

Impulse



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

Imprint

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Project Website:

www.detect-erasmus.eu

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. Project Number: 2018-1-DE03-KA201-047400

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Austria

“Election Fraud” during the presidential election in Austria



What happened?

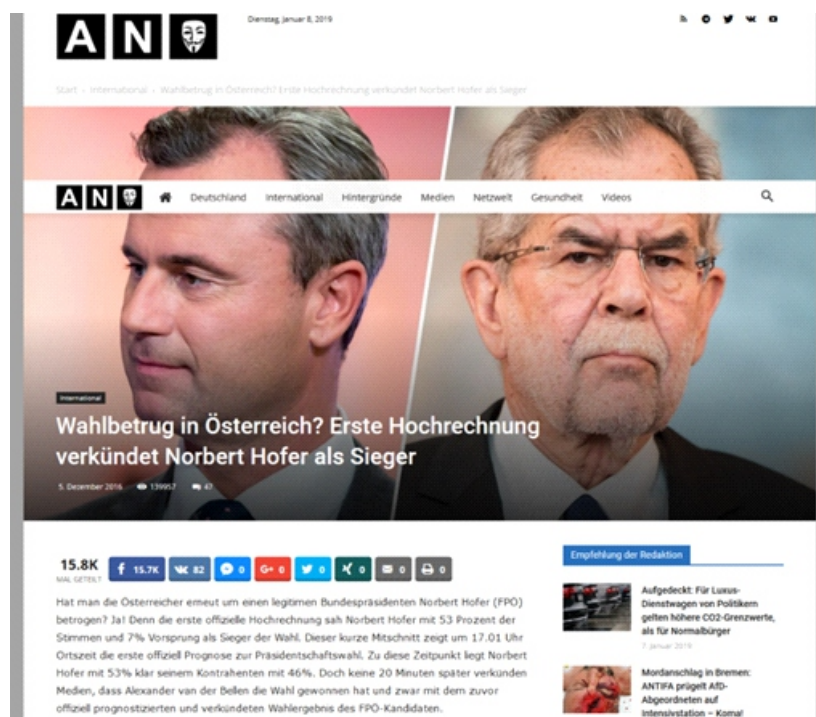
In 2016 during the second round of the presidential election in Austria between Alexander Van der Bellen (Green Party) and the right-wing candidate Norbert Hofer (FPÖ) a video went viral on social media. It allegedly proofed election fraud and Hofer's success. The video was first posted by Euronews. Here, Euronews made a mistake. At 5 PM they showed a chart which was misinterpreted as an election prognosis and a win for Norbert Hofer. This was a mistake. The chart merely showed preliminary results of the voting behaviour in rural Austria. Votes from urban areas as well as postal ballots (both favouring Van der Bellen) were not yet included. Euronews apologized and corrected its mistake immediately, announcing Van der Bellen as the winner.

What is the problem?

The video was re-framed and titled #wahlbetrug (election fraud) and posted again and again by right-wing sites. The rectification of the video was deliberately ignored or accused of being wrong anyway. Especially the right-wing site anonymousnews.ru, which is popular for spreading conspiracy theories, played a dominant role in promoting the story of the #wahlbetrug. The site's article which addresses this "fraud" was shared more than 14.000 times. The text claimed Austrians had again been betrayed and denied from their true victor Norbert Hofer (FPÖ) ("Hat man die Österreicher erneut um einen legitimen Bundespräsidenten Norbert Hofer (FPÖ) betrogen? Ja!") Thus, taken out of its original context information was distorted and falsified. It was used to mislead voters and trigger mistrust in the democratic process of voting. To support the claim, an established media was used as a source (video by Euronews).

The ministry of internal affairs, the news channel Zeit im Bild and the fact checking site Mimikama intervened immediately, providing facts and highlighting the videos false claims. Nevertheless, a lot of social media users could not be convinced about the post's false claims and the election's legitimacy. Even after provided with the correct information, one user wrote: "Fact is, there is something fishy about this." ("Fakt ist, da stinkt etwas gewaltig.")

The video was soon picked up by (right-wing) Youtubers. Due to the many interactions (likes, shares, comments) and technical support (algorithms) it became a trending topic and was suggested to many users on Youtube for days. This video did not stand on its own, especially right-wing bloggers created further vlogs arguing against the election results (i.e. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWqYrRAkdsA>) further perpetuating the idea of a manipulated presidential election.



Sources publishing fake content

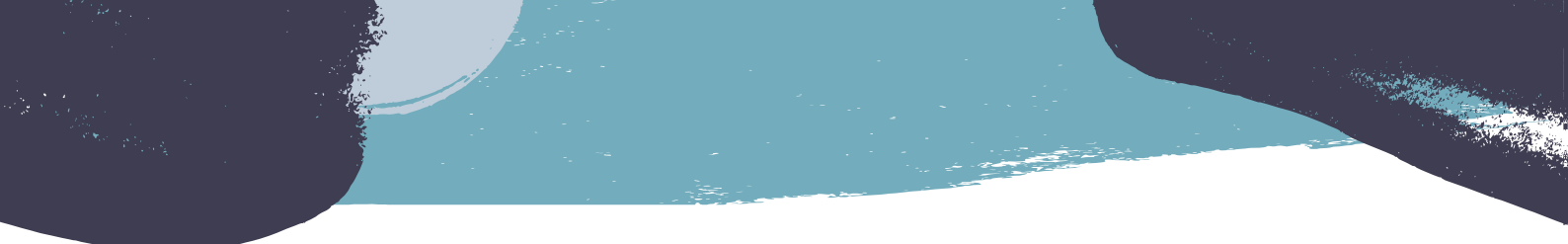
- Anonymous.ru. 5.12.2016. Wahlbetrug in Österreich? Erste Hochrechnung verkündet Norbert Hofer als Sieger. Retrieved from: http://www.anonymousnews.ru/2016/12/05/wahlbetrug-in-oesterreich-erste-hochrechnung-zeigt-hofer-als-wahlgewinner/?fbclid=IwAR2acTkOYtI0KZK3Twf8ibSleCHo22EumAxqe2fDR8cjcyiqkJR8wKM_fg
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWqYrRAkdsA> (one example of a video by a right-wing Youtuber)
- Euronews English. 4.12.2016, Facebook Post. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/euronews/videos/vb.101402598109/10154437812073110/?type=2&thehea>

