#COMMIT

COMMunIcation campaign against exTremism and radicalisation

Training materials for the capacity building programme

Deliverable 4.1

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Introduction[1]

During the past years, Europe has been facing alarming tendencies toward increasing radical, extremist and terrorist propaganda. Extremists use widely online means (especially social media) to spread hate, encourage violence, radicalise and recruit followers, prepare and incite attacks and then claim credit for them. According to Europol, over 70 social media platforms are used by terrorists to spread their propaganda materials[2]. Such content has been proven to accelerate the radicalisation and recruitment processes. Young people are a particularly vulnerable category as radicals, extremists and terrorists are increasingly populating the social media spaces where they consume and share information, socialise and are socialised. Therefore, they are one of the main groups that would benefit from developing skills improving their capacity not only to detect propaganda, fake information and extremist content, but also to create and disseminate positive messages among their peers as an alternative to extremist content online. To help them resist indoctrination and radicalisation, their critical thinking and media literacy skills must be improved, and the internalisation of democratic values supported. Social media are certainly a part of the problem, and yet they can also be a part of the solution. Although online communication activities are not deradicalisation tools themselves, they can be used as preventive tools, offering different perspectives on social challenges and, directly/indirectly, challenging extremist ideas via counter and alternative narratives[3]. The development of such narratives as well as awareness on "how disinformation and fake news influence terrorist and extremist groups' ability to impact audiences" are considered as a priority in order to prevent terrorist propaganda[4].

Education around these issues would not only benefit vulnerable young people, but also another important group of people/institutions, i.e., future media specialists, civil society organisations and local authorities. Although this is a self-evident need, yet it is seldom a part of standard curricula or professional trainings.

Given these premises, this Capacity Building Programme (CBP) is addressed to university students, civil society organisations and local stakeholders. It is divided into 6 modules for a total duration of 30 hours (see Programme Overview). Each module develops a series of activities including frontal lectures, discussions in plenary sessions, group and individual work. In general, it adopts an interactive and non-formal approach based on participative, cooperative and peer learning. Group work will be particularly important as participants will co-create, with the support of the experts and partners, multimedia content for the online campaigns. For this reason, content creation and development activities are distributed throughout the modules.

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[1] Due to the pandemic prevention measures, it is possible that the CBP might need be adapted to be delivered online.
[2] Conway, M. (2017), *Violent Extremism and Terrorism Online in 2016. The Year in Review.*
https://www.voxpol.eu/download/vox-pol_publication/Year-In-Review-WEB.pdf.
[3] RAN ISSUE PAPER (2015), *Counter Narratives and Alternative Narratives.* https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_cn_oct2015_en.pdf
[4] High-Level Commission Expert Group on Radicalisation (HLCEG-R) (2018)*, Final Report*. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20180613_final-report-radicalisation.pdf

ABOUT COMMIT

COMMIT - COMMunIcation campaign against exTremism and radicalisation, is a 30-months project, funded by the European Commission through the ISF-CSEP programme (grant agreement n° 867019) and coordinated by Centro per lo Sviluppo Creativo Danilo Dolci.

The project aims to prevent & dissuade vulnerable young people (13 – 25) in 4 partner countries from extremism, radicalism & terrorism providing them with skills relevant to co- create counter narratives challenging extremist online propaganda and alternative narratives promoting democratic values, tolerance & cooperation, and to identify & resist extremist online content.

COMMIT adopts a trans-medial approach combining online campaigning (3 campaigns are developed addressing: fake news, hate speech, populistic propaganda; extremism, radicalism and terrorism; active bystandership, active citizenship and youth participation) & face to face activities (trainings, workshops, events). COMMIT aims also to improve the capacity of university students, media professionals, Civil Society Organisations, Internet companies, stakeholders to meet the new challenges linked to extremist propaganda online & radicalisation, training them in alternative & counter narratives and their use in prevention of radicalisation through a capacity building programme.

The current document has been developed by UNIPA with the contribution of all partners, under the WP4 Capacity Building for university students, civil society organisations and local stakeholders, A4.1 - Development of capacity building.

The capacity building training is focused on methods and strategies to prevent and combat extremist and radical online content using alternative & counter narratives. It aims to equip university students and professionals in the field of media and communication, representatives of CSOs and other relevant local stakeholders with competencies and tools needed to prevent and combat extremism and radical propaganda online and promote democratic values.

The current document is a public deliverable available for any CSO, trainer, educator willing to address the COMMIT topics with a similar target group. The document contains detailed overview, description of each training session with foreseen duration, methods and materials used, step by step guide and all needed istructions, indications and deepening readings for implementing a similar capacity building in other countries and contexts. Annexed to this document there are also accompaining power-point presentations used by project partners during the delivery of the training. Any trainer willing to use the COMMIT training material can take inspiration, adapt, or directly use all of parts of the resources made available.

Overview of the Capacity Building Programme

Module 1 - Introduction (4 hrs)		
Activity	**Time**	**Methods**
Activity 1.1 - Team building activity	30mins	Group work
Activity 1.2: Introducing the COMMIT project and the CBP	30 mins	Frontal lecture, discussion
Activity 1.3 - Presentation of the main topics of COMMIT communications campaigns	1,5 h	Online survey, frontal lecture, discussion
Activity 1.4 - What is a communication campaign	1,5 h	Frontal lecture, group work, discussion
Module 2 - Alternative and counter narratives (4 hrs)		
Activity	**Time**	**Methods**
Activity 2.1 - Summary of alternative and counter narrative methods (RLB)	1,5 h	Frontal lecture, discussion
Activity 2.2 – Examples/exercises on alternative and counter narratives	1 h	Frontal lecture, group work, discussion
Activity 2.3 - Content creation and development	1,5 h	Individual and group work
Module 3 - Radicalisation and extremism (4 hrs)		
Activity	**Time**	**Methods**
Activity 3.1 - Defining radicalisation and extremism	1 h	Frontal lecture, discussion
Activity 3.2 – Examples/exercises of radicalisation and extremism	1,5 h	Frontal lecture, group work, discussion
Activity 3.3 - Content creation and development	1,5 h	Individual and group work
Module 4 - Hate speech and populism (6 hrs)		
Activity	**Time**	**Methods**
Activity 4.1 - Defining hate speech and populism	1 h	Frontal lecture, discussion
Activity 4.2 - Technology-supported analysis of extremist and radical online content (Guy De Pauw; Olivier Cauberghs)	1,5 h	Frontal lecture, group work, discussion

Activity 4.3 – Examples/exercises on hate speech and populism	1 h	Frontal lecture, discussion, group work
Activity 4.4 - The role of fake news in hate speech and populist discourses - Debunking strategies	1 h	Frontal lecture, group work, discussion
Activity 4.5 - Content creation and development	1,5 h	Individual and group work
Module 5 - Workshop on Audiovisual Languages and Digital Media Production (9 hrs)		
Activity	**Time**	**Methods**
Activity 5.1 - Visual rhetoric, myth and photography	1,30 h	Frontal lecture, group work, plenary discussion
Activity 5.2 - The basic components of visual analysis	1,30 h	Frontal lecture, exercises in plenary
Activity 5.3 - Video production. From theory to practice	6 hrs	Frontal lecture and group work for video co-creation
Module 6 – Development of COMMIT DECLARATION (3 hrs)		
Activity	**Time**	**Methods**
Activity 6.1 - Development of the COMMIT Declaration	3 hrs	Frontal lecture, group work, plenary discussion

MODULE 1 – INTRODUCTION (4 hrs)

Activity 1.1: Team building activity - *The triangle of similarities*	**Duration:** 30 mins **Methods:** group work

OBJECTIVES
To help participants to know each other and enhance the team spirit.

STRUCTURE
Part 1:
Separate participants into four groups, consider mixing participants so that they are matched up with unknown people - but it also works with school classes etc.

Part 2:
Each group gets a flipchart and highlighters in different colors. The instructor demonstrates the task by drawing a pyramid.
Participants should then assign to the pyramid the following tasks:
a) Things they have in common are written into the pyramid
b) Individual things are written down outside the pyramid close to the name of each participant
In order to complete the task, participants have to communicate and ask questions. Doing so, they are getting to know each other better.

Part 3:
In the end, every group presents the result to the other groups.

Materials & tools: flipchart or online whiteboard (such as Google Jamboard)

Activity 1.2: The COMMIT project and the CBP	**Duration:** 30 mins **Methods:** Frontal lecture, Q&A

OBJECTIVES
To present the COMMIT project and the CBP

STRUCTURE
Part 1: Frontal lecture (20 mins)
The instructor illustrates briefly the COMMIT project and the CBP underlining the co-creative role participants are going to play in developing the contents (publications and videos) to be used during the online campaigns.

The COMMIT project

COMMIT (*COMMunIcation campaign against exTremism and radicalisation*) is a project funded by the European Commission (Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs). It has the general

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objective to prevent and dissuade susceptible and vulnerable audience (TG1: young people aged 13-25 from schools, youth centres and groups, vocational schools, reception centres, etc.) from radical ideas that lead to, extremism and terrorism, providing them with skills needed to co-develop and disseminate alternative narratives promoting democratic values, tolerance and cooperation, and equipping them with competences needed to identify and resist susceptible online content of intolerance and violence (hate speech, fake news and populist propaganda that can act as a stepping stone to extremism). COMMIT aims to reach TG1 with the tendency to sympathise with/being involved in radical/extremist/terrorist groups with online campaigns based on peer-to-peer, co-created alternative and counter narratives addressing researched root causes and push and pull factors of violent radicalisation, exposing and challenging extremism also online, and offering positive alternatives. COMMIT also aims to improve the capacity of university students in the field of communication, journalists and key stakeholders such as civil society organisations, grass-root organisations, internet/media companies (TG2) to meet the new challenges linked to violent and extremist propaganda online (including the role of media in conveying messages nurturing hate speech and radical voices) and train them in alternative and counter narratives as a tool to prevent and combat extremism. Following RAN' definition, counter narratives aim to deconstruct, discredit and demystify extremist propaganda through emotion, theology, humour, exposure of hypocrisy, lies and untruth (fake news), while alternative narratives undercut it by focusing on what we are "for" rather than "against", or by putting forward a positive story about social values, such as tolerance, freedom and democracy[5].

Finally, COMMIT contributes to sharing learning and practice and to supporting stakeholders, such as civil society organisations, encouraging them to exploit their understanding of local communities, cooperate, create networks and jointly act against extremism and violent radicalisation, promoting democratic principles and fundamental rights.

To achieve these goals, COMMIT adopts a combination of three online campaigns and several offline support activities. The online campaigns address three main topics:

- fake news, hate speech, populist propaganda
- extremism, radicalism and terrorism
- bystandership, active citizenship and youth participation

For an effective targeting, COMMIT has carried out an AI-supported analysis of online extremist content (see Deliverable 2.1), a literature review on the push and pull factors of radicalisation, and a field research to map out the profile of TA (see Deliverable 2.2)[6]. Drawing from this work, COMMIT has developed a communication strategy for each campaign using the GAMMMA+ model. Alternative narratives will be used to target vulnerable young people, counter narratives those close to terrorist/extremist groups and radicalised. The credibility of the messages will be ensured by testimonies of people affected by radicalism, extremism and terrorism, by former members and people fighting against, as well as by peers.

COMMIT adopts a collaborative approach: both TG1 and TG2 co-create and validate the content to support credibility and promote active engagement. The online campaigns – including texts, visuals & videos –use the social media mostly used by the target audience. Online campaigns will undergo a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of their reach and impact, accompanied by a set of lessons learned and good practices to be shared amongst the civil society organisations included in the Civil

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[5] RAN ISSUE PAPER (2015), *Counter Narratives and Alternative Narratives.* https://bit.ly/37LHrcr
[6] All deliverables can be downloaded from COMMIT website https://commitproject.eu/resources/

Society Empowerment Programme (CSEP) and the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) promoted by the EU Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs.

In addition to the campaigns, the *COMMIT Declaration* will be developed during the CBP. Its recommendations and call to action will be submitted to media, journalists, politicians and institutional authorities in different EU countries. These stakeholders will also be addressed and engaged during the COMMIT International Conference for the further EU-wide dissemination of the project's results.

The Capacity Building Programme

The CBP is addressed to at least 15 participants per country, recruited among university students, civil society/grass-root organisations and local stakeholders (media/internet companies, local authorities, etc.). It is divided into 6 modules, each one developing a series of activities including frontal lectures, discussions in plenary sessions, group and individual work. In general, the CBP adopts an interactive and non-formal approach based on participative, cooperative and peer learning. Group/peer-to-peer work will be particularly important as participants will co-create, with the support of the experts and partners, multimedia content for the online campaigns. For this reason, content creation and development activities are distributed throughout the modules.

The CBP aims to:
- develop participants' awareness of their own prejudices and stereotypes with regards to the topics of the project;
- develop participants' knowledge of COMMIT topics: (1) fake news, hate speech, populist propaganda; (2) right-/left-wing extremism; (3) radicalism and terrorism;
- de-construct the most widespread national/local narratives (and the ideologies that justify them) that can lead to the de-personalisation of members of a group (ethnic, religious, etc.) or category (women, LGBTQI, etc.), leading to radicalised violent outcomes;
- co-create with participants a series of counter-narratives and alternative narratives to prevent and combat extremism and radical propaganda online and promote democratic values;
- contribute to the creation of the online content (publications and videos) for the campaigns;
- develop the COMMIT Declaration, including a memorandum of understanding and bottom-up recommendations on how to combat extremism content online, prevent radicalisation and promote the European democratic values.

