evidence that
honey is a natural
Cancer
Vaccine
is growing.**

**Among the mechanisms on
how honey fights cancer are
inhibition of cancer cell
proliferation, induction of
apoptosis, and cell-cycle
arrest.**

**~ Evidence-Based Complementary and
Alternative Medicine, 2012**

www.benefits-of-honey.com

False connections

Clickbait - bad journalism practices contribute to the challenges of information chaos, especially when most readers do not read beyond the title of a material.

The headline uses the elements of clickbait, to attract attention, shares or clicks.





Old people live too long and this is a risk for the global economy. We must do something, urgently.

—Christine Lagarde, Director of the
International Monetary Fund
(Translated from the Spanish)

Misleading content

It's about truncating statements, cropping a photo to position an event in a certain way, or providing statistical data that supports a particular point of view, without considering, for example, how the data was gathered.

The article quotes the then head of the Monetary Investment Fund (IMF), Christine Lagarde, who said that the elderly live too long, and this becomes a risk to the global economy.



Old people live too long and this is a risk for the global economy. We must do something, urgently.

—Christine Lagarde, Director of the
International Monetary Fund
(Translated from the Spanish)



False context

In this case, it is, for example, a true but old photograph, which is used as new. Generally, such misinformation occurs in crisis situations or ongoing events.

We can also talk about past and present statements or articles, if there is a suitable context.





Impostor content

The name or logo of a known institution is used in conjunction with fake content. It is a very effective method because we tend to validate content faster, without checking, if we believe it was created by people or organizations we already trust.



Immigration Police arresting people at Voting Booths!

¡Policía de inmigración en las cabinas de votación!

pic.twitter.com/Fzbz5oAiNM

7:28 PM - Oct 28, 2016



Manipulated content

In this case a true content altered in some way. It is a very powerful method that is based on real images (video or photo) that someone modifies to look different than they really happened (for example, the speed with which frames in a video follow one another can be slowed down to give feeling that the person speaking is drunk).



The terrible
prophecy that
announces that
The end of the
world is coming
in 2021.

0:03 / 2:36



The end of the world is coming in 2021 - Prophecy

451 de vizionări



3



1



TRIMITE



SALVEAZĂ



Imagine Dragons - On Top Of
The World (Official Music...

ImagineDragons

291 mil. de vizionări • acum 7 ani

Manufactured content

Here we refer to times when the content is manufactured one hundred percent. For example, it could be about creating fake content, which can also be distributed through a fake user account.

This category also includes deepfakes, in which artificial intelligence is used to create a video or audio in which someone does or says something they did not actually say. In this category we can also mention the counterfeit content regarding "miracle" cures that cure diseases in a few days, or conspiracy theories.



Disinformation

Unexpected events or crisis situations are extremely favourable to the emergence of information chaos elements.

Rumours, conspiracy theories and information chaos in general appear when the need for information is very high and, most of the time, official information is missing.

Conspiracy theories



DISINFORMATION

VERIFYING MEDIA MESSAGES



Information verification techniques

The verification process involves three necessary preconditions:

- a) an open approach to information, based on healthy scepticism and a commitment to find out what the facts are;**
- b) a knowledge base that allows the identification of possible errors or bad intentions in the transmission of information;**
- c) documentation and verification practical skills.**

What are we looking at



All the elements are very important in better understanding the contents that reach us.