Sources correcting & reacting to the content

- Der Standard. 6.12.2016. Retrieved from: <https://derstandard.at/2000048859152/Erneuter-Wahlbetrug-in-Oesterreich-Fake-Video-verbreitet-sich-rasant>
- Brodnig, Ingrid. 12.12.2016, Das Profil. „Da stinkt was“: Wie Verschwörungstheorien entstehen. Abrufbar unter: <https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/wie-verschwoerungstheorien-entstehen-euronews-video-7806493>
- Bundesministerium für Inneres. 5.12.2016, Facebook Post. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/BundesministeriumFuerInneres/photos/a.576249875859125/714463142037797/?type=3>
- Leitner, Michael. 5.12.2016, Futurezone.at. Nutzer fallen auf Wahlmanipulations-Video herein. Retrieved from: <https://futurezone.at/digital-life/facebook-nutzer-fallen-auf-wahlmanipulations-video-herein/>

Ideas and tasks for the classroom

- In order to discuss the influence of (manipulated) statistics, the Euronews case can be re-enacted in class. The teacher can either select two pupils to act as candidates of the presidential election or choose two real life politicians which are introduced in a couple of sentences beforehand. A team of journalists (2-3 pupils) asks the colleagues about their choice. It should be kept secret how often a candidate is chosen. In a second round, this process is repeated with other candidates (to avoid being influenced by the previous election). However,



now, voters cast their votes on a public list, which shows the decisions of the other voters. Afterwards all results are presented. Now, pupils may discuss possible differences between the two elections. Did the information on how other people vote influence their decision? The teacher can discuss with the pupils whether the second decision was easier for them than the other one or whether they felt that they were more likely to join the majority or what their friends chose. In a further step the pupils research the “Asch conformity experiment” or the “Bandwagon effect” and the results are collected in the class. The pupils answer the question “What effects falsified statistics can have on real political circumstances?”

- The pupils discuss the following questions in groups of 4-5 people: (1) Collect your previous knowledge on filter bubbles in a mind map. If necessary, you can do research on the Internet. (2) What role in the Euronews case could filter bubbles have played in forming opinions? How can the belief that the election was not a fair one be substantiated even though Euronews has already excused the statistics as misleading?

Shitstorm against Austria's New Year's Eve Baby

The example does not fit the category “fake news”. It rather shows the power of shitstorms and how innocent people are targeted and silenced.

What happened?

Every Year the first baby born in an Austrian state – the “New Year’s Eve Baby” – is announced in the media. This happy event is usually celebrated with love and congratulations. However, after the Viennese hospital cluster announced the first born in Vienna in 2018 a shitstorm followed. The picture shows the happy family, the mother is wearing a headscarf.



Sources correcting & reacting to the content

- Der Standard. 3.1.2018. Wiener Neujahrsbaby schlägt Welle von Hasspostings entgegen. Retrieved from: <https://derstandard.at/2000071398600/Wiener-Neujahrsbaby-schlaegt-Welle-von-Hasspostings-entgegen>
- Der Standard. 4.1.2018. Hetze gegen Wiener Neujahrsbaby: Anzeige gegen Hassposter. Retrieved from: <https://derstandard.at/2000071459692/Hetze-gegen-Wiener-Neujahrsbaby-Ermittlungen-gegen-Hassposter>
- Heute. 4.1.2018. Anzeigen und Ermittlungen nach Hass auf Bay laufen. Retrieved from: <https://www.heute.at/digital/multimedia/story/Neujahrsbaby-Wien--Anzeigen-und-Ermittlungen-nach-Hass-auf-Baby-Asel-laufen-56791764>
- Melissa, Eddy. 4.1.2018. New York Times: Vienna "New Year's Baby" Greeted First With Hate, Then Hearts. Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/04/world/europe/vienna-new-years-baby.html?fbclid=IwAR2jgqx9G9zzuiUBFk43bWzTvYFpvc4_Y63736vKwEztiwDBZo4D0sbBks

- Tulej, Aleksandra. 2.1.2018. Biber: Die schlimmsten Hasskommentare um das Neujahrsbaby 2018. Retrieved from: https://www.dasbiber.at/blog/die-schlimmsten-hasskommentare-um-das-neujahrsbaby-2018?fbclid=IwAR0B6KcV0chNQPFJ1PqzAZ1DExkom04ow1Wxx_sbe17RhBQGwa_h2vjqt7c

Ideas and tasks for the classroom

- The actual post on New Year's Eve baby is not fake, but the comments reproduce prejudices that are not acceptable. Civil courage of the pupils can be practiced by a collective blackboard picture. The teacher sticks the post and some discriminating comments on the board. The pupils now write answers in the manner of an online post below. The comments are now discussed by the class. The students also research #flowerrain and discuss the results in teams. The discussion continues with the whole class.
- Shitstorms occur more and more frequently and many people have to suffer from the hate of online communities. The pupils research in teams of two people the shitstorm cases of the New Year's Eve baby, Sigrid Maurer (politician of the Austrian green party) and Philipp Awounou (advertisement model) and answer the following questions:
 - What types of prejudice and discrimination did the victims have to deal with? What were the reasons for the shitstorms?
 - How did the victims, prominent people and other users react to the shitstorms?
 - What consequences can shitstorms have for the victims?
 - How do you rate the development of the shitstorm cases? How could schools, the government and private users deal with shitstorms of this kind?

Social Bots vs. Global Compact for Migration

What happened?

In December 2018 the Global Compact for Migration was signed by 164 states in Marrakech. This treaty was widely discussed and used by right-wing groups to stir-up hate against refugees and migrants.

What is the problem?

In addition to the discussions by right-wing groups, a mass of social bots was programmed to tweet against the international treaty. They were designed to spread false information about the agreement, i.e. that the German government is lying to its citizens. In general, the migration pact was intensely discussed in Austria. In the weeks leading up to the signing, false information about it went viral. In the end the Austrian government decided against the treaty. A dominant force in spreading false information about the agreement was unzensuriert.at. this far right newspaper has many political, personal and financial connections to the FPÖ and other far right circles. Amongst other things, they argued the compact would aim to suppress the freedom of the press and forcing journalists to post only positive articles on migration. Discrediting established media such as the news media Ö1, unzensuriert.at claimed that the “established media” was propagandizing in favour of the treaty. Additionally, the right-extremist movement Identitäre further advertised against the treaty online, i.e. the Austrian Martin Sellner on his popular Youtube channel. His video, in which he provides wrong information on the agreement has 162.418 views.