Part 2: Questions & Answers (10 mins)

Materials & tools: slides

Activity 1.3: Presentation of the main topics of COMMIT communication campaigns	Duration: 1,5 h Methods: Live classroom online survey, frontal lecture, discussion

OBJECTIVES
- To identify and deconstruct participants' prior knowledge and pre-conceptions with regards to the main topics of COMMIT communication campaigns.
- To brainstorm about COMMIT topics and develop a first basic understanding of them.

STRUCTURE

Part 1: Live classroom online survey (20 mins)

The instructor launches an online live classroom-survey (with open-ended answers) using for instance Quizizz, Forms, Kahoot or Mentimeter. Questions should make reference to the main topics of COMMIT communication campaigns: religious radicalisation, political extremism, fake news, hate speech, populist propaganda, etc. For example: How do you define political extremism? Make an example. Why do people become political extremists? How political extremism spreads around? What could be done to counteract it? Who are targets of political extremism? What is fake news? etc.

The results of this survey may be used throughout the different activities of the CBP as a starting point to question participants' prior knowledge on the topics of the activities.

Tip: We suggest allowing participants to enter the live classroom-survey anonymously so that they can express themselves more freely.

Part 2: Frontal lecture (40 mins)

Drawing from the answers given during the survey, the instructor gives a first general introduction to the main topics of COMMIT communication campaigns. Further content for this lecture can be drawn from the literature review developed for the Deliverable 2.2 (see COMMIT website) and from activities 3,1, 4.1, 4.2 (see below).

COMMIT online campaigns

COMMIT will develop three online campaigns to prevent radicalism that leads to extremism and terrorism by disseminating alternative narratives promoting democratic values, tolerance and cooperation and dismantling online content of intolerance and violence (hate speech, fake news and populist propaganda) that can act as a stepping stone to extremism.

Radicalisation in its extreme forms is the linking trait of all campaigns. It could be defined as a process of escalation from non-violent to increasingly violent repertoires of action that develops through a complex set of interactions unfolding over time. As for the risk factors that lead to violent radicalisation, the Center for Strategic and International Studies talks about an intersection between "'push' and 'pull' factors often operating within fragile, oppressive, or conflict-affected environments that help to explain this phenomenon. Structural conditions, including real and perceived marginalisation, grievances, and experiences of injustice or corruption, may push individuals into joining a violent extremist organisation, while radical recruitment narratives, propaganda, and social ties to extremist networks work to pull them in. Psychological factors, such as impulsive, thrill-seeking behaviour or a desire to exact revenge or right perceived wrongs, are also thought to play a role in the radicalisation process" (CSIS 2016, p. 14)[7].

We know from literature that a radicalised ideology does not necessarily leads to embracing terrorism[8]. The paths and junctions that lead to it vary depending on the subjects and the contexts. Socio-demographic conditions are undoubtedly important, but increasingly also feelings of shame and humiliation trigger a process of identification with a charismatic leader and/or a radical narrative. Additionally, networks (both online and offline), interpersonal communication, propaganda and information techniques have become equally important in the development of radicalised terrorism.

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[7] CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies), (2016), *Turning Point. A New Comprehensive Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism, A Report of the CSIS Commission on Countering Violent Extremism*. Authors: Green S.N., Proctor K., https://csis-ilab.github.io/cve/report/Turning_Point.pdf

[8] See COMMIT D2.2 https://commitproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/D2.2._Target-Audience-Mapping-Report.pdf

Finally, many studies show that extremist narratives play a major impact on "young people who are going through a phase of transition, who have not yet defined their goals for the future, who feel a sense of frustration and who feel called to a higher cause"[9].

Right-wing extremism is a form of radicalisation usually associated with fascism, racism, supremacism and ultra-nationalism. It typically defends racial, ethnic or pseudo-national identity and shows a strong hostility towards "weak" state authorities, minorities, migrants and/or Left-wing political groups. The path that leads Right-wing extremism to violence is similar to other forms of radicalisation, as it "takes place at the intersection of an enabling environment and personal trajectory, where the actual process is triggered by personal experiences, kinship, friendship, group dynamics and socialisation"[10].

Left-wing extremism is another form of radicalisation that focuses primarily on anti-capitalist demands and calls for the transformation of political systems considered responsible for producing social inequalities, and that may ultimately employ violent means to further its cause. This category includes anarchist, Maoist, Trotskyist and Marxist-Leninist groups that use violence to advocate for their cause.

An interesting body of work from psychologists argues that particular personality types are attracted either to Right- or Left-wing extremism not by adherence to any particular political programme, but merely by an enthusiasm for overthrowing whichever authorities happen to be in power[11]. Admittedly, unlike some groups on the extremist Right, Left-wing extremists usually do not promote violence directly. However, this enthusiasm may lead them to think that political violence (the "revolution") is sometimes justified to solve certain problems.

As for hate speech, in 1997 the Council of Europe defined it as "all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance". As such, it undermines respect for minority groups and damages social cohesion. The Internet, as it is often the case, plays a crucial role both as a risk factor but also as an opportunity for solutions. On the one hand, it is used for disseminating racist, sexist, xenophobic, antisemitic attitudes and materials, on the other hand, however, it may offer unprecedented means of counteracting against all that. It can be used, for example, to set up educational and awareness-raising networks in the field of combating racism and intolerance. Hate speech, entrenched with fake news, is typically used in populist propaganda. In the last decades, we have seen a continuity of discriminatory and racist practices, in a constant reproduction of circular relationship and mutual influence between political, media and social racism. Institutional and political figures (coming from the far-Right spectrum) frequently are the authors, mostly unpunished, of hate speech messages and fake news on minority/target groups, increasingly using social networks as the primary channel of dissemination, finding in the mass media a further possibility for spreading and legitimising such content as "normal" public discourse, often appealing to freedom of expression.

Tip: While illustrating the topics, we suggest involving participants by making reference, when possible, to their survey answers so that they are prompted to question their own initial assumptions about certain issues.

Part 3: Debriefing (30 mins)

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[9] Tusini S. (2016), "Percorsi di (dis)integrazione: dalla prima generazione migrante ai foreign fighters", in «Sociologia e ricerca sociale», 110, p. 133

[10] RAN (2019), *Factbook – Far-Right extremism*, p. 5. https://ec.europa.eu/home- affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran- papers/docs/ran_fre_factbook_20191205_en.pdf

[11] Altemeyer B., (1996), *The Authoritarian Spectre*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.) and London, p. 218.

The instructor invites participants to discuss what they have learnt and how it compares with their prior knowledge and understanding of it.
Tip: We suggest two debriefing techniques that can be consistently used throughout the modules:
1. *What? So What? Now What?*
    The focus of these questions is: *What* have you learned? *So, what* is the significance of the learning? *Now what* are you going to do or change going forward?
2. *Tree of Knowledge*

On a whiteboard or flipchart, draw a tree (just a trunk with branches, no leaves) Then, give the participants post-its, to write down what they learned to help them grow. Ask participants to stick the notes on the tree. The post-its act like leaves for the tree. The more "leaves," the more they feel they have learned (for more techniques, see http://blog.trainerswarehouse.com/memorable-debriefing

Materials & tools: Online survey platform (quizziz, mentimeter, kahoot), slides, flipchart or whiteboard (ex. Google Jamboard)

Activity 1.4: What is a communication campaign/The GAMMMA+ model and COMMIT Communication Strategy	**Duration:** 1,5 h **Methods:** Frontal lecture, group work, discussion

OBJECTIVES
- To learn about definitions and components of communication campaigns
- To learn about the RAN GAMMMA+ model
- To share with participants tips insights for COMMIT communication campaigns as they have been developed in the COMMIT communication strategy

STRUCTURE
Part 1: Frontal lecture (40 mins)
The instructor describes definitions and components of communication campaigns. S/he also presents the RAN GAMMMA+ model and how it has been implemented in COMMIT Communication Strategy
Defining communication campaigns
Communication campaigns are communicative processes planned and developed with a purposeful promotional strategy to change knowledge, attitudes, behaviours or policy in a specific, intended audience via marketing and advertising techniques. There are different kinds of communication campaigns:
- *Marketing communication campaigns* refer to actions and activities that are aimed at promoting a particular product, business or service by spreading a specific message through different media of promotion like television, print media, Internet, social media etc. designed step by step and in a planned way during a particular time period.
- *Political communication campaigns* refer to actions and activities that are aimed at promoting a particular political party or candidate before elections (to gain votes) or during the non-electoral period to create or maintain public opinion support and consensus.
- *Public communication campaigns* encompass strategies for producing effects on the   knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of people across a variety of domains, including pro-social, environmental, and health outcomes. Public communication campaigns can be broadly defined as purposive attempts to inform, persuade, or motivate behaviour changes in a

relatively well-defined audience, generally for noncommercial benefits to the individuals and/or society at large, typically within a given time period, by means of organised communication activities involving mass and social media, and often complemented by interpersonal support.

Usually, a communication campaign starts from an initial research phase where issues are identified, and a target audience is selected. After that, a communication strategy is developed where campaign goals and messages are decided, and media channels are selected to carry out the messages. Finally, the campaign is evaluated for effectiveness and impact. For a useful guide to communication campaign planning, see Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 – A communication planning guide

Source: https://bit.ly/3srdUwI

The GAMMMA+ model and the COMMIT communication strategy
COMMIT Communication strategy is based on the GAMMMA+ model developed by the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)[12]. As RAN experts suggest[13],
- Effective communication campaigns have goals that are SMART, that is specific, measurable, accepted, realistic, timely.
- The promoted messages are relevant and the target audience considers the messengers credible.
- The campaign works with the target audience's preferred medium or online platforms and is also present when the audience communicates offline.
- Campaigns should offer a call to action for those wishing to become involved in the issue at hand, which will facilitate monitoring and evaluation.
- Campaigns aiming to change minds and behaviours offer opportunity for sustained dialogue (both online and offline) with those in their audience who wish to talk.
- Campaigns which ensure they have monitoring and evaluation components in place from the start can then adjust ongoing activities if needed, and once completed, can learn whether they had the desired impact.
- Campaigns that produce a constant stream of content for their target audience to interact with increase their chances of having an impact.
- Authenticity and quantity are more relevant than technical quality.
- Alternative narratives promote positive alternative perspectives, courses of action and role models, and foster critical thinking.
- Counter-narratives, which aim at debunking extremist propaganda, should only be directed at a well-researched and understood audience which is already engaged with extremist content.

The GAMMMA+ model is based on the following key elements: Goal, Audience, Message, Messenger, Media, Action + Monitoring and Evaluation. These elements have all been taken into consideration in the COMMIT Communication Strategy for the online campaigns included in the project.

Goal
COMMIT online campaigns aim at preventing and dissuading susceptible and vulnerable audience (young people aged 13-25 from schools, youth centres and groups, vocational schools, reception centres, etc.) from radicalism that leads to extremism and terrorism providing them with skills needed to co-develop and disseminate alternative narratives promoting democratic values, tolerance and cooperation, and equipping them with competences needed to identify and resist susceptible online content of intolerance and violence (hate speech, fake news and populist propaganda that can act as a stepping stone to violent radicalisation).

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[12] Established by the Directorate Home and Migration Affairs in 2011, the RAN is a network of frontline practitioners who work daily with both those vulnerable to radicalisation and those who have already been radicalised. As civil society representatives, social workers, youth workers, teachers, healthcare professionals, local authority representatives, police officers and prison officers, they are engaged in both preventing and countering violent extremism in all its forms and rehabilitating and reintegrating violent extremists. For more details see: https://bit.ly/3qRbVBv

[13] These tips and the whole GAMMMA+ model are presented in the RAN Issue Paper available at: https://bit.ly/3dOhBbS

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Audience
COMMIT target audience includes young people aged 13-25 at risk of being radicalised and affected by extremist content, fake news and hate speech. Findings from the research phase of the project have provided information to understand what makes them vulnerable, whom they follow and where they get information and support. The push and pull risk factors that need to be taken into account for reaching these young people have to do with the fragile, oppressive, or conflict-affected environments they might live in. Other structural conditions to be considered are low-income families and basic education levels, reduced social mobility, a migration background, unemployment or underpaid jobs, experiences of injustice, lack of social ties. Also, psychological factors are important, such as a sense of disorientation due to their age, impulsive and thrill-seeking behaviours, desire to revenge perceived unfairness or wrongs, victimisation, socio-political alienation. Cognitive risk factors have to do with exposure to radical narratives that provide a filter for making sense of reality and reinforce identity based on violence, hate and revenge; biased images of religion, migrants and sexual orientation or gender identity; Western capitalist societies perceived as immoral and exploitative; threats to national security and jobs as they are presented in mainstream and social media and more in general newsmedia biased representations of social reality. Findings from the national desk research carried out by COMMIT partners have provided a focus on how these factors intervene in more specific, country-based ways[14].