We come to ... the deconstruction of the message

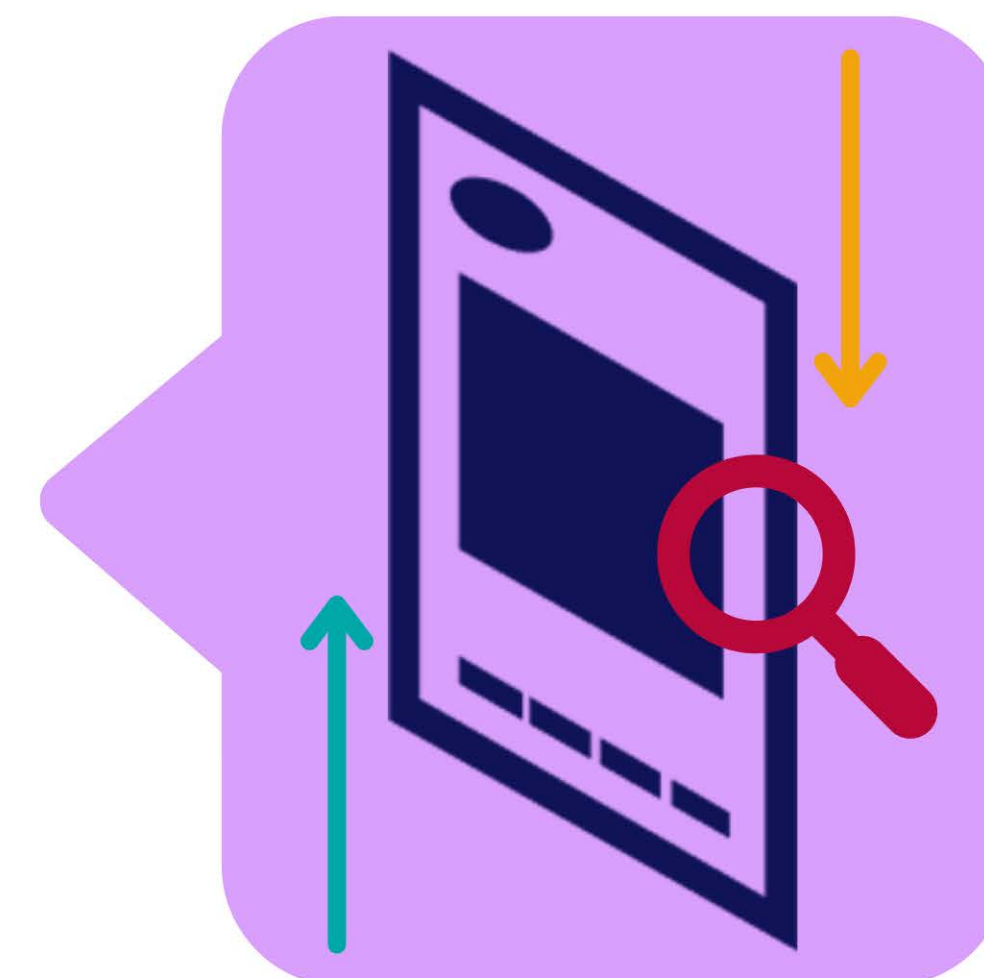
Evaluation starts with 5 essential questions investigating information credibility:

- a) **Evaluation of the source and purpose:** Who created this message? Is the author credited with confidence in the public space? What values, lifestyle, points of view are represented in the message? But omitted? Why was this message sent? What are the interests behind the message? Are they transparent in public or not?
- b) **Content evaluation:** How can the message be understood differently by different recipients? What is the factual information and what are the opinions? What creative techniques are used to attract attention?

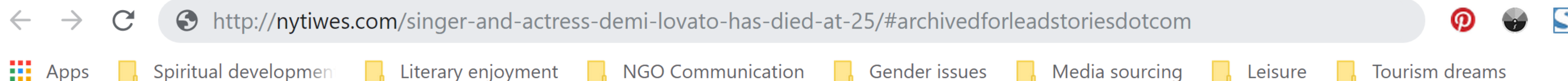
Information verification techniques

Evaluation of information is done in two stages:

- a) **Vertical search** - involves investigating the message, analysing its components, trying to establish the degree of credibility only by evaluating the information contained in the message.
- b) **Lateral search** - involves investigating the information contained in the message, by reporting to external sources and analysis from several perspectives.



Vertical search



Vertical search looks at the source and content of the message, looking at:

Source - the publication is recognized and invested with confidence

Author - the author of the article is easy to identify and appears with the full name

URL - professional name, which corresponds to the publication or company. The domain name can be an indicator of credibility

Attention: About us or Contact pages

Vertical search (1)

The **links** inside the article are functional and lead the reader to other legitimate sources

Web design - an "aged", rudimentary or overloaded design will raise questions

Paid content - signals are used for advertising content, if applicable (P for advertising or A for advertorial, etc.)

The images - are original and refer to the related event.



Lateral search

Lateral search is complementary to the vertical search and follows the same elements, in five stages:

Source - investigating the website owner (from other web pages etc.)

Author - looking for information about the author's expertise and experience

URL – check if the URL is marked as safe by search engines, if they have a security protocol implemented.