Sources publishing fake content

- Unzensuriert.at. 7.10.2018. UN-Migrationspakt: Propaganda started. Retrieved from: <https://www.unzensuriert.at/content/0027914-UN-Migrationspakt-Propaganda-startet>

- Unzensuriert.at. 25.11.2018. AfD-Politiker sieht Pressefreiheit durch UN-Migrationspakt massiv bedroht. Retrieved from: <https://www.unzensuriert.at/content/0028310-AfD-Politiker-sieht-Pressefreiheit-durch-UN-Migrationspakt-massiv-bedroht>
- Sellner, Martin. 16.9.2018. Youtube: UN Migrationspakt stoppen: Nicht in unserem Namen. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VK6h14I3A60>

Sources correcting & reacting to the content

- Der Standard, 10. 12.2018. Social Bots machten im Netz Stimmung gegen Migrationspakt. Retrieved from: <https://derstandard.at/2000093566193/Social-Bots-machten-im-Netz-Stimmung-gegen-Migrationspakt>
- Die Presse. 10.12.2018. Social Bots machten Stimmung gegen Migrationspakt. Retrieved from: <https://diepresse.com/home/ausland/aussenpolitik/5543837/Social-Bots-versus-UNMigrationspakt>

Ideas and tasks for the classroom

- Video analysis [If necessary, activate English-language subtitles]: The pupils watch Sellner's video and answer the following questions:
 - What words and expressions does Sellner use to convince his viewers? Concentrate on the terms "mass migration", "critical", "anti-democratic". What is he trying to achieve with his choice of words?
 - How does Sellner justify his statement that the pact is anti-democratic? Research for representative democracy and work out whether its allegations are tenable.
 - What groups of people does Sellner speak of? Is this classification acceptable? What speaks against it?
 - Sellner repeatedly reads out sections of texts. He also translates texts in English. How do you rate the translation? Is it correct or is the content falsified (if so, to what extent)? (Keyword: critical media) [If you watch the video in English, compare the text with the English subtitles.]
 - Check out the comments. What feelings are expressed in them? How could these have arisen?
- Chat bots: Social bots are now well developed, so it's difficult to distinguish them from humans. The pupils form teams of two people. Together they research which kinds of chat bots there are and which topics interests them. Then they choose a chat bot and start a conversation with him. The pupils should answer the following questions:

- Does the bot respond correctly to your questions? What kind of questions does the bot not answer correctly or does not know the answer?
- How would the bot respond to your messages so that the answer is appropriate? Try to check your assumption.
- Can you have a (meaningful) conversation about politics with your bot?
- If you write this bot e.g on Twitter, would you recognize that it is a bot? If so, how would you detect him?

Christmas Money for Refugees (International Example)

What happened?

This fake news report on refugees is an example how the label of satire is misused to promote racism. The article was created by the fake website nachrichten.de.com. Everyone can use this site to create fake content within a couple of minutes. The article claims that asylum seekers are provided with 700 € Christmas money.

What is the problem?

This fake information was spread in 2017 and in 2018. According to the analysis platform Buzzsumo this article was the most popular facebook post about refugees in 2017. It had 180.000 interactions (likes, share, comments). Although fact checker sites proofed the article to be fake, some users argued that “although this post may be fake, we know that this COULD happen in Germany/Austria.”



700 Euro Weihnachtsgeld für Flüchtlinge

© Montag 14. Januar 217484 Teilen

f Auf Facebook teilen



Wir das Bundeskanzleramt am Freitag mitteilte, gibt es für jeden Flüchtling der vor dem ersten Oktober nach Deutschland eingereist ist 700€ Weihnachtsgeld. Das Geld soll in erster Linie für Geschenke der Daheimgebliebenen Familienangehörigen bestimmt sein. Bundeskanzlerin Merkel hält diese geringe Summe als das mindeste das man für die Menschen aus den Kriegsgebieten aufbringen muss.

f Auf Facebook teilen

Like

Ein Missbrauch melden

+ Erstelle deinen eigenen Witz

Sources publishing fake content

- Nachrichten.de.com, N.N.: 700 Euro Weihnachtsgeld für Flüchtlinge. Retrieved from: <http://www.nachrichten.de.com/58553a311df80/700-euro-weihnachtsgeld-fur-fluchtlinge.html>

Sources correcting & reacting to the content

- Andre, Wolf. 10.10.2018. Mimikama: Verärgern dich diese 700€ Weihnachtsgeld für Flüchtlinge? Retrieved from: <https://www.mimikama.at/allgemein/700-e-weihnachtsgeld/>
- Brodnig, Ingrid, 2018: Lügen im Netz. Wie Fake News, Populisten und unkontrollierte Technik uns manipulieren, S. 26 & 38

- Brodnig, Ingrid, N.N. Brodnigs Blog: 5 von 10 problematisch: Die Top-Meldungen zu Flüchtlingen. Retrieved from: <https://www.brodnig.org/2018/01/04/top-meldungen-fluechtlinge-2017/>
- Röttger, Tania, 30.10.2018. Correctiv.org: Bewertung: Völlig falsch. Kein Weihnachtsgeld für Flüchtlinge. Retrieved from: <https://correctiv.org/faktencheck/migration/2018/10/30/kein-weihnachtsgeld-fuer-fluechtlinge>

Ideas and tasks for the classroom

Because of the numerous memes circulating on the Internet, many young people still know the show X-Factor with Jonathan Frakes. In each episode he tells a creepy story. In the end, he reveals whether this story is true or fictitious.

The pupils form groups of 4-5 people and look for articles or videos online. They can choose reliable or fake posts. Then they present the story in front of the class like Frakes would do. Then the rest of the class has to find out whether the story is true or fake. The students use strategies that the teacher showed them beforehand (reverse image search, mimikama etc.) In the end, the group reveals the truth about the post.

Alternatively, the group can show the classmates how to find out whether it is a fake or a reliable post via the projector. Each group should use a different strategy. In the end, the different strategies are collected and discussed.

George Soros, Antisemitism and the FPÖ

What happened?

In the tradition of antisemitic hate speech, right-wing media is targeting the American-Hungarian billionaire George Soros. The "Soros-legend" was first created by Hungarian right extremist groups and later picked up by Austrian right-wing groups close to the FPÖ. They are claiming that the "evil Jew" Soros "manipulates", or "infiltrates" Austria's political establishment and the media. Especially during the last election, the FPÖ used these false claims to discredit Sebastian Kurz.