Message
To reach youngsters at risk means showing and promoting empathy, tolerance, understanding of diversity, open mindedness, re-humanising of others; working on anxiety and fears as risk factors for conflicts; building resilience. However, this should be done by producing during the campaigns messages that look, as much as possible, at local conditions and address them.
Some suggestions for the message are:
- *Build positive stories to offer a different perspective*. Adopting the Inoculation Approach (see Module 2, Activity 2.1), we could challenge the implicit logic of extremist propaganda by making young people aware of the connection it makes between psychological mechanisms (fear of diversity, need of positive identity and out-grouping, scapegoating) and negative life circumstances (unemployment, school-dropping, marginalisation, etc.).
- *Use satire, irony or humour* to unveil propaganda hypocrisy and lies. However, keep in mind that, if badly applied, it can reinforce victimisation and humiliation narratives. Using fiction, short animated movies and role-play videos could work too.
- *Avoid polarisation* (the "us" vs "them" dichotomy).
- *Encourage active bystandership* by inviting people to intervene as early as possible (paying attention to not endangering themselves), seek an ally (police or similar), report what they've seen and finally mobilise others.
- *Use approaches working on psychological processes* to foster attitudinal change such as paradoxical thinking, for example, by which people are exposed to information that fits with their beliefs but in a very extreme way, hence making them realise how problematic those beliefs can be and hence open themselves to alternative ones.
- *Use simple words and emotional appeals.* The message must be attractive with more images than words. Call for emotions and values, rather than mere facts or figures. Unlike extremist

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[14] See COMMIT D2.2 https://commitproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/D2.2._Target-Audience-Mapping-Report.pdf

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propaganda, we want to appeal to positive emotions, rather than negative ones as they can de-humanise and reinforce extremist messages.

- *Be very specific in addressing our targets,* taking into account their ambitions, grievances, frustrations, broken dreams, fears and anxieties, material living conditions.
- As said, *focus on micro-issues happening in local contexts* so that we can intervene in a very initial phase when grievance and anger about a certain specific topic start arising, potentially leading to a process of radicalisation.
- If creating *alternative narratives,* offer positive stories, oriented to inclusion and where responsibility and decision power is given to each individual.
- If creating *counter-narratives,* offer stories to challenge extremism and online hate speech; do it by involving credible testimonials or experts, who underline and explain false or distorted information; deconstruct and demystify violent extremism.
- Teach youth how to *debunk fake news and misinformation* by using local media professionals or social media influencers.

Messenger
For the success of counter and alternative narratives, it is very important to create an atmosphere of trust, respect and co-creation. It is fundamental to use credible local voices and build local partnerships. In local communities we may find effective messengers (young people, role models, influencers, people who have been directly or indirectly involved in the campaigns' topics, bloggers, pop culture icons, etc.) because of their proximity to the target audience and their ability to speak using emotions, facts and situations that appeal the young people living in the community. Ask messengers to use storytelling, that is personal stories by which they may get closer to the target audience.

(Social) Media
Since our target audience is widely present in social media, we can use them to encourage young people to take action.

Action
It is essential that campaigns combine theory with action. This can be done either by involving young people in the co-creation of the campaign or with a "call to action" coherent with the message we want to communicate in the campaigns. It is possible to raise young people's interest and motivate them by giving them responsibility, opportunities to socialise, a sense that they can "make a difference".

+ Monitoring and Evaluation
On-going qualitative and quantitative evaluation is planned for the whole period of implementation of the communication campaigns. Each campaign will be evaluated individually after being launched following the GAMMMA methodology, its reach and impact will be monitored in order to make any adjustments if needed during the campaign.

Part 2:   Examples and exercises (30 mins*)*
The instructor shows examples of specific national public communication campaigns and discusses with participants how the GAMMMA+ model might fit into them.

Part 3: Debriefing (20 mins)
For debriefing techniques, see activity 1.3 (part 3) - **Materials & tools:** Online survey platform (quizziz, mentimeter, kahoot), slides, flipchart or whiteboard

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MODULE 2 − ALTERNATIVE AND COUNTER NARRATIVES (4 hrs)

Activity 2.1: An overview of alternative and counter narrative methods (RLB)	**Duration:** 1,5 h **Method**: frontal lecture and discussion

OBJECTIVES
- To present the main methods used worldwide to counter Hate speech
- To focus on a recommended activity based on RLB's CoV "Inoculation approach".

STRUCTURE
Part 1: Frontal lecture (30 mins)
The instructor presents a summary overview of the main non-technological methods used around the world today in countering the incitement presented by populism, radicalisation methods and fake news:
(i) Counter Speech methods
(ii) Educational methods cataloging Hate Speech (Lexica method)
(iii) Inoculations methods
(i) & (ii) will be elaborated in the next section.

Part 2: Frontal lecture (30 mins)
The instructor makes a focus on one of the lesser known methods- "inoculation". Two different methods are presented:
- Cambridge University's "Social Decision making Lab's methodology of exaggeration and subsequent behaviour change"
- Radio La Benevolencija's method of media edutainment in the service of embedding know-how to recognize inciting messaging and motivating "Active Bystandership"

Part 3: Discussion (30 mins)
Participants discuss the methods presented and develop a first short brainstorming on how these can be applied to the COMMIT project in principle.

Materials & Tools: Powerpoint, Video projection with sound, notebooks

Activity 2.2: Examples and exercises on alternative and counter narratives	**Duration:** 1 h **Methods:** Frontal lecture, group work, discussion

OBJECTIVES
- To analyse country-specific examples of alternative narratives that promote and raise awareness on the risks related to different forms of radicalisation/extremism/hate speech
- To analyse country-specific examples of counter-narratives that unmask the contradictions and false promises of radicalising messages, providing a realistic alternative of choice

STRUCTURE
Part 1: Frontal lecture (30 mins)
Building on insights gained through Activity 2.1, the instructor presents and analyses with participants some examples of counter and alternative narratives developed during some national communication campaigns or other kinds of initiatives.
Some examples (in English) are:
1. The *"Hope Not Hate" Online Community Organization*. It is a grass roots anti-fascism anti-racism campaigning Organization. It uses offline and online community mobilization approaches to expose the hypocrisy and violent values of the UK far right and get people active within their own communities. Daily content creation takes the form of social network posts, weekly investigative journalism pieces, and videoed interviews of far Right leaders. The integration across platforms – through links and widgets, and consistent branding – makes content discoverable and maximizes its reach.

Facebook group www.facebook.com/hope.n.hate?fref=ts ,
Website www.hopenothate.org.uk
YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/c/hopenothate/videos

2. *The Counter Extremism Project* (CEP) is a not-for-profit, non-partisan, international policy organization formed to combat the growing threat from extremist ideologies by countering the narrative of extremists and their online recruitment, and advocating for smart laws, policies, and regulations.
Website: https://www.counterextremism.com/
This is how they define the notion of "counter narratives" in their Glossary: https://bit.ly/3uJvwpI
This is a short video presenting their definition of counter narratives
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5oxwZuDe7aM

2. Other examples can be found in Aya Chebbi's blog. Aya is a multi award-winning Pan-African feminist. She rose to prominence as a political blogger during 2010/2011 Tunisia's Revolution.
This is Aya's blog: https://ayachebbi.com/
These are Aya's counter narratives: https://ayachebbi.com/counter-narrative/

Part 3: Debriefing (20 mins)

For debriefing techniques, see Activity 1.3 (part 3).
Materials & Tools: slides, flipchart, videos.

| **Activity 2.3:** Content creation and development | **Duration:** 1,5 h |
| | **Method:** Group work |

OBJECTIVES

This activity aims at creating contents for the different campaigns. As indicated in the Communication Strategy, each partner needs to co-create with participants a total 3 videos (see Module 5) and 30 publications in any format (posts, infographics, stories for Instagram/Facebook, presentations, etc.):

- 6 on any topic
- 12 for WP6 (Campaign against political extremism)
- 12 for WP7 (Campaign against radicalisation and terrorism)

STRUCTURE

This is a transversal activity to be done at the end of module 2, 3 and 4.

The instructor divides participants into 3 groups of 5 persons. Each group must produce a chosen number of publications so that at the end of the three modules (2-3-4), a total production of at least 30 publications per partner is reached.

In activity 2.3, in particular, participants produce publications with alternative and counter narratives concerning one of three general topics of COMMIT.

***Tips*:**

1. Before starting to create any content, the instructor may consider the possibility to anticipate at this point the activities 5.1 and 5.2 of Module 5 where some basic knowledge and skills on visual rhetoric are provided.
2. A useful guide to the top free desktop tools and apps for creating and delivering great social media content can be found here. In the guide you will also find a link to a Buffer post presenting 9 Informative Infographics explaining why visual content is so important for social media communication.
3. We also suggest looking at these 14 Great Tools to Create Engaging Infographics and Images for your Social Media Posts. Another free online tool for creating effective infographics is https://venngage.com/
4. Another useful resource can be found here. It is a guide offering some statistics to show that images are the most engaging type of content on social media. It also provides some tips on what makes a good photo, the common types of images on social media, and which are the most engaging ones.
5. Participants can either produce their own images or search for them online. A useful guide recommending several places online for downloading (legally) good-quality images can be found here. This guide also provides an overview of Creative Commons licensing, and explains how to tell if an image found online is allowed to be used, altered, and/or shared by other users.

MODULE 3 - RADICALISATION AND EXTREMISM

Activity 3.1 Defining radicalisation and extremism	**Duration:** 1 h **Methods:** Frontal lecture, group work, discussion

OBJECTIVES
- To define the concepts of radicalisation and extremism
- To identify the different kinds of radicalisation (for instance, religious radicalisation) and extremism (for instance, far Right movements and political parties)
- To bring participants to reflect on their personal experience of these phenomena.

STRUCTURE
Part 1: Frontal lecture (40 mins)

Definitions of radicalisation, extremism and terrorism[15]
Defining complex phenomena such as radicalisation, political extremism and terrorism is not easy. The debate is still open in the scientific community and in terms of language and legislation there are many national differences. Nevertheless, clarifying the differences with a pragmatic approach is useful to have a common understanding among participants that will be useful to work on the content production for the communication campaigns.
Radicalisation can be defined as a process of escalation from non-violent to increasingly violent repertoires of action that develops through a complex set of interactions unfolding over time. The European Council defines it as a "complex phenomenon of individuals or groups becoming intolerant with regard to basic democratic values like equality and diversity, as well as a rising propensity towards using means of force to reach political goals that negate and/or undermine democracy"[16].
UNESCO, in a guide for policy-makers, points out that the term "'radical' can be defined in varying ways depending on circumstance. In certain contexts, it can simply mean 'wanting to cause political change'. In the context of efforts to prevent violent extremism, 'radicalisation' is commonly used to describe the processes by which a person adopts extreme views or practices to the point of legitimising the use of violence. The key notion here is the process of embracing violence. If one wishes to point to the process by which one becomes a violent extremist, the expression 'radicalisation leading to violence' will be more appropriate than 'violent extremism', which focuses on the ideologically motivated resort to violence"[17].
UNESCO also offers a definition of extremism and violent extremism, arguing that "'extremism' refers to attitudes or behaviours that are deemed outside the norm. This basic dictionary understanding highlights the inherently subjective nature of the term, which can take on different meanings depending on who defines the norm and decides what is acceptable or not accordingly".Violent

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[15] For more details, see the scientific literature review developed in COMMIT D2.2 https://commitproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/D2.2._Target-Audience-Mapping-Report.pdf
[16] European Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA: https://bit.ly/37LkwxV
[17] UNESCO, *Preventing violent extremism through education: a guide for policy-makers*, https://bit.ly/3dMNwt0

extremism, instead, "refers to the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals"[18].

Finally, "terrorism' can be defined as the intentional and systematic use of actions designed to provoke terror in the public as a means to certain ends. Terrorism can be the act of an individual or a group of individuals acting in their individual capacity or with the support of a State. It may also be the act of a State, whether against the population (human rights violations such as forced labour, deportation, genocide, etc.), or in the context of an international armed conflict against the civil population of the enemy State"[19].

To have a comprehensive view of the different aspects that help define radicalisation issues we need to look at the intersection of three levels:

1. the micro-level (the individual level), which involves identity problems, non-integration, feelings of alienation, marginalisation, relative deprivation, humiliation, stigmatisation and rejection, often combined with moral outrage and feelings of vengeance;
2. the meso-level (the broader radical context), which symbolises the link between the individual and the formation of reference groups that can possibly socialise (offline and online) to radical behaviours and beliefs;
3. the macro-level (society as a whole), which indicates the role of governments and domestic or foreign societies, the radicalisation of public opinion and political parties, tensions with so-called "majorities", relationships with minorities, with diaspora groups, lack of socio-economic opportunities.

To sum up, we can follow Schmid's recommendations about the concept of radicalisation:

- see it as a process that can affect conflict parties on both sides in a confrontation;
- remain aware of the fact that radical opinions do not necessarily lead to political violence or terrorism;
- detach radicalisation to some extent from radicalism and link it more to the process of growing commitment to and engagement with (violent) extremism;
- apply it not only to individuals and small groups but also to larger collectivities;
- analyse radicalisation not only on the micro- but also on the meso- and macro-levels.

The radicalisation process

Different authors have tried to develop an understanding of the phases and dimensions that lead to violent radicalisation. El-Muhammadi, for example, in a study about Malaysian militant extremists, identifies four dimensions in the radicalisation process from non-violence to violence, also showing the possible expressions through which they could manifest themselves[20] (see Figure 3).

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[18] UNESCO, *Preventing violent extremism through education: a guide for policy-makers*, https://bit.ly/3dMNwt0

[19] International Migration Law, Glossary on Migration, 2011, https://www.west-info.eu/files/iom.pdf

[20] El-Muhammadi A. (2020), "Radicalisation model: learning from Malaysian militant-extremists", in Gunaratna R., Hussin S. (eds.), *Terrorist Deradicalisation in Global Contexts: Success, Failure and Continuity*, Routledge, New York, chapter 12 (digital edition).