Catfishing



Lateral search (1)

Subject - if the topic is of great interest, it may have already been verified (fact checking and information triangulation)

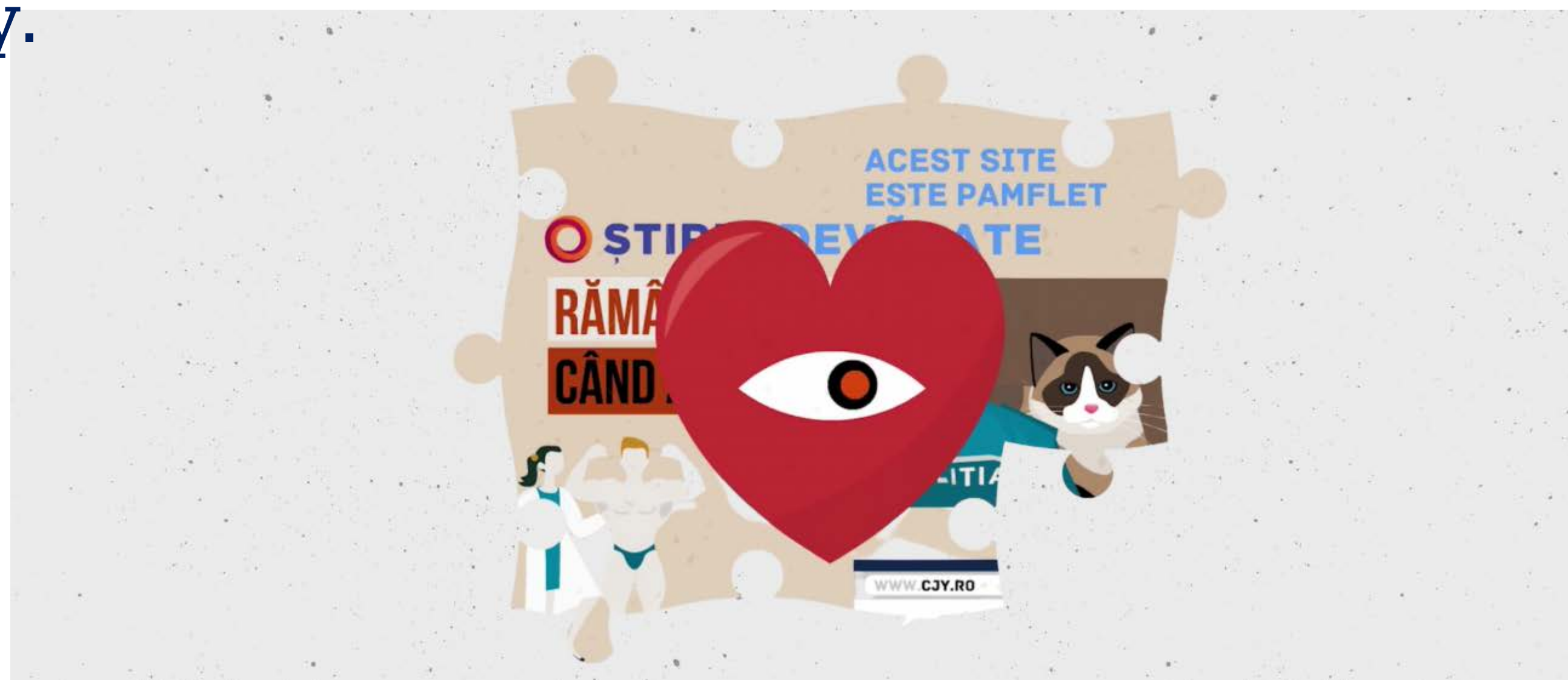
Content - for a careful check, we can use the following sources: online libraries, subscription to online scientific journals, online academic databases (eg. ebsco, gstor), open source statistics (eg. Eurostat charts, UN #youthstats), linked bibliographies (especially for Wikipedia), social networks as a primary source (statements, live videos, etc.)



Lateral search (2)

Close the circle - if the investigation leads nowhere and every answer or solution leads to new questions and searches, without a concrete result, abandon and start the search, using a different strategy.

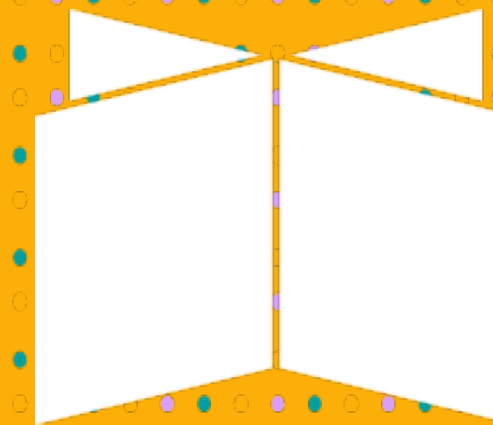
Watch out for emotions!!! What prejudices, experiences and beliefs prevent us from critically filtering the message?





Q&A!
Conclusions

Thank you!



contact@cji.ro