What is the problem?

Since the decision to re-locate the Central European University ("Soros-Uni") to Vienna, false information and antisemitism against Soros increased again. Various right-wing media are creating a diverse set of fake content about Soros' agenda to destroy democracies and states by infiltrating them with uncontrolled immigration.



Sources publishing fake content

- Klagemauer.tv, 3.10.2018. Youtube: Das Spinnennetz des George Soros für grenzenlose Migration. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRI5Mjbcf1o&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3QI-kvrEcZvtOxvnfoWgcqvcEbmV7331A8eV3BQmGOcHMGmZfRboQx6Rw>

- Unzensuriert.at. N.N. Mitgliedschaft im elitären Klub ECFR: Ist Sebastian Kurz von Soros finanziert? Retrieve from: <https://www.unzensuriert.at/content/0024903-Mitgliedschaft-im-elitaeren-Klub-ECFR-Ist-Sebastian-Kurz-von-Soros-finanziert>
- Unzensuriert.at. N.N. George Soros bildete klammheimlich die zweitgrößte Stiftung in den USA. Retrieved from: <https://www.unzensuriert.at/content/0025328-George-Soros-bildete-klammheimlich-die-zweitgroesste-Stiftung-den-USA?fbclid=IwAR3c9iEAS3qml1ATTcN1Yik9c2oNE9yk0G3HmBMITozV7Q41G68JvljuWeY>

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- Hagen, Lara, 14.3.2018: Unzensuriert.at und FPÖ mit antisemitischen Tönen gegen Soros. Retrieved from: <https://derstandard.at/2000076136211/Unzensuriert-und-FPOe-mit-antisemitischen-Toenen-gegen-Soros?ref=article&fbclid=IwAR15dm2dpar68m3WY4q3Bd9durF7zvLqHAOizBIDYSyclQIUL7NmBVf35JE>
- Peham, Andreas, 26.4.2018. Mosaik-Blog: „Verschämter Antisemitismus ist in der FPÖ Parteiräson“: Andreas Peham über Gudenus und die Soros-Legende. Retrieved from: <https://mosaik-blog.at/soros-gudenus-fpoe-verschaemter-antisemitismus-parteiraeson-andreas-peham/?fbclid=IwAR3-UT6oNromdpa5MrDCwE0U7OGtPB9HxDtGjGarHnemj9OzYiw6qWmLfho>
- Stopptdierechten.at, 12.10.2017: George Soros und die FPÖ (II). Die Dokumentation. Retrieved from: https://www.stopptdierechten.at/2017/10/12/george-soros-und-die-fpoe-ii-die-dokumentation/?fbclid=IwAR0EuvFpfpTjKY071sWy5qfMUzMVQ_oBdziXcaqBlb20SXgs18Kj5ZwkpR0

Ideas and tasks for the classroom

Explanatory film: Anti-Semitism is a widespread phenomenon and the source of various conspiracy theories. The pupils form four groups to learn more about anti-semitism and conspiracy theories. Each group takes on a different aspect of the topic and does research on the Internet (the teacher should recommend a couple of reliable websites) or with the help of handouts:

- Definitions: Anti-semitism
- Anti-semitic prejudices: Which prejudices against Jews are popular nowadays? What is the background of these prejudices? Why can prejudices be dangerous and harmful?
- History of anti-semitism: When does anti-semitism begin? How did it develop over time? Which conspiracy theories and prejudices are particularly popular today?
- Case of George Soros: What prejudices are there? What headlines do you find about Soros and anti-semitic prejudices? How do other, reliable media react to this?

The pupils now produce a presentation and/or an explanatory film on their smartphones together. Each team works with its own topic, but the teams should coordinate to avoid overlapping content. Each group thinks about how they can present their content in an exciting way, with each group having no more than five minutes to speak. They can work with posters, blackboards, objects, disguise, etc. At the end all contributions are presented one after the other, so that a continuous explanatory film is created. If the consent of parents, pupils and the school has been obtained, the presentation can be filmed.

Possible source for the research: <https://www.lpb-bw.de/verschwörungstheorien#c45495>



Bulgaria

Fake about refugee flows of Bg MEP Angel Dzambazki, far-right politician

What happened?

An Open letter dated 9 July 2018 from member of European Parliament Angel Djambazki and Sofia municipal councillor Karlos Kontrera, both from VMRO party, part of the governmental coalition, claims that the country's capital "was flooded with thousands of foreigners." According to them, this situation is a threat to the health and security of Sofia's citizens. Furthermore, Djambazki and Kontrera argue that the migrants, predominantly young men, occupy and terrorise entire neighbourhoods

What is the problem?

Fake information about the real situation with asylum seekers in Sofia/Bulgaria based on hate speech and manipulating the public opinion by fear.

Sources publishing fake content

Various media published articles quoting the Open letter of Djambazki and Kontrera:

- <https://offnews.bg/politika/vmro-poiskaha-zakrivane-na-tcentrovete-za-migranti-v-sofia684031.html>
- <https://www.segabg.com/node/6677>

- <https://www.mediapool.bg/vmro-iska-zakrivane-na-migrantskite-tsentrove-v-sofiya-news281257.html>
- <https://www.dnes.bg/obshtestvo/2018/07/09/vmro-nastoiavat-da-se-zakriiat-centrovete-za-migranti-v-sofiia.381698>

Sources correcting & reacting to the content

- 27 July 2018: Mediapool publishes an article „True or not? VMRO: Crowds of illegal migrants terrorize Sofia” (they have also an article quoting the letter, see 3): <https://www.mediapool.bg/vyarno-ili-ne-vmro-talpi-ot-neza-konni-migranti-podlozhiha-na-teror-sofiya-news281977.html>
- According to this article, public data from State Agency for Refugees and Ministry of Interior show that the number of incoming asylum seekers for the period January-July 2018 is the lowest after 2012. State Agency for Refugees website: <https://aref.government.bg/bg/node/238>
- Ministry of interior, Directorate Migration website: <https://mvr.bg>
- Also statistics from Ministry of Interior don't prove the statement of Djambazki and Kontrera that asylum seekers terrorize Sofia – the number of crimes committed by foreigners is several times lower than the number of crimes committed by Bulgarian citizens. Ministry of interior, Capital City Directorate website: <https://www.mvr.bg/sdvr>
- The claims of Djambazki and Kontrera are shown as fake by the Prime Minister Boyko Borisov and the vice Prime Minister, minister of Defence and leader of the same VMRO party Krasimir Karakachanov. Protocol, Council of Ministers, 18.07.2018: http://pris.government.bg/prin/document_view.aspx?DocumentID=Pqo/Gh2hWezuiUaCtLOlog==

Ideas and tasks for the classroom

Discussion about hate speech, manipulating political discourse, how media reproducing news are not always presenting information but opinions of politicians, exercise how to search information on institutional websites and how to verify political statements.