Figure 3 - El-Muhammadi's dimensions of radicalisation

Dimension	Description	Manifestation	
Cognitive-oriented radicalisation	The use of logical explanation, rationalisation and justification for the acceptance of violence. It occurs at the mental level, and it may or may not being translated into violence.	I think what they have done in Iraq and Syria is cruel and unacceptable/I think I should join the group to help them/I think enemies are equally violent.	Non-violence
Emotive-oriented radicalisation	The use of emotive justification to justify acceptance and tolerance to violence. Emotive elements: anger, revenge, humiliation, sense to 'get even'. It occurs at the emotive level and it may or may not being translated into violence.	I feel angry when I look at the picture of kids being killed by the bomb. I can't just sit down and do nothing/don't you feel angry if some people did that to you?	
Faith-oriented radicalisation	The use of faith and spiritual justification to justify acceptance and tolerance to violence. It occurs at the faith level, and it may or may not be translated into violence.	I am convinced joining Daesh is the best way for me/I believe that death is sweeter than life/I believe in martyrdom.	
Action-oriented radicalisation	The use of action to commit violence, act of terrorism. It is the cumulative effects of one of the elements stated earlier: cognitive, emotive and faith that generate violence.	I did join the group because I can't accept to see this thing happened/I did it because it is the right things to do, don't you think?	Violence

Similarly, Borum, starting from the analysis of extremist and violent groups with a differentiated ideological background, reconstructs the phases of the radicalisation process tracing them back to the triggering episodes with which he explains the onset of what he calls a "terrorist mentality". In particular, he describes a first phase in which an event is perceived as wrong ("It's not Right"); things worsen when it is perceived as a blatant injustice ("It's not fair"), attributed to a specific policy, person or nation ("It's your fault") which is then demonised as responsible, thus justifying violence against it ("You're Evil")[21] (Fig. 4)
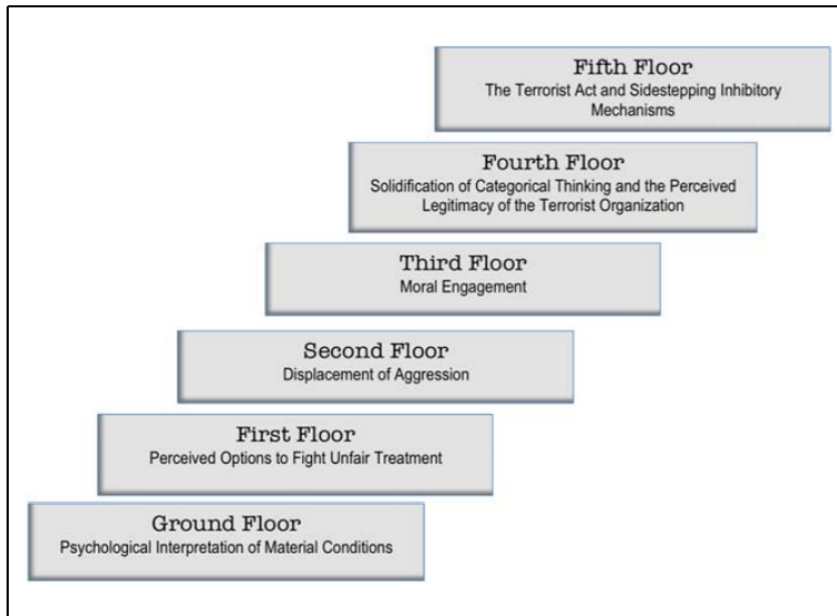
Figure 4 – Borum's Four-Stage Model of the Terrorist Mindset

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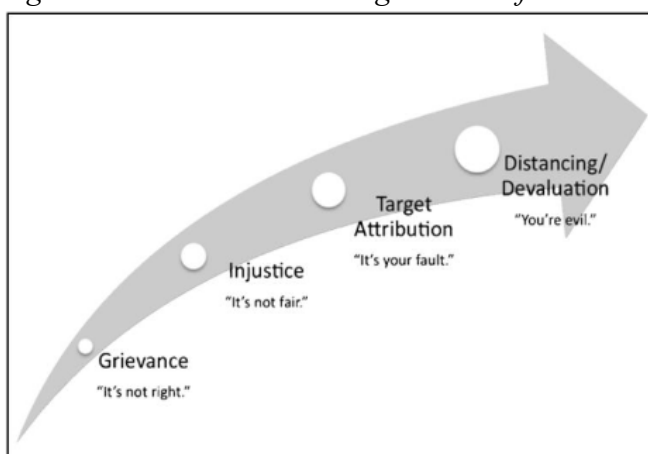
[21] See Borum R. (2012), "Radicalisation into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research", «Journal of Strategic Security», 4(4), pp. 37-62, https://bit.ly/3q1cuY1.

Moghaddam too has developed a "staircase" to terrorism (Fig.5).

Fig. 5 - Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism

The risk factors of radicalisation

There is no just one description of push and pull factors that start a radicalisation process or produce a violent extremist, nor do these factors persist motionless throughout the different junctures of a person's life. One's vulnerability to violent extremism can change over time contingently depending on circumstances.

According to Precht[22], three categories of motivational factors characterise extremist radicalisation in Europe:

- *background factors*, which include personal struggles with one's religious identity, experiences with discrimination, lack of social integration
- *trigger factors*, which include people (such as charismatic leaders or a mentor) and events (such as the imposition of certain policies) that can provoke dislike or activism
- *opportunity factors*, which include the degree of access and opportunities that an individual may have in exposing himself/herself to extremist ideas. These opportunities include physical and virtual places such as the Internet, mosques, prisons and criminal institutions, and social groups and collectives.

Borum instead highlights three overlapping but distinct elements which may "motivate individuals to becoming radicalised or committing terrorist acts: The ideas of the radical narrative that provide a filter for understanding the world; the sociological factors that compel an individual to embrace this radical

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[22] Precht T. (2007), *Home grown terrorism and Islamist radicalization in Europe: From conversion to terrorism*, Danish Ministry of Defense.

narrative; and the psychological factors, characteristics, pathologies, and triggers that may prompt an individual to use violence in order to promote or consummate this narrative"[23].

RAN offers an interesting visual representation – a "kaleidoscope" – of the risk, protection and promotion factors of radicalisation (Fig. 6). The risk factors – operating within and around the individual – can be mitigated by protective and promotive factors, contributing to the development of individual and societal resilience against extremism[24].

Fig. 6 – RAN's kaleidoscope of risk, protective and promotive factors
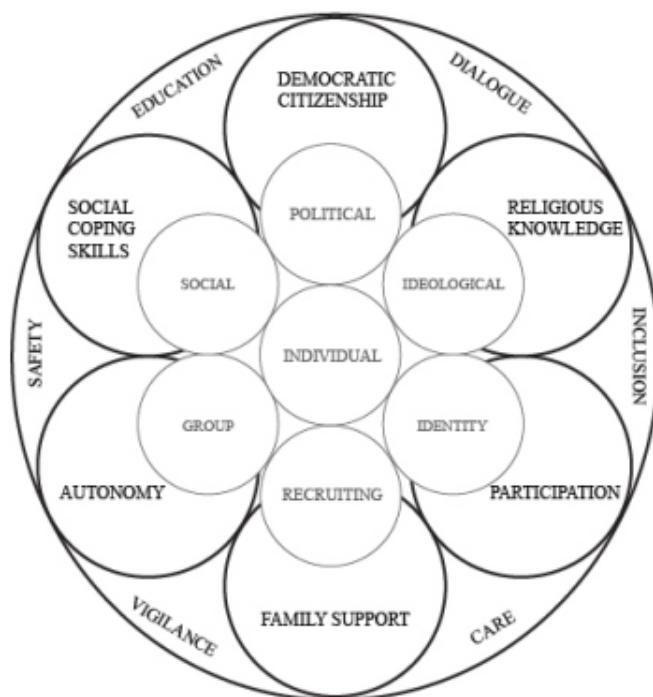
At the centre of the kaleidoscope is the individual where personal risk factors (victimhood, anger, and feelings of humiliation) interact with "social factors (exclusion, social immobility, crime), political factors (foreign policy, islamophobia), ideological/religious factors, cultural/identity factors (lack of belonging, identity crisis, marginalisation), recruiting factors, group dynamics. In the intermediate layer of factors, the main protective factors are represented. These factors maintain a distance between the individual and deviancy or harm. Each one mitigates risk and promotes individual resilience in relation to a particular risk factor"[25].

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[23] See Borum R. (2012), "Radicalisation into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research", «Journal of Strategic Security», 4(4), p. 44, https://bit.ly/3q1cuY1

[24] Sieckelinck S., Gielen A.J. (2018), *RAN ISSUE PAPER Protective and promotive factors building resilience against violent radicalisation*, https://bit.ly/3dRnlSc.

[25] The authors go on to describe how each protective factor contributes to mitigate risk and promote individual and social resilience through specific policies and practices. A recent application of RAN's kaleidoscopic model has been done in the EU project OLTRE ((https://oltre.uniroma2.it/) where it was used as a conceptual stepping stone for its preventive strategy and communication campaign against radicalisation. See Macaluso, M., Tumminelli, G., Spampinato, A., & Volterrani, A. (2020). Second-Generation Muslim Youth Between Perception and Change: A Case Study on the Prevention of Radicalization. "Sociology Study", 10(3), 103-122, https://bit.ly/3r14GqO.

Tips: The instructor may want to show, at some point, a short video from RAN which explains and summarises the topics of the lecture: https://www.youtube.com/embed/Z8Vy7wxQ-ik
We suggest starting the lecture by presenting some facts and figures on extremism and counter extremism in partner countries (see https://www.counterextremism.com/countries). It may also be of interest to say something about European Ethno-Nationalist and White Supremacy Groups https://www.counterextremism.com/european-white-supremacy-groups

Further readings
- *RAN papers and other publications: https://bit.ly/3qXTSJY*
- *UNESCO: A Teacher's guide on the prevention of violent extremism, https://bit.ly/3qYWJlN*

Part 2 Debriefing (20 mins)

Recalling the results of the live classroom-survey done in Activity 1.3 (Part 1), participants discuss their prior knowledge and understanding of the concepts of radicalisation, extremism and terrorism and verify whether they have started questioning them by gaining new insights from the lecture. For debriefing techniques see Activity 1.3 (Part 3).

Materials & tools: Survey, slides, debate.

Activity 3.2 Examples and exercises on radicalisation, extremism and terrorism	**Duration:** 1,5 h **Methods:** Frontal lecture, group work, discussion

OBJECTIVES
- To analyse country-specific examples of radicalised groups and extremist political movements/parties/leaders
- To analyse the online communication of radicalised groups and extremist political movements/parties/leaders (video, images, pages and posts on social networks, etc.)

STRUCTURE
Part 1 Frontal lecture: (30 mins)

Forms of political radicalisation: the far-Right extremists' strategies and narratives
One of the most widespread forms of political radicalisation in recent years, across all European countries, is right-wing political extremism. During the last decades, the far-Right extremist scene has changed, it has moved from offline to online, embracing the gaming culture and increasing transnational networks. There are different kinds of organisations: from militant neo-Nazi groups to local protest groups that oppose perceived "Islamisation", and to online groups who consider themselves members of the alt-right fringe movement. There are violent extremist groups and groups that promote or condone violence (Fig. 7)[26].

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[26] RAN (2019), *Factbook. Far-right extremism*, https://bit.ly/3b0ub5K. See also, RAN (2020), *Violent right-wing extremism in focus*, https://bit.ly/3r0dYTW

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Fig. 7 – The different types of far-Right ideologies

The instructor may find examples and reflections on issues about radicalisation in RAN's YouTube channel. In particular:

- A case study on the narratives and strategies of far-right extremists https://bit.ly/2O3A35x (a shorter version is also available: https://bit.ly/3sC8T4F)
- On Involving young people in the prevention of radicalisation https://bit.ly/3b0AhDw
- A playlist of reflections and EU projects on far-Right extremism: https://bit.ly/3bYG77J

Country-specific case studies about political extremism
The instructor describes country-specific examples of political extremism, showing their ideology, narratives, symbols and vocabulary, representations and manifestations. For a practical guide to this, see RAN 2019, *Factbook. Far-right extremism*, https://bit.ly/3b0ub5K

Part 2: Group work: (30 min)
The instructor divides participants in small groups and assigns them the task to analyse some visual materials (posts, videos, images, memes, stories) of political extremists.
Part 3 Debriefing (30 mins)
Participants present and share in plenary insights and lessons learnt during the previous parts. For debriefing techniques see Activity 1.3 (Part 3).

Materials & tools: slides, flipchart.

Activity 3.3 - Content creation and development	**Duration:** 1,5 h **Method:** Group work

For the objectives and structure of this Activity (and also some tips), see Activity 2.3 (Module 2).

In this specific case, participants produce publications concerning radicalisation, extremism and terrorism in any format (videos, posts, infographics, stories for Instagram/Facebook, presentations, etc.).

Materials & tools: Computers/notebooks, flipcharts and various apps/tools.

MODULE 4 – HATE SPEECH AND POPULISM (6 hrs)

Activity 4.1: Defining hate speech and populism	**Duration:** 1 h **Methods:** Frontal lecture and discussion

OBJECTIVES
- To define the concepts of "hate speech" and "populism"
- To identify the dynamics that originate hate speech and populism
- To identify different characteristics of social media that facilitate the spread of phenomenon online

STRUCTURE
Part 1: Frontal lecture (30 min)

Defining hate speech
The definition of the concept of hate speech is strictly dependent on the different interpretation of freedom of speech in different contexts: it changes over time and also in relation to different national laws, international documents, self-regulation codes of social media. It also changes in relation to its effects: not all expressions of incitement to hatred, violence and extremism produce a concrete risk of promoting discrimination, hatred, violence or segregation.

Although there is no universally shared definition of the concept, European and international institutions have tried to settle its borders in a series of documents.
- The Council of Europe Recommendation on "hate speech" defines it as "speech likely to produce the effect of legitimising, spreading or promoting racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of discrimination or hatred based on intolerance" (https://bit.ly/2O6yzrb).
- In 2015 the ECRI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance) definition provides a much broader concept which includes "the advocacy, promotion or incitement, in any form, of the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or group of persons, as well as any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatisation or threat in respect of such a person or group of persons and the justification of all the preceding types of expression, on the ground of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, language, religion or belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and other personal characteristics or status" (https://bit.ly/3bO59q1).
- in 2019 UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech defines it as communication that "attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language regarding a person or a group based on who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender, or other identity factors" (https://bit.ly/3aXKbp7).

The Internet, as it is often the case, plays a crucial role both as a risk factor but also an opportunity for solutions. On the one hand, it is used for disseminating racist, sexist, xenophobic, antisemitic attitudes and materials, on the other hand, however, it may offer unprecedented means of counteracting against all that. It can be used, for example, to set up educational and awareness-raising networks in the field of combating racism and intolerance.

The origins of hate speech

To identify possible answers to online hate speech, it is suitable to take a step back and go back to the origins: How does it originate? What mechanisms lead to it? As we know, many factors interact – sometimes in a conflicting way – defining our attitudes and behaviours. What we call "world view" is given by the combination of several elements:

- emotions (some issues, such as immigration, arouse powerful emotions such as fear or anger);
- identity (the process of identity formation is determined by our living conditions as well as conscious/unconscious choices);
- lived experiences (the events and relationships lived in the course of our existence, as well as the meanings given to them, can shape the way we cope with challenges);
- values (within the same culture or community we can find contrasting or divisive values that might determine polarized positions);
- beliefs (when our experiences on someone or something is limited, we could resort to generalizations and analogies based on isolated experiences to fill our knowledge gaps).

Stereotype is a specific belief related to the characteristics, attributes and behaviours of members of a particular group. It can produce negative effects when it makes *a priori* judgements on certain individuals/social groups, generating discriminatory actions. Another important factor of hate speech is the narrative frame it gives to a particular phenomenon. Different narrative forms (cinema, literature, music, but also advertising, journalism, etc.) with different ideologies behind them tend to impose different interpretations. Narrative frames can be used in a negative way bringing one group against the other and instigating hatred, violence, and stigma.

To understand if we are dealing with a case of hate speech, we need to identify its implicit meaning. Beyond its explicit content, hate speech conveys two other messages[27].

The first one is targeted at the attacked people and aims to weaken their feeling of security and freedom, bringing them to think that they have no space (i.e., they cannot be accepted and/or integrated) in society. The other message is addressed to the members of the community who do not belong to the attacked group: the aim is to convey the idea that the opinions underlying hate speech are widely shared, even if not always publicly expressed. Over time, these messages become components of the daily social fabric, creating a fertile ground for discrimination, hate crimes, violations of human rights.

Finally, it is important to underline that the impact of hate speech is not limited to the influence it can have on online debates about certain controversial issues. In fact, it produces negative effects and repercussions also on the offline lives of the attacked individuals/social groups as well as on the entire community.

Hate speech online and the role of ICT companies

Everyday a lot of content that can be considered hate speech is shared online, especially in social media, blogs, in the comments of newspapers, but also on TV, in political and current affairs programs. The Internet is usually seen as the space where freedom has its greatest fulfilment, primarily as freedom of expression. Consider, for example, the great importance of networked participation, digital democracy, as well as the massive use of social networks done by politicians or young people to organise protests, campaigns, political and social action, often with an international echo. Indeed, the Internet has given the opportunity to connect people from all over the world. One reason for this is that social media have a "horizontal" structure that works as a sound box for all the contents that circulate

[27] Waldron J. (2014), *The Harm in Hate Speech*, Harvard University Press, 2014.

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in it. However, the brevity of such contents as well as the speed in their editing often make them over-simplified and extreme. Furthermore, the increasing number of the so-called echo chambers, that is online spaces (such as, for example, Facebook groups) where the information shared strengthens a single point of view on a certain issue, facilitates the polarisation of opinions and often leads to phenomena such as racism, xenophobia, populism and terrorism. Racist and discriminatory statements in social networks are very common as they are the ideal place where it is extraordinarily easy to get in touch, comment, share and circulate news and opinions from basically anywhere free of any cost, and, above all, covered by anonymity.

Therefore, speed, interconnection and incisiveness are some of the characteristics of social media that make them one of the preferred channels for the dissemination of hate speech online.

Hate speech online is a difficult and urgent phenomenon to fight, above all for three reasons:

- persistence over time: hate speech can remain online for a long time, in different formats and platforms; the longer it remains accessible, the greater is its negative effect;
- the recurrence of content: the structure of social media platforms can make content recurring in different spaces so that even if removed from one place, it can always re-appear under another name and/or title somewhere else;
- anonymity: the possibility of anonymity and, to some extent, impunity promote the expression of hateful opinions. Haters often may not be aware of the direct consequences of their actions and may not perceive the potential impact of their hate messages on people's real life.

The debate on hate speech online has recently involved all institutions, national and international. In May 2016, to prevent and counter the spread of illegal hate speech online, the European Commission signed with four major ICT companies (Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube) a Code of Conduct. In 2018 Instagram, Google, Snapchat and Dailymotion joined the Code, and Jeuxvideo.com in 2019. The Code is based on a close cooperation between the European Commission, ICT platforms and a network of organisations (NGOs and national authorities) located in different EU countries. By signing the Code, ICT companies commit to the permanent development of internal procedures and staff training for examining within 24 hours most of the requests for removal of hate speech content, and, in case, delete it or make it inaccessible. In addition, the ICT companies are committed to strengthening partnerships with civil society organisations to report content that incites violence and hate behaviour. One of the main objectives of this cooperation is to verify if ICT companies are complying with the rules of the Code. Although some progress has been done in this direction, social media platforms must continue to improve transparency and feedback to users.

Further readings

- Alkiviadou N. (2019) "Hate Speech on Social Media Networks: Towards a Regulatory Framework?", in Information and Communications Technology Law, 28 (1). pp. 19-35. https://bit.ly/3b1WbG8
- Article 19 (2018), Self-regulation and "hate speech" on social media platforms, https://bit.ly/37SrSzX
- Matamoros-Fernández A., Farkas J. (2021), "Racism, Hate Speech, and Social Media: A Systematic Review and Critique", in *Television & New Media*, Vol. 22(2) 205–224. https://bit.ly/2Obe8cn
- Estellés M., Castellví J. (2020), "The Educational Implications of Populism, Emotions and Digital Hate Speech: A Dialogue with Scholars from Canada, Chile, Spain, the UK, and the US", in Sustainability 12, no. 15: 6034. https://bit.ly/3b0b108

Part 2 Debriefing (30 mins)

Drawing also from the results of the live classroom-survey done in Activity 1.3 (Part 1), participants discuss their prior knowledge and understanding of the concepts of hate speech and populism and verify if they have started questioning them by gaining new insights from the activity done. For debriefing techniques see Activity 1.3 (Part 3).

Activity 4.2: Technology-supported analysis of extremist and radical online content (Guy De Pauw; Olivier Cauberghs)	**Duration:** 1,5 h **Method**: frontal lecture / take-home assignment (shared task)

OBJECTIVES

This activity will give students an overview of how technology can be used to perform social media mining of societally harmful phenomena such as hate speech and disinformation. We will use hands-on exercises with readily available tools to give the students basic notions of the possibilities and limitations of Big Data analyses and Artificial Intelligence.

STRUCTURE

Part 1 (30 mins): a frontal lecture about current applications of Big Data and Artificial Intelligence. Instructors will show how user-generated content is leveraged by social media companies for monetary gain.

Part 2 (20 mins): we show how readily available tools can be used to collect user-generated content to study societal phenomena. We explain how Artificial Intelligence can be trained to automatically recognize hate speech and fake news by observing human behaviour.

Part 3 (15 mins): participants are divided into small groups and will start the shared task: they will be asked to read and assess a series of social media messages by labelling them on a spreadsheet.

Part 4 (10 mins): each group briefly discusses findings.

Part 5: (10 mins) the instructor shows what the AI has learned from the work of participants.

Materials & Tools: Students should bring a laptop or a smartphone for the labelling task. Powerpoint presentation.

Activity 4.3. Examples and exercises on hate speech and populism	**Duration:** 1 h **Methods:** Frontal lecture, group work, discussion

OBJECTIVES
- To analyse examples of hate speech and populist views of political movements/ parties/leaders
- to analyse how haters and populists use different communication strategies and media to attract attention and interest: video, images, pages and posts on social networks, etc.

STRUCTURE

Part 1 Frontal lecture: (20 mins)

The instructor describes examples of country-specific hate speech and populist discourses and analyses how they are constructed.

Amnesty International-Italy has developed a five-dimensions model for the analysis of hate speech[28]:

1) Content

If we look at implicit content, some sentences can be considered more offensive than others. A moderate insult is less "toxic" than an incitement to act against a community.
Think of the difference between negative generalizations like "Migrants do not work", insults like "Roma steal everything" and extreme expressions like "Muslim bitch, I'll rape you tomorrow".

2) Context

The same expression can be more or less toxic depending on the context in which it is used. Toxicity increases with the hater's visibility and the reach (audience reached) of the medium used for sharing the message. Equally important is the contextualization relating to the specific historical, political, social, economic background in which toxic content and the phenomenon it relates to is framed. "Migrants ruin the country" is unpleasant in a 16-year-old's blog, but it is a lot worse if it's a Minister's tweet;

3)Intention and tone

The same expression can be more or less toxic depending on the tone and the intention used. If an aggressive tone is accompanied by the intention to promote discriminatory content and harm someone, a sentence acquires much greater seriousness. A sentence like "Let's exterminate Roma!" written as a private message with no intention to move to action is certainly less toxic than being published on a big poster hanging next to a Roma camp. However, the impact of hate speech is not necessarily proportional to the violence of tone and content. For example, a deceptive argument inserted in a speech on health and social care within Roma camps, expressed in a polite form, can do more damage than insults and comments perceived as extreme in an immediate way.

4) Potential target

Some individuals or social groups, depending on the general perception of them, may be considered more vulnerable than others, as in the case of minorities. For example, an insult against Christians will

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[28] Amnesty International-Italy (2020), *Hate speecH: conoscerlo e contrastarlo,* https://bit.ly/3uDyyLU.

be more toxic in a country where the majority belongs to another religion. The same expression applied to different people or groups can produce different effects: "Jews are greedy and criminal" is more toxic than "politicians are greedy and criminal".

5) Real or potential impact
To better assess the real or potential impact of a toxic claim, it is necessary to try and look at it from the victim's point of view. An external person may tend to minimize its impact: to say that it was simply written "for fun" can be deeply mortifying for those who have been targeted.
Its impact on single individuals may go from lack of self-esteem and anxiety, to isolation and depression, to even suicide. On social group it may go from discrimination and stigma, to hate crimes and persecution, to genocide.

Tip: Some examples of toxicity could be drawn from Commit online content analysis and activity 4.2[29].

Part 2: Group work (20 mins)
The trainer divides participants in small groups and gives them examples of hate speech content, asking to place them on a hypothetical scale of toxicity according to Amnesty's model, and to justify their choice.
Part 3: Plenary discussion (20 mins)
Participants present and discuss in plenary the results of their group work.
Materials & tools: slides, examples of hate speech/populist content, flipchart.

Activity 4.4: The role of fake news in hate speech and populist discourses - Debunking strategies	**Duration:** 1 h **Method:** frontal lecture, group work, discussion

OBJECTIVES
- To raise awareness on the presence of different forms of disinformation and misinformation online
- To bring participants to recognise fake news by checking information sources and deconstructing content
- To present some strategies to debunk distorted or biased information.