Day of Commemoration of the Victims of Communism – fake photos

What happened?

On February 1 Bulgaria commemorates the victims of the communist regime. On this occasion, media published photo materials to visualize People's Court action from 1945, the dead of estimated 30 000 people after the new regime is established and the cruelty of the communist concentration camps. The writer, former diplomat and human rights activist Lea Cohen, made a research showing that most of the photos are from other events such as the deportation of Jews from Macedonia (under Bulgarian administration at that period), showing people in Auschwitz, etc. Her Facebook post has 1.4 K shares.

What is the problem?

Some media use incorrect photos to illustrate historic events. At the same time, a single Facebook post from a person with certain influence serves as an evidence that those photos are incorrectly used without any quoted trusted source.



Sources publishing fake content

- https://www.actualno.com/chronicles/naj-masovata-ekzekucija-na-narodnija-syd-na-bylgarski-oficeri-i-politici-news_590797.html
- <https://trafficnews.bg/urok-po-istorija/predi-74-godini-e-izvarsheno-edno-nai-golemite-zlodeianiia-130656/>
- <http://istinata.net>

Sources correcting & reacting to the content

For some of the photos from Cohen's Facebook post there are other proofs that represent different historic events. For example:



Jewish women being expelled from Greece during the Holocaust.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of the Ghetto Fighters' House

<https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-greece-passes-jewish-law-of-return-1.5337359>



This photo is used in many articles as illustration of Nazi concentration camps.

War against humanity: Jewish prisoners at Ebensee concentration camp in Austria

Photo Credit: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/denial/why-holocaust-case-matters/>



Thracian Jews crowded onto a ship used for deportations

Photo Credit: US Holocaust Memorial Museum

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/photo/thracian-jews-crowded-onto-a-ship-used-for-deportations>

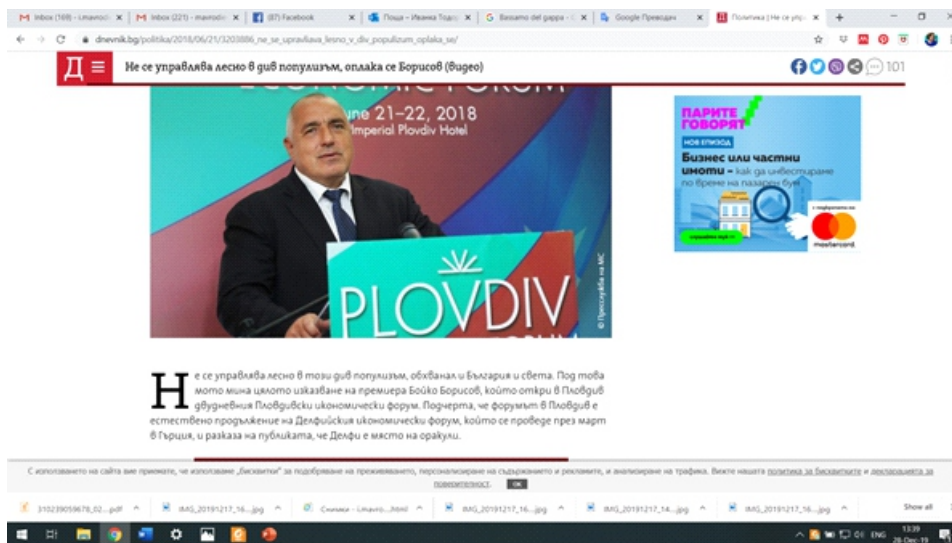
Ideas and tasks for the classroom

- Discussion about the role of the images in modern media, including social media. Exercise how to search for images on Google and verify what they really represent.
- Discussion on the role of opinion makers in social media and on the evidence they provide to support their argument and statement.

*Fake =
Ignorance of political leaders*

What happened?

PM Boyko Borisov's statement in Plovdiv who opened the two-day Plovdiv Economic Forum in 21-22 June 2018, Imperial Park Hotel, Plovdiv. He stressed that the forum in Plovdiv was a natural follow-up to the Delphi Economic Forum and told the audience that Delphi was an oracle place. "It is not easily managed in this wild populism that has spread to Bulgaria and the world. The motto of Prime Minister Boyko Borisov, who opened the two-day Plovdiv Economic Forum in Plovdiv, went under this motto. He emphasized that the Plovdiv Forum is a natural extension of the Delphi Economic Forum, held in March in Greece, and told the audience that Delphi is a place of oracles."



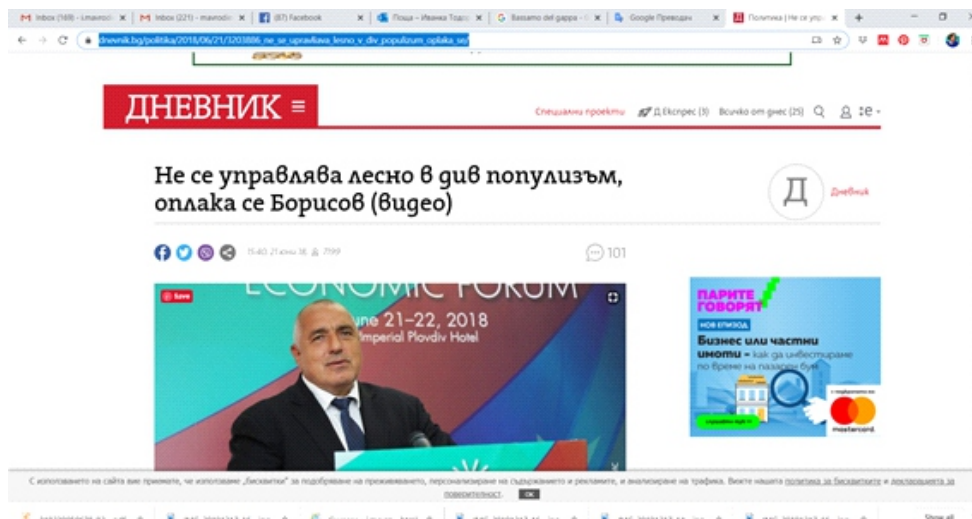
What is the problem?

A lack of knowledge about an ancient history, modern activities, international organisation, forum and populist approach to pay attention of media and citizens. Statesmen, journalists, citizens should compare the information and they should find official sources, credible evidence and real facts from different courses.

Sources publishing fake content

- Dnevnik Newspaper, online version:

https://www.dnevnik.bg/politika/2018/06/21/3203886_ne_se_upravliava_lesno_v_div_populizum_oplaka_se/3



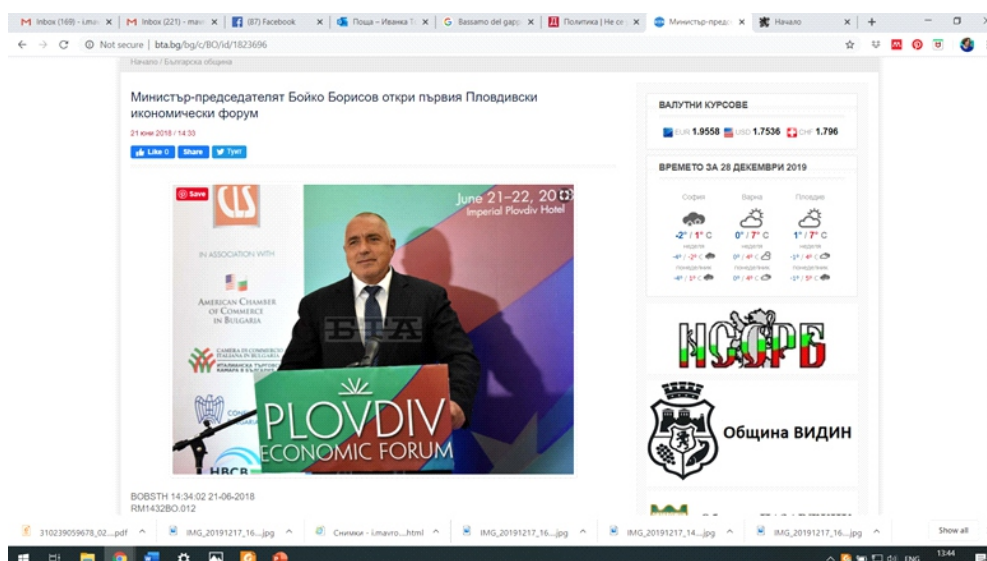
- <http://old.segabg.com/article.php?id=909904>



Sources correcting & reacting to the content

Sources about the event Plovdiv Economic Forum:

- The first Plovdiv Economic Forum, entitled "The Complex Context of Growth", begins tomorrow. The Forum will be held at the Imperial Hotel Plovdiv on Thursday and Friday, June 21-22, 2018. More than eighty prominent figures from Bulgaria and Europe will speak at the forum, which will enable key challenges to economic growth to be identified and evaluated." Plovdiv Online: <https://plovdiv-online.com>



- Bulgarian Information Agency <http://www.bta.bg/bg/c/BO/id/1823696>
- Manager Magazine: <https://www.manager.bg/biznes/boyko-borisov-shche-otkrie-prviya-plovdivski-ikonicheski-forum-na-21-yuni>
- Plovdiv News: <https://www.plovdivnews.bg/plovdiv/item/65109-boiko-borisov-otkriva-vazhen-ikonicheski-forum-v-plovdiv>

Sources about Delfi Economic Forum:

- Official site of the Delfi Forum <http://www.delphiforum.gr/>
- Center of Liberal Strategies <http://www.cls-sofia.org/bg/partners/delphi-economic-forum-212.html>
- Econ.bg: <https://econ.bg>

Sources about Delfi Oracle:

- National Geographic: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/magazine/2019/03-04/ancient-greece-ruins-of-delphi/>
- Wikipedia: <https://bg.wikipedia.org/>
- Greek site: <https://greeklandscapes.com/delphi/>

Ideas and tasks for the classroom

The instruction should include brief information about the case as well as a clear explanation on how to find information from different official and credible sources. The next step includes a comparison between the sources using the approach of critical reading. Final step includes a conclusion about fake news and role of social networks and online media. Pupils have a chance and good opportunities to develop the digital literacy and civil knowledge and to be active citizens and netizens.

Fake about Roma children grants



What happened?

The project "Supporting Roma students for successfully completing secondary education" has a duration of two years. The budget is 561,000 euros, of which 60% are provided by the Roma Education Fund and 40% by the Ministry of Education and Science. The implementation is entrusted to the Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students of Ethnic Minorities (CEIDDEM), established in 2006 with the task of implementing the policy of the Ministry of Education and Science in the field of educational integration. The project envisages a total of 1,200 scholarships for the two school years - 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

BTV, minister of education Meglena Kuneva explains: "The Ministry of Education and Science states that the purpose of the scholarships is to keep the Roma children in school. According to unofficial data, 20% of the children entering the first grade are Roma, but their number is decreasing. In the seventh grade of Roma origin are 7% of the students and in the 12th grade - only 1%."

What is the problem?

A fake about these grants, titled "With € 30 scholarships, we motivate gypsies to graduate from high school", was published. Some of the media and several nationalist parties and organizations use the project as an example of dividing Bulgarian society by ethnicity and social status.

Media coverage is mainly through publications in electronic versions of newspapers and online media. Most publications incorporate images or video footage into the text, however, some of the photographs are not related to the content on the specific subject matter, but rather show Roma children in open spaces in neighborhoods, suggesting that they are not in school.

Nationalist-oriented political parties represented by Valery Simeonov and Krasimir Karakachanov use the legislature and the parliamentary rostrum instead of television studios to announce their theses against the project. Political parties seek to draw dividends.