STRUCTURE
Part 1: Frontal lecture (30 mins)

The context: the impact of infotainment and social media on newsmaking
Although the diffusion of the Internet and social media have brought about significant positive changes in contemporary society, the informative immediacy of the web has placed users in front of the risk of

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[29] See Deliverable 2.1 - https://commitproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/D2.1-Content-Analysis-Report_DEF.pdf

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an almost systematic inability to recognise truthful information. Fake news is playing a major role as fuel for this information-overload process, often nurturing hate speech and populist discourses. According to many authors, the contemporary success of online disinformation is connected to relevant changes in Western journalism from the '90s: the centrality of traditional political journalism has weakened, without disappearing, and *soft* news, focused on emotions and conflicts has prevailed over the "old" moral duty to inform citizens. The "spectacular" logic has transformed news values, imposing a dramatising, emotional attitude in the narration of the world, also the political one, by both journalists and politicians[30]. Adopting the aesthetics of TV, its rhythms and rules, journalism has radically changed: personalisation, conversationalization, and dramatisation are dominant in the contemporary arena where charismatic performances have become the privileged strategy for winning the electorate. The collapse between information and entertainment (infotainment) is producing relevant political effects both on newsmaking and citizenship: at a journalistic level, a fragmentation of reality and lack of contextualising competence are dominant, therefore people are presented with *pieces of information*, often offered by non-professional actors, using non-traditional, "softer" sources of information, such as late-night comedy or daytime talk shows. At the citizenship level, the merging of politics and popular culture has produced the risk of bringing people to vote according to emotional, "softer" bases. Moreover, the Internet and social media have created a new environment where billions of news is produced and shared by anyone, bringing to a radical change not only in the newsmaking process, but also in the definition of the role of journalists. Individuals are no longer mere receivers of news written by professionals: they can also become news producers and active networked citizens in a context characterised by disintermediation, time compression, speed of information flows and easily accessible news. Consequently, journalism has radically changed due to the presence of social media, both in terms of new risks and potentialities; due to the disinhibitory effects of online interaction and ideological echo chambers, the emotional component is more and more central: "*the best way to get people to share a story is by appealing to their feelings*"[31]. However, the most dangerous risk is *the lack of transparency* in the research process of news: individuals are passive because they do not decide the logic of information filtering and are also led towards polarisation, hence to hyper-simplified representations or confirmation biases. It is more and more apparent that in the contemporary media scenario, people live immersed in a flood of news, but they are less and less able to manage an informational chaos where *the difference between true and false seems irrelevant* and rational argumentation, based on logical sequences and truthfulness of facts, is defeated by the predominance of emotions and irrational-instinctive reactions. The predominance of emotainment as well as the pervasive viralisation process of news are deeply worsening contemporary journalism's crisis. Similarly, the increasing presence of fake news in digital environments damages journalism's credibility and its social responsibility, especially when completely or partially false news becomes real issues in the political debate.

Fake news, post-truth and populist discourse

Concern about dis-information in the media is by no means a new phenomenon but especially after the presidential elections in the USA in 2016, the expression fake news has become a real buzzword. Many political institutions and researchers have reported extensively about this phenomenon in order to curb it. What is common across the different definitions of fake news is *how fake information is*

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[30] Rizzuto F. (2019), Reality versus Emotions in Italian Journalism, "Soft Power. Revista Euroamericana de teoria, historia de la politica y del derecho", vol. 6, 229-245, https://bit.ly/3dSFZZH
[31] Albright J. (2017), Welcome to the era of fake news, in "Media and Communication", vol. (5)2, 87-89. https://bit.ly/3ksIKCu, p. 48.

made to look like real news. In general terms, we can say that fake news is unreal, invented news with different levels of criticality like, for example:

- satirical news that, if written without context, may be perceived as real;
- news coming from conspiracy theorists;
- news based on rumours, gossip or pseudo-science;
- hate news from sources that promote racism, homophobia, misogyny, other forms of discrimination;
- totally or partially incorrect news that use emotional language to attract readers (clickbaiting)
- totally false news that imitate professional real news;
- intentionally distorted political news.

Admittedly, one problem with the expression "fake news' is the implication that it is simple and straightforward to distinguish between truth and falsehood. If identifying and distinguishing what's fake or fabricated from what is more trustworthy is an important practice, yet we need to be aware that forms of bias are present in all sources of information (be they mainstream or not).

Fake news is part of larger changes in contemporary society where the category of truth as a socially perceived standard of judgement has weakened while empirical truths, often based on individual perception, have multiplied (lately, also thanks to social media). We now live in a post-truth era where "objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Oxford Dictionary, 2016). Fake news is therefore an effect of much broader changes either in the political field (dominated by a people's growing distrust of politicians) or in the media system itself. As David Buckingham argues, "while 'old' media such as newspapers and television continue to play a role, social media can easily bypass legal regulations on factual reporting, and they can be used to spread rumours and disinformation much more quickly"[32]. On the internet the public sphere has become completely de-territorialized, making interconnection and disintermediation possible, paving the way to populist movements and leaders. In the post-truth era, the result of this process is a progressive strengthening of impermeable ideological spheres, increasingly extraneous to dissent, rational confrontation and different opinions. Social media and fake news play a crucial role in fostering populist discourses by adopting two typical disinformation methods: *scaremongering* and *conspiracy*. What unites the two strategies is the construction of a dangerous and scary threat by means of distorting narratives. Populists promote the proliferation of fake news and establish an immediate, emotional but shallow narrative model. Through elements such as the centrality of the receiver and his/her emotions and fears, the fact's proximity and manipulability, populist communication aspires to exercise control on communities. This kind of informative communication, if not verified and debunked, can lead to episodes of collective psychosis, as well as to racist, homophobic, xenophobic, misogynous phenomena. Especially in historical moments of crisis and turmoil, this confused hybridization between facts and invention, endangers democracy as well as institutional credibility and authority.

Defining debunking

The word *debunking* derives from the English *bunk*, used in colloquial language to define nonsense. The prefix *-de* is applied with the meaning of "removing". Debunking can thus be defined as the practice of questioning or denying, based on scientific methodologies, false, exaggerated, unscientific statements. The modern connotation of the term is due to the American journalist and writer William

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[32] Buckingham, D. (2019), *The Media Education Manifesto*, Polity Press, Cambridge (USA), p. 41-42.

Woodward, who used it in his bestseller, *Bunk,* published in 1923. Initially, debunkers mainly operated in fields such as religion, UFO phenomena, statements on the paranormal, research carried out with unscientific methods, conspiracy theories or alleged miraculous events and intervened precisely to deny all these phenomena. In the contemporary disinformation ecosystem, debunking mainly deals with verifying sources' reliability and questioning content's veracity. Debunking focuses on the communication process, starting from the finished product (news), analysing its content, context, sources in order to identify the reasons behind it and possibly unmask them. Consequently, debunking consists not so much in discriminating true from false but rather true from probable or plausible. Many important newsmedia have specific teams dealing with debunking and fact checking.

In 2015 *First Draft News* was born. It is a project in which individuals as well as institutions (like publishers and agents operating in the media field) work to fight online disinformation through a platform providing "practical and ethical guidance on how to find, verify and publish content sourced from the social web" and "cutting-edge digital tools to help both content creators and the public make better-informed judgments about the information they encounter online"[33]. *First Draft News* offers an entire collection of tools and techniques for training: https://start.me/p/vjv80b/first-draft-basic-toolkit. In particular, it offers a typology for defining mis- and disinformation (Fig. 8)

Fig. 8 – 7 Types of mis- and disinformation[34]
 See https://firstdraftnews.org/latest/fake-news-complicated/
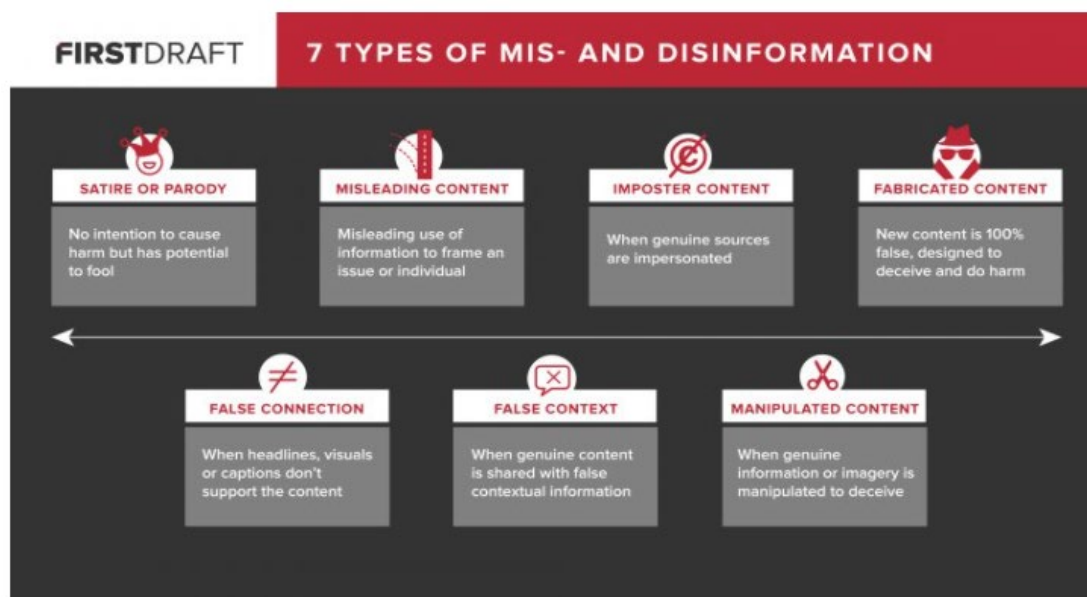
Another interesting online resource for fighting fake news and propaganda and developing critical debunking skills is the Mind Over Media platform, created in 2015 by the Media Education Lab, led by US media literacy education scholar Renée Hobbs: https://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/. The goal is to "build people's critical thinking and communication skills, promoting dialogue and discussion about what constitutes contemporary propaganda and how it may have positive, benign or negative impact on individuals and society". It then provides training materials for identifying

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[33] See https://firstdraftnews.org/about/
[34] See https://firstdraftnews.org/latest/fake-news-complicated/

propaganda, recognising techniques being used to influence public opinion and behaviour, and considering when propaganda may be dangerous. Such techniques are:

- *Activating strong emotions, fears and prejudices*. "Successful propagandists understand how to psychologically tailor messages to people's emotions in order to create a sense of excitement and arousal that suppresses critical thinking".
- *Responding to audience needs & values*. "Effective propaganda conveys messages, themes, and language that appeal directly, and many times exclusively, to specific and distinct groups within a population", making them personal and relevant.
- *Simplifying information & ideas*. "Successful propaganda tells simple stories that are familiar and trusted, often using metaphors, imagery and repetition to make them seem natural or "true… Oversimplifying information does not contribute to knowledge or understanding, but because people naturally seek to reduce complexity, this form of propaganda can be effective".
- *Attacking opponents*. "Propaganda can serve as a form of political and social warfare to identify and vilify opponents… Attacking opponents also encourages "either-or" or "us-them" thinking which suppresses the consideration of more complex information and ideas. Propaganda can also be used to discredit individuals, destroy their reputation, exclude specific groups of people, incite hatred or cultivate indifference".

Finally, an interesting resource is provided by EAVI (Media Literacy for Citizenship), a EU-funded NGO which has prepared an effective infographic on fake news (available in 17 languages) with many tips and recommendations to debunk and go "beyond" fake news (see: https://eavi.eu/beyond-fake-news-10-types-misleading-info/).

Further readings and training resources:

- Andersen K., (2019), *An Entrance for the Uninterested: Who Watches Soft News and How Does It Affect Their Political Participation? In "*Mass Communication and Society", 22(4), 487-507. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2019.1585544
- Cook J., Lewandowsky S., (2011), *The Debunking Handbook,* https://bit.ly/37TjnVp
- UNESCO (2018), *Journalism, "Fake News" & Disinformation* https://en.unesco.org/fightfakenews

Part 2 Exercises and discussion (30 mins)

The instructor shows some examples of fake news and discuss with participants which techniques have been used to draw attention and manipulate interpretation.

Materials & tools: slides, multimedia examples of local fake news.

Activity 4.5 - Content creation and development	**Duration:** 1,5 h **Method:** Group work

For the objectives and the structure of this Activity (and also some tips), see Activity 2.3 (Module 2).

In this specific case, participants produce publications concerning hate speech, populism, propaganda, fake news, etc. in any format (videos, posts, infographics, stories for Instagram/Facebook, presentations, etc.). **Materials & tools:** Computers/notebooks, flipcharts and various apps/tools.

MODULE 5 – AUDIOVISUAL LANGUAGE AND DIGITAL MEDIA PRODUCTION (9 hrs)

Activity 5.1 – Visual rhetoric, myth and photography	**Duration:** 1,30 h **Method:** Frontal lecture, group work, plenary discussion

OBJECTIVES
- To introduce the concept of visual rhetoric
- To describe Roland Barthes' notion of myth in photography
- To define the concepts of denotation and connotation and how they apply to the themes and figures of an image.

STRUCTURE
Part 1: Frontal lecture (40 mins)

Windows on the world?

We live in a society dominated by images. Fixed or in motion, photographs or drawings, all we need to do is access the Internet and we are literally overwhelmed by visuality. It is thanks to images and videos, often produced by non-professionals and continuously spread by social networks, that we learn to know the world around us, both the one closest to us and the one farthest away from our daily lives. Today, thanks to social media, an enormous mass of information comes "from below", from users who (as *prosumers*) are supposed to account in real time what they see and hear without thinking much about what they are doing, how and with what effects.

In fact, images are not windows on the world! Despite the easiness of producing so much visuality using it to communicate in such a pervasive way, the problematic nature of images as objects of meaning has not changed, nor are we more skilled at reading and interpreting them. A photo is in principle the exact reproduction of what is in front of the camera's lens, and yet such optical precision has nothing to do with the completeness of the idea that we can make of a fact through it. Seeing does not mean knowing, or at least it does not mean real, thoroughly knowing, and this for various reasons, as we will see later. A great photographer is not someone who shows – let's say - a war scene in such a way that we can understand how the troops are lined up, he is someone who knows how to catch that detail, maybe very small, thanks to which the viewer can really understand what is happening at that moment, what is the meaning of a fact which is inevitably much wider and more complex than what can be shown in a single image. Henri Cartier-Bresson, one of the greatest photographers of all time, loved to say: "To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which gave that event its proper expression".

All this leads to an unpredictable reversal: reality is not the presupposition of photography (as well as cinema and every form of visuality), but rather its product, an effect that images produce under certain conditions. Living in a world so strongly populated by images, then, implies confronting oneself, if nothing else, with changing and iridescent realities. What we need to do, then, is to lay down a few

points that will help us go deeper into the analysis of images, showing what fundamental questions they raise.