Sources publishing fake content

- <https://news.bg/education/s-po-eur-30-stipendii-motivirame-tsigancheta-dazavarshatgimnaziya.html>
- <https://news.bg/education/s-vnezapni-proverki-kuneva-shte-proveryava-dali-tsiganchetata-stipendianti-sa-v-klas.html>
- <https://news.bg/education/zashto-darzhavata-da-plashta-chastnite-urotsi-na-tsiganchetata-protestirat-uchenitsi-pred-mon.html>
- <https://news.bg/education/1300-tsigancheta-kandidatstvali-za-stipendii.html>
- <http://www.dnes.bg/obrazovanie/2016/10/21/roditeli-vystanaha-zashto-da-ima-stipendii-samo-za-romcheta.319407>
- <https://nova.bg/news/view/2016/10/22/162596>
- <http://www.dnes.bg/obrazovanie/2016/10/26/naprejenie-i-sred-romite-za-stipendiite-ot-mon.319979>

Sources correcting & reacting to the content

- Official site of Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (CEICSEM), <http://coiduem.mon.bg/>
- The site of Ministry of Education and science - <https://www.mon.bg/?go=events&p=detail&newsId=2220>

- BTV, minister of education Meglena Kuneva, 25.10.2016., <http://btvnovinite.bg/article/tazisutrin/razgovori-s-gosti/meglana-kuneva-za-stipendiite-za-romiskoro-ot-pazara-na-truda-shteot-romi.html>
- <http://www.mediapool.bg/okolo-600-romski-uchenitsi-shte-poluchat-stipendii-za-da-pr-odalzhat-uchilishte-news255362.html>
- <https://trud.bg>
- <https://www.dnes.bg/obshtestvo/2016/10/18/600-romcheta-sys-stipendii-po-obrazovaten-proekt.319073>
- <http://btvnovinite.bg/article/bulgaria/mon-dava-stipendii-na-romski-uchenici-za-da-zavarshat-obrazovaniето-si.html>
- <http://social.framar.bg/>
- <http://www.segabg.com/article.php?id=827287>
- <http://www.banker.bg/obshtestvo-i-politika/read/kuneva-zashtiti-stipendiite-za-romski-deca>
- <http://www.dnes.bg/obrazovanie/2016/10/24/smetkite-na-kuneva-sochat-700-romcheta-s-30-stipendiia-za-shkolo.319719>
- <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/veliko-tyrnovo/centyr-amalipe-stipendiite-za-romskite-uchenici-shte-namalqt-otpadaneto-ot-uchilishte-1617354>
- <http://btvnovinite.bg/article/bulgaria/obshtestvo/stipendiite-za-romski-uchenici-integracija-ili-diskriminacija.html>
- <http://baricada.org/2016/10/27/stipendii-za-romi-ili-obrazovanie-pod-naem/>, последно посещение на 10.01.2018.
- http://www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2016/10/27/2851313_durjavnite_pari_za_romski_stipendii_sa_2_ot_sreds tvata/

• Ideas and tasks for the classroom

The students in the DETECT-studio are divided into two groups. The first group is tasked with getting acquainted with information from websites that misinform and manipulate readers. The second group is tasked with acquaintance with the information from the websites that present the project correctly. The two groups then summarize the new information they have received and share their views. In the teacher-led discussion, students discuss the thoughts, feelings and attitudes of the participants in the two groups. The exercises finish with the conclusion that there is a need to search for more sources and to analyze the information presented online.

Lack of transparency of public funding vs state capture. The case of funding of the National Palace of culture for the Bulgarian Rotation Presidency of the EU

What happened?

Bulgaria spends blindly on the European Presidency. There is no institution to say what amount is spent on the preparation and how much money remains for 2018. „However, the topic is not at all European. It is about repairing and wasting public money. And all this is against the backdrop of two consecutive repairs to the area around the National Palace of Culture for a total of almost 17 million leva.“ (https://m.offnews.bg/news/Razsledvane_68/Nacionalen-dvoretc-na-razhishtenieto_672016.html)

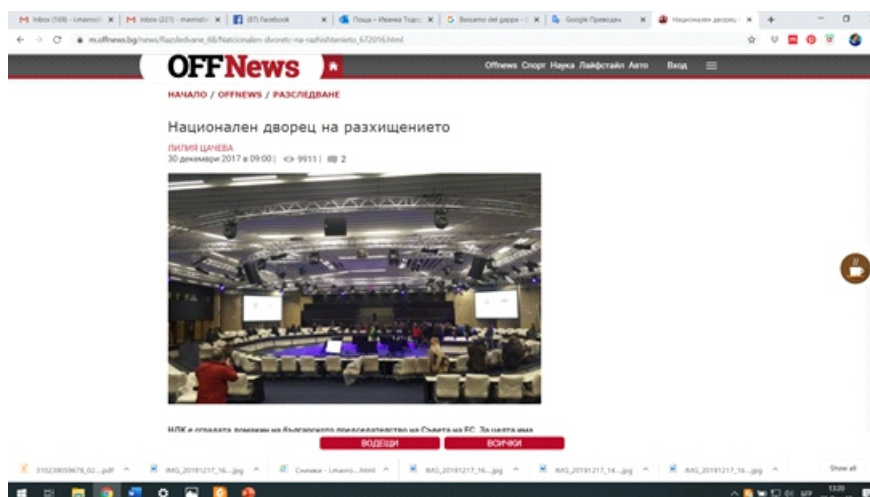
„A lot of work, BGN 45 million, scandals, protests, change of directors. This is how the last months have been spent preparing the most important building for the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU Council - the National Palace of Culture. Today, the Palace opened its doors to show what it looks like days before part of the European Union summit enters. Bulgarian Presidency Minister Lilyana Pavlova and Culture Minister Boil Banov, National Palace of Culture director Angel Mitev and head of the board took journalists from the palace.“ (<https://offnews.bg/obsh-testvo/finalno-ndk-sled-golemia-remont-snimki-671413.html>). The article starts: “Bulgaria does not know how much of the planned 150m leva for the EU Council presidency is spent and how much remains. The only sure number so far indicated by the Minister of Culture Boil Banov is that the repair of the National Palace of Culture costs 45 million leva. This amount has repaired 90,000 square meters of 123,000 square meters in the Palace of Culture, which will be the main event center in Bulgaria in connection with the presidency, which started on 1 January 2018.”

What is the problem?