Definition of visual rhetoric

A quite good definition of Visual Rhetoric can be found in Wikipedia[35]:

"Visual rhetoric is the art of effective communication through visual elements such as images, typography, and texts. Visual rhetoric encompasses the skill of visual literacy and the ability to analyze images for their form and meaning. Drawing on techniques from semiotics and rhetorical analysis, visual rhetoric expands on visual literacy as it examines the structure of an image with the focus on its persuasive effects on an audience.
Although visual rhetoric also involves typography and other texts, it concentrates mainly on the use of images or visual texts. Using images is central to visual rhetoric because these visuals help in either forming the case an image alone wants to convey, or arguing the point that a writer formulates, in the case of a multimodal text which combines image and written text, for example. Also, visual rhetoric involves how writers arrange segments of a visual text on the page. In addition to that, visual rhetoric involves the selection of different fonts, contrastive colors, and graphs, among other elements, to shape a visual rhetoric text. One vital component of visual rhetoric is analyzing the visual text. One way of analyzing a visual text is to look for its significant meaning."

Our starting point will be Roland Barthes, one of the most important French semiologists.

Photography and Myth

Fig. 1 – The cover of *Paris Match* of which Roland Barthes writes in his book *Mythologies*

The magazine *Paris Match* came into Barthes' hands while he was at the barber's shop. Or at least, this is the story he tells us before starting to talk about the photograph that occupies the entire cover in which a child-soldier brings his hand to his forehead as a sign of greeting. It was 1955 and for some time all the weekly magazines had been illustrating their articles with photographic images. What struck the semiologist is the simplicity of this photograph (Fig.1), its apparent innocence: the boy's face is serious, concentrated, completely absorbed by a gesture accomplished with the most authentic conviction. It doesn't take long to understand that to fully understand the meaning of a photograph it is

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[35] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_rhetoric

necessary to ask oneself not only what is visible but also about what is not. The greeting that the boy is making must be addressed to something/someone that is above him, a position that the framing from below helps to accentuate, thus making the boy's face more imposing. It is to that "something/someone" that the salute is due, including the firmness of the conviction with which it is done. Being a military man, it can only be the homeland, and therefore what the young man is looking at can't be but the French flag, probably hoisted on a flagpole at that precise moment. As we read in the small black box at the bottom right, the magazine announced a report on a French Army parade held that week at the *Palais des Sportes*.

In this photograph, however, there is something else, a message that is not immediately perceptible. "I see very well," writes Barthes, "what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors". It is not only what is put in plain sight that the photograph is talking about: it celebrates the greatness of France, true, but in doing so, it intervenes in an issue such as colonialism, leaving it to be legitimized by those who should be opposing it most strenuously, i.e., the African natives themselves. The theme is not addressed directly, nor is it supported by any element in the picture, so it can always be said that it has been improperly addressed/interpreted, that both the photographer and the person who chose to illustrate the cover of the magazine in that way did not want to deal with that subject. In fact, a message of this type is sent, hidden from plain sight like a magician's trick. All the more dangerous when the ideology it bears can be concealed under the innocent evidence of a type of image, the photograph, that is incapable of lying.

The reflection we have presented can be found in the margins of *Mythologies*, a key book of 1957 that inspired generations of semioticians by showing how the emerging science of signs could be used as a methodology to analyse not only the products of "high" culture such as literature, but also popular ones. Everything can be considered a myth, Barthes argues, because it is the semiotic process that makes it so, explaining this process with the example of the *Paris Match* photograph. The idea is simple: at the heart of the matter is the way society is signified by several cultural products. Knowing reality does not only have to do with its perception – with the fact of being able to see in a photograph a boy performing a certain gesture – but, more profoundly, with giving it meaning, thus assuming what we see as a "sign" that puts together an expression (or signifier) and a content (or signified) according to Semiotics.

In mythical signification, Barthes explains, the expression can be understood in two different ways depending on whether we look at it as the final term of a linguistic system or as the initial term of a mythical system. The young black soldier addressing his greeting to something: this is what we can say about this image, its meaning from the linguistic point of view, a complete, concluded sensory reality that is sufficient for itself and that, moreover, is completely incontrovertible. And it is precisely because of this apparent incontrovertibility that the myth is grafted onto it. In order for this to happen, it is necessary for that expression to empty itself of its meaning, removing its contingency and its obviousness to be silently redetermined as a form to be filled again with another meaning. Barthes calls it a "confused knowledge", because it is made up of uncertain, unstable associations that can only concern a certain number of users and, as we said, always be retracted and denied. In other words, the same picture conveys at the same time a *denoted message*, that is the first meaning that the picture communicates (a soldier greeting the flag), and a *connoted* one, that is that further meaning that can be derived from the same perception and that consists in what society wants us to read in it (the legitimization of colonialism).

Denotation

We can think of denotation as the primary sense of a sign, that is the meaning most commonly associated with it. The word "dog", for example, immediately makes us think of an animal. What happens is that a relationship is established on the basis of a linguistic code between a set of sounds (or letters in the case of the written word) that we can consider the expression (or signifier) of the sign and an idea that we can consider its content (or signified). In this specific case the content is related to a concrete entity such as an animal, but this is not always the case, as for example happens with the word "patience". In the case of photography, we can think of the denoted meaning as what the picture shows and therefore what we can know about the world through it. In the case of the picture in Fig. 2 we see Barack Obama shaking hands with his successor Donald Trump, a very common sign of greeting.

Fig. 2 – The meeting between Barack Obama and Donald Trump on the day of the latter's inauguration at the White House

Connotation

Connotation occurs when it is possible to detect the presence of another level of signification beyond the one denoted. The word "dog" certainly refers to a specific mammal, but it has many other meanings that may or may not be activated in a given context. We are obviously thinking of fidelity, friendship, but also of the misery of living conditions that can make someone say that a poor homeless person lives "like a dog". In these cases, we can think that the relationship between expression and content that characterizes the sign (dog=animal) is linked to another one that, starting from the same expression (the word does not change), refers to further contents (dog=tramp). This second connotative relation is such because it is grafted onto the same plane of expression as the denotative one.
In the case of the photograph in Fig. 2, what we see is undoubtedly a handshake between two Presidents of the United States, but this same gesture takes on a different meaning if we take into consideration other aspects of the photographic image, such as Obama's gaze and his facial expression. If at the first level it is a greeting, at the second level we have to think that it is not exactly a gesture of friendship or a genuine welcome. On the contrary, there is a strong contrast between the assumed cordiality of the handshake and the coldness expressed by Obama's face. In short, the meaning of the greeting is modified by another detail of that complex sign that is a photograph in which an apparently less important aspect such as the direction of the gaze and the expression of the face modify the sense of the main element of the image that is the handshake.

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Themes and figures

Speaking of denotation and connotation we have seen how the same picture can convey different meanings because of the complexity of its signifier. A further step in evaluating the meaning of a visual object is to identify the figures that compose it. With the word figure we mean a more or less wide set of visual traits that refer to an object that is identifiable, recognizable and therefore nameable. The dog we have talked about, if present in a picture, can be considered one of the figures that compose it. These figures, as we have seen, very often carry multiple meanings that can be made more or less relevant depending on the presence of other figures.

The theme, on the other hand, is a core of content that can be more or less articulated. In many cases a theme can be summarized by a single term, such as the word "freedom," but in others it presupposes a complex configuration, as in the case of "social justice". In both cases, the meaning of a theme consists of a "typical" story whose articulation involves characters with specific roles and values. The concept of "freedom" presupposes its opposite "oppression" and can be declined in many ways depending on the way it is understood. In a physical sense, for example, it may be related to a prison but in a broader sense it may be related to a totalitarian regime that prohibits the expression of ideas.

Precise relationships are established between themes and figures within a culture, such that the same theme is signified by several possible figures. The freedom we were talking about can be suggested visually through the image of a bird or a broken chain. Each of these figures, however, as much as they suggest the chosen theme, can also evoke other themes that may or may not be consistent with the message we want to communicate. If the flight of a golden eagle will also suggest a reference to the United States of America, which has this animal in its coat of arms, the broken chain will instead suggest a reference to the prison, but also to slavery.

Fig. 3 – A picture that conveys the concept of peace

Fig. 4 – An image that conveys the concept of peace by using different figures from the previous one

See pictures in Fig. 3 and 4. In both cases we are dealing with photos showing the concept of "peace" however the theme is suggested by a very different set of figures, to the point of referring to two different types of "peace". In the case of Fig. 3, the rifles, one of the most common figures of the war theme, are opposed the figure of the flower that if in itself does not necessarily refer to peace - in another context it could suggest the reference to the environment - it takes a sense opposite to that of an instrument of death. On the other hand, in Fig. 4 the gesture of prayer of the old woman, but also her Indian features, makes us think of a peace that is not necessarily the opposite of war, but of an inner peace, of the balance of the soul.

The Reality Effect

In semiotics the expression Reality Effect is commonly used to refer to those characteristics of a text, be it verbal or visual, which have the effect of making people believe something is true. A description of a news event such as a terrorist attack often contains various quantitative information (the number of dead, the amount of explosives used, etc.) so that the public perceives that report as the product of a well-informed witness. In many cases this is true, in others, however, it may not be so, or, more trivially, these numbers may not be known to anyone. Let's think about the initial phases of an attack like the Twin Towers in New York. Since the very first minutes, numbers about the victims started to circulate, not as a generic "thousands of victims" but "2634 dead". In those agitated moments no one could know with precision such numbers and therefore it would have been more logical not to quantify them in such a stringent way, however every network and website that covered the event tended to reaffirm its superiority over the others primarily showing   numbers. A knowledge that, needless to say, no one else had and that they all produced as a "reality effect". Numbers, expert opinions, details often useless or impossible to know, stories of individuals perhaps told in a very passionate and exciting way are all ways to verbally create an effect of reality.

As we have seen, visual text, especially photographic text, has an advantage over words. For technical but also historical, and therefore cultural, reasons, the photographic image expresses a certain "aura of reality". An image that seems to us to be the product of a camera, simply because it has some qualities, will be believed to be true much more easily than one that is not. This does not mean, however, that photography does not make use of communicative strategies to validate the effect of reality it produces, and therefore to be perceived as a "realistic reproduction". As we will see, framing, perspective, and time are all variables that characterise photographic production and play an active role in determining the realism of the image understood as an effect of meaning. Through this realism, an image such as the one Barthes speaks of in Fig. 1, conveys its ideology without ever making it explicit, hiding it under the innocence of a "stolen shot".

Part 2: Group Work (20 min)

Denotation and Connotation
The instructor divides participants in small groups and gives them several pictures asking them to address denoted and connoted meanings. S/he asks them to identify and justify which visual elements are relevant to the two levels of reading, highlighting how the signifier is "reconfigured" by the connotative reading.

Themes and figures
The instructor presents several pictures to the students asking them to indicate what the dominant theme is and through what figures it is conveyed. Then the instructor asks them to track down other pictures on the web that use the same figures but convey different themes. Next, the instructor selects a theme and asks students to identify the figures that convey it and trace them in some pictures on the web. He or she then asks the students to analyse these pictures in detail to highlight their sense effects.

Part 3: Plenary discussion (30 mins)
Participants present and discuss in plenary the results of their group work showing also how the images analysed create the "reality effect".

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Activity 5.2 – The basic components of visual analysis	**Duration:** 1 h **Method:** Frontal lecture, exercises in plenary

OBJECTIVES

STRUCTURE
Part 1: Frontal lecture (30 mins)

Framing, perspective and time

Looking at a photograph, unlike looking at a painting or a drawing, gives us a visual experience very similar to the one we have when we observe something with the naked eye. Whether the picture is reproduced on paper or displayed on a digital device, the details, perspective and colours are in most cases so exactly superimposable to those of natural vision that we think not only that what we are seeing is real, but also that through the picture's vision we can get a precise idea of what is being shown. Photography, Barthes used to say, does not lie. Or better, is supposed not to lie. And yet there are at least three variables that characterise photographic reproduction that have a significant influence on the meanings we can derive from an image: *framing, perspective*, and *time*.

Framing

Photography means first of all framing, and framing means deciding what not to show. With the exception of the very recent spherical images, photographs conceal much more than they actually show. Certainly, there are lenses of different focal lengths, some of which offer an angle of vision greater than that of the human eye, but unless one gets precisely to the 360° of spherical images, photography is always a selection. What we need to ask ourselves is how isolating some details instead of others can change the way we make sense of a given situation. This question does not concern only the framing that the photographer does, but also that sort of re-framing that occurs when an image is cut after it has been taken, as it frequently happens in newspapers or social networks.

To understand how much the isolation of certain elements from a larger situation can change our perception of them, we can work on a picture reframing it.

Fig. 5 – An image of the recent assault on Capitol Hill, the seat of government of the United States of America. This famous photograph depicts a disturbing character known as "the Shaman" who has become one of the icons of the protesters

Fig. 6 – The photograph is the same as Fig. 5, only here we can see it in its entirety

In Fig. 5 we find one of the images of the recent attack on the United States government headquarters on Capitol Hill, in particular that of a disturbing character who has become one of the icons of protesters, known as "the Shaman." In this photograph, the subject looks like a lone madman who, with the U.S. flag in his hand, howls some strange message to anyone listening. But it is enough to look at the photograph from which this picture has been cut out, that of Fig. 6, to realise how complex the situation is. Not only is there a policeman at a very short distance from the shaman, but there are also other activists and others who look like ordinary citizens. It seems that the policeman is trying to talk to the protesters, evidently to convince them with simple words to stop. Particularly interesting are the faces of the two comrades beside the Shaman, with their disturbing looks, very different from those of the other two civilians on the scene. The whole picture, as opposed to the cropped one, shows well the complexity of a situation in which great confusion reigned between very different "parties". Another interesting example of how a different framing of an image can change the perception of it is the photo taken by AP Japanese photographer Itsuo Inouye of U.S. Marines helping an Iraqi soldier with water (see Fig. 7). Inouye's original photo is the one in the middle. The original caption reads: *U.S. Marines from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit help an Iraqi soldier with water from a canteen in southern Iraq, on Friday, March 21, 2003. Some 200 Iraqi soldiers surrendered to the U.S. 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit just after an hour after it crossed the border into Iraq from northern Kuwait.*

Fig. 7 - Itsuo Inouye's photo

Perspective/point of view

If framing has to do with *what to* show, perspective has to do with *how* the photographer does it. In the case of picture in fig. 1, for example, the boy is framed from below, and this creates a certain distortion that not only creates the effect of a more imposing figure, but also suggests, thanks in part to his gaze, that there is something even greater, namely the homeland.

Fig. 8 – *Fox Terrier sur Pont des Arts* by Robert Doisneau

Fig. 9 – A similar scene of the previous photograph taken from a different point of view and, obviously, in a different moment

In the famous shot by Robert Doisneau in Fig. 8 we find ourselves before a very refined play of perspective that makes it difficult to decipher the scene. The image is dominated by the figure of a man walking his dog who seems to have stopped with evident curiosity to look at the work of a painter. We can also see the canvas on which he is working and we have no difficulty in recognising the profile of a naked woman. But there is another detail that strikes us and it is the foot of a woman who seems to be sitting on the bench in front of the painter. Is she the girl in the painting? And if so, is she really naked as would be appropriate for painting *en plain air*? Impossible to say because the perspective does not allow us to dissolve the doubt. Only a change of perspective such as the one in Fig. 9 reveals that the woman is perfectly dressed, introducing at the same time the suspicion that the whole situation has actually been artfully constructed to provoke the reaction of passers-by in order to take pictures of them staring at the canvas. A true "photographic trap" of the many that Doisneau loved to create.

Time

After almost 200 years from the invention of photography we don't even notice it anymore, but it was thanks to mechanical reproduction of pictures that man had the experience of instantaneousness. The natural visual experience is in fact linked to duration, to the more or less slow becoming of things. It is not by chance that some of the first photographic experiments concerned the analysis of movement, for example that of a galloping horse, that the so-called stroboscopic photography allowed it to break down into micro-movements. From a semiotic point of view, the impossibility of reproducing duration and therefore action has repercussions on the possibility of using static images to tell stories. For Cartier-Bresson the only way to face and overcome the limit of the medium is to try to record what he

calls the decisive moment, that is, a particular instant in the development of an action from which it is possible to infer what happened before and what can happen afterwards.

Fig. 10 - *The Dying Militian* by Robert Capa

One of the most famous examples of a decisive instant is that of Robert Capa's photograph of a soldier shot dead but not yet lying on the ground, suspended between life and death as well as between heaven and earth (Fig.10).

Clearly, these communicative strategies can also be used to make believe something that is not true or to support very partial views of a fact as well as completely subjective opinions. This is what happens, for example, with fake news: it is not so much (and only) untrue news, without foundation or simply the result of an excessively "biased" view, but news that is conveyed using all possible precautions so that it is believed to be true. From a picture used to confirm a fake news, we must expect an extremely high level of realism. So, it happens very often that such pictures do not show a particularly high visual quality, so that they appear as "stolen" and not constructed; that they frame a rather limited portion of a scene in a way that draws the attention on a detail rather than allowing to connect several elements; that they offer a point of view at eye level and possibly without distortions, so that what is shown may seem to be the gaze of a witness; that the moment is caught in a way it doesn't arouse any curiosity about what happened before and what may happen after. Also, the themes and figures evoked (by the image but also by a verbal discourse) will be the most common ones that the public assumes more easily without being led to think too much. Whoever wants to spread a fake news needs a passive and inattentive spectator, showing him/her what s/he already knows without soliciting any awareness or critical thinking skills.

The rule of thirds

Commonly photos are shot with the subject at the centre. This is certainly important to catch the viewer's attention on the subject and not on other elements. In Fig. 11 the main subject takes clearly the central position and is in focus.

Fig. 11 – The subject at the centre

Caption: Forced to grow up too soon in Lebanon: Mahmoud
Image credit: UNHCR/S. Baldwin.

However, you may also want to place your subject off-center, making sure that the background doesn't distract from the subject. In this case, the "rule of thirds" applies, that is the image is divided into thirds both horizontally and vertically, and then the most important element(s) is positioned either along these lines, or where the lines intersect (Fig. 12). This rule may help you produce better balanced photos (and also add text on one side), but you must not follow it blindly, sometimes you may need to break it to have a better image (as in Fig. 11).

Fig. 12 – The "rule of thirds"

Source: https://digital-photography-school.com/rule-of-thirds/
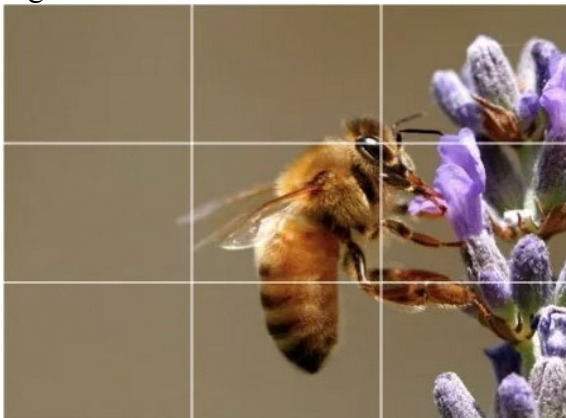
Part 2: Exercises and discussion (30 mins)

Framing
The instructor chooses a few pictures and cut them out. S/he then asks participants to describe what is happening. Afterwards s/he shows the entire picture asking for a new description, but also to identify what elements drove the previous interpretation.

Perspective
A good exercise is to show participants several images of the same situation and ask them to describe how their choice of viewpoint affects the sense one makes of the whole scene.

Time
The instructor shows a picture of an event and asks students to imagine what happened before that instant and what might happen next. S/he then shows other pictures of the same event asking how each changes the perception of the action taking place.

The "rule of thirds"
The instructor shows some pictures with subjects positioned either at the center or on one side and then asks participants to discuss the different meanings/impressions they derive from these different positionings.

Activity 5.3 – Video production. From theory to practice	**Duration:** 6 hrs **Method:** Frontal lecture and group work for video co-creation

OBJECTIVES
After illustrating the basic notions of the video production process, this activity aims to co-create with participants three videos to be included in COMMIT campaigns. With the help of a video expert, they will first learn about video production and do some practice on various techniques and tools, and eventually develop their own videos.

From photography to cinema. The importance of the editing process
The passage from photographic images, unnaturally static, to cinematographic ones, perfectly compatible with natural vision, only increases the possibility of producing a Reality Effect. In cinema, however, as in photography, the technical possibility of reproducing reality is not sufficient. Almost one hundred and twenty years of film history have led to the development of a real cinematographic language which, like photography, has specific procedures to obtain a Reality Effect.

It is generally believed that the transition from photography to cinema simply consists in the introduction of movement. The static image does not allow to perceive the unfolding of an action, while cinema introduces this possibility. Seeing a train entering a station produces a different effect than seeing a snapshot of it apparently standing still on the track. Certainly, the technical possibility of reproducing movement aroused astonishment at the end of the nineteenth century, however, it was clear from the beginning that the real novelty of the cinematographic medium was not in the reproduction of time, but in the possibility of transforming it, breaking it down and reorganising it through editing. There are many who see a sort of proto-montage (or internal montage) even in the first film in history made by the Lumière brothers in 1896, _L'Arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat_, in which, despite the fact that the shot is continuous and made from a single point of view, the latter is carefully chosen so as to follow various actions and characters that take place on the platform of the train station where it is set. Already the Lumière had made clear that what made cinema interesting, and also very effective as a form of communication, was not the similarity with vision but the possibility it had to tell stories. But what is a story? And how is it told visually?

An important distinction that is good to make is that between _fabula_ and _plot_. The fabula is the set of facts that make up a story considered in their logical and chronological order. The narrator can tell a story respecting the fabula, that is, maintaining the natural order of events, but more often he organises his narration in a different way, creating what is called a plot. This alteration, which evidently changes the natural order of events, is done to achieve a specific meaning effect. Suspense, for example, is produced when a viewer knows that something is going to happen (perhaps because it has been anticipated by the narrative) but does not know when it will occur.

Editing is a very important element of cinematography. It is a form of cutting and sewing that takes place for a twofold purpose. The first one regards how an action is described. The story of a woman who is deciding to steal an envelope full of money will unlikely be narrated simply showing her taking the envelope and walking away. What the director wants to do (in this case Hitchcock in *Psycho*) is not simply to show the action carried out by the protagonist, but to let us see what she is thinking, her inner struggle between the fear of violating the law and desire of pursuing happiness elsewhere. Therefore, to enrich the scene with implicit meaning, the continuity of the action is disassembled by creating many shots that alternate normal preparations with increasingly close-ups of the tempting envelope. A crescendo of tension that culminates in the fatal decision to run away with the money. The second purpose is to present the viewer with a plot. It is quite common for an action film to begin "in medias res", perhaps at the very moment in which the clash between hero and villain takes place, only to return, a few shots later, to a time long before that, in which perhaps the protagonist did not know his antagonist and lived a quiet life. It is the well-known principle of the flashback, which can be followed by flashforwards that create an altered temporality, in some ways illogical, if not for the effect of exciting the viewer. It would be very long and complex to describe, even only superficially, the many editing solutions commonly adopted in contemporary filmmaking, the result of an evolution that has affected both the production and fruition techniques. If cinema works, it is because the public has learned to "read" its language, to recogniσe its conventions and therefore to interpret what it intends to mean. What we can say is that American cinema, in particular, has contributed to the development of what is commonly called invisible editing, that is, a series of technical and formal solutions whose purpose is to make the spectator forget the fiction of cinematographic action. In fact, the invisible montage works on the principle of the spectator's identification, who only by being completely immersed in the filmic reality can feel that set of emotions that make the cinematic experience so pleasant. The paradox is that this effect is achieved not by reducing the intervention of the montage to a minimum, and therefore with long sequences and respecting the so-called unity of time, but by doing the exact opposite: frame shifts as well as time jumps come and go quickly and every action is described with a few simple shots in which it is more what the viewer deduces on his/her own rather than what is actually shown.

A description of the different types of editing techniques with very clear examples of them can be found here.

The basics of video production

A video production is made of four major steps: pre-production, production, post-production and distribution. To go through these steps, we can follow Peri Elmokadem's "8 tips for making professional looking videos":

1. Plan your video content
2. Pick the right background
3. You don't need to buy a new camera
4. Avoid using your camera's mic
5. Use the right lighting
6. Film in small segments
7. Brush up on composition rules
8. Put your videos into the world

Elmokadem's infographic in Fig. 13 describes in some details these tips. For a more in-depth description, see Peri Elmokadem's article here.

Fig. 13 - Eight tips for making professional looking videos

Source: https://visme.co/blog/video-tips/#skipahead

Tips:
1. To know more about the importance of videos on social media, you may have a look at this short guide on The power of videos in the digital age, offering also some practical tips on how to best use videos on social media.
2. Another practical guide offering suggestions on online tools to record and edit videos (like screencasts, montages and slideshows) for social media marketing and campaigns can be found here.
3. This guide suggests three free options for editing video: Lightworks, Shotcut, and especially YouTube's own browser-based video editing tool (YouTube Editor). If you go to the official page on Google support https://support.google.com/youtube#topic= you may find a quite useful help page, including a community to get in touch with experts and other users in the YouTube help forum, and a video library with helpful tips, feature overviews and step-by-step tutorials (in different languages).

MODULE 6 − DEVELOPMENT OF COMMIT DECLARATION (3 HRS)

Activity 6.1 - Development of the COMMIT DECLARATION	**Duration:** 3 h **Method:** Frontal lecture, group work, plenary discussion

OBJECTIVES
- To develop the COMMIT Declaration, including a memorandum of understanding and bottom-up recommendations on how to combat extremist content online, prevent radicalisation and promote the European democratic values.

STRUCTURE
Part 1 Frontal lecture (30 mins)
The instructor shortly illustrates the aim and structure of the Declaration. It could have the form of a *Decalogue* for adopting more respectful, trustworthy and responsible communication attitudes. An example could be the Italian Manifesto delle parole ostili (the Manifesto is also in English and in different versions, depending on the stakeholders involved). Eventually, s/he divides participants in small groups and assigns them the task of developing three different drafts of the Declaration. The instructor also invites them to develop, drawing from the knowledge they have developed thanks to CBP, a series of recommendations to significant stakeholders, both at local and national/transnational level.

Part 2 Group work (1,30 h)
Participants, in groups, work on drafting the Declaration and the recommendations.

Part 3 Plenary discussion (1 h)
Participants, in plenum, develop – with the help of the instructor – the final version of both the Declaration and the recommendations.

Materials & Tools: slides, flipcharts.

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