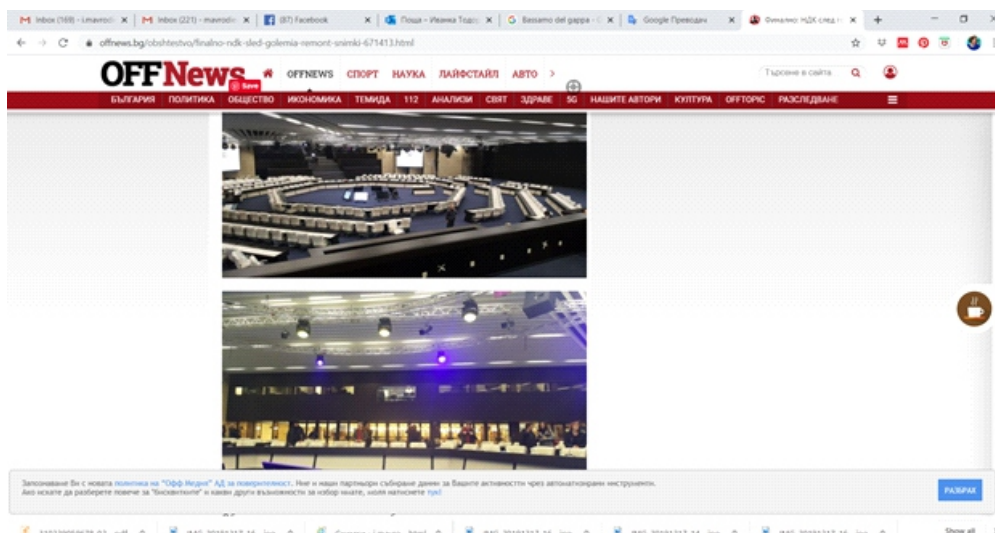
The National Palace of Culture is the official place of Bulgarian European Presidency. Bulgarian media write that many BG leva have been spent and there is no transparency and control over the funds and the quality of the renovation of the National Palace of Culture. Citizens have doubts about corruption and spending money on unnecessary or unimportant things.

Sources publishing fake content

- https://m.offnews.bg/news/Razsledvane_68/Natcionalen-dvoretc-na-razhishteniето_672016.html



- <https://offnews.bg/obshtestvo/finalno-ndk-sled-golemia-remont-snimki-671413.html>



Sources correcting & reacting to the content

- The official site of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU: <https://eu2018bg.bg/bg/events/37>
- Official activities, delegates, events: <https://eu2018bg.bg/bg/news/1498>
- Security System: <https://eu2018bg.bg/bg/news/44>
- Official results after the pool conducted at the end of the Bulgarian Presidency: <https://eu2018bg.bg/>
- NewsBG: <https://news.bg/society/plochkite-pred-ndk-ne-izdarzhaha-do-kraya-na-evropredsedatelstvoto.html>
- Newspaper Dnevnik: https://www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2017/09/28/3049603_remontut_na_ndk_nabubna_do_nad_40 mln leva_parite_pak
- Media Group Investor: <https://www.investor.bg/ikonomika-i-politika/332/a/12-mln-lv-struva-sistemata-za-sigurnost-v-ndk-izgradena-za-evropredsedatelstvoto-252365>
- Online Media Barivadata: <https://baricada.org/2018/04/25/snimki-remont>
- Online media – Investigation Journalism: <https://www.razkritia.com>
- Darik Radio: <https://dariknews.bg>

Ideas and tasks for the classroom

How to enhance digital citizenship? It is very important to explain that state institutions should be responsible during the process of investment and media, non-governmental organization play a key role in a civil society in connection with transparency in connection with decision makers, quality of renovations, reputation of the Republic of Bulgaria as a member of the European Union. The information published online could be read critically and it is obligatory to combine digital literacy with the knowledge of civil society and the role of citizens and netizens, digital citizens in the society. The tasks: The pupils should find the information from different online sources and compare it. They can follow the requirements for fine fake news step by step and they can investigate the process of creating, establishing and broadcasting fake content. Teachers can recommend sites to organize fact checking for example: Poynter - International Fact Checking Network (<https://www.poynter.org>).



Croatia

'Offended Muslims' Attack Christmas Tree

What happened?

A viral video displays footage of a group of people in what appears to be an Arab-speaking country, gathered around a decorated Christmas tree in a public space. Some persons are shaking the Christmas tree, while others are even climbing it and appear to be taking objects from its branches and throwing them into the surrounding crowd.

Claims were made in a number of media in the west that the video was shot in a mall that was alternatively reported as being in France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, The United States or a number of other Western countries. The media who posted the video usually followed it with claims that the video shows migrants devastating or robbing a Christmas tree.

In fact, the video displays footage of a group of people in Egypt - possibly members of the Christian religious group - partaking in a Christmas tradition which includes hiding small presents in Christmas trees for others to find and the distributing them. This tradition exists in some form in many countries around the world.

What is the problem?

The footage represents a group of people shaking a Christmas tree. But:

- Who are the people in the recording? Where do they come from, what signals about their nationality or religion do we have available?
- What are the people in the recording doing exactly? What intent or emotion are they expressing as they do so?
- Are there other people (non-participants) in the recording? What are they doing and how are they acting?

Sources publishing fake content

- <http://archive.is/MX1IG/image>

Sources correcting & reacting to the content

- <https://faktograf.hr/2018/12/13/davorin-karacic-izvijestio-o-migrantskoj-pljacki-bozicnog-drvca-u-nje-mackoj/>
- <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/offended-muslims-attack-christmas-tree/>

Circles of Hell

What happened?

A Member of Parliament of the Republic of Croatia has claimed that Dante Alighieri has reserved the deepest circles of Hell for "the neutral ones", probably as a means of criticizing what he considers to be the indecisiveness of the Government that his party is in opposition to.

The statement that the "deepest", or alternatively, the "hottest" circles of Hell are reserved for the indecisive has often appeared in popular culture and has been attributed to a number of people as the originators, usually wrongly. In political debate, this claim is often used to criticize politicians who are perceived as not being decisive or resolute enough.

In fact, this claim makes a factual error when referring to the literary work that is the originator of representation of Hell as being divided into "circles" - the 14th century epic poem "Inferno" by Dante Alighieri. The integral version of the epic has been well-known and extensively analyzed for centuries and it is well-known that the author described neither the deepest circles of Hell as "hot", nor as reserved for the "indecisive".

What is the problem?

Circles of Hell are a common cultural trope. But:

- Are they described anywhere? Have they been given a structure that can be referred to? Is there a description of who is in the "deepest" circles of Hell?
- What value system does the referenced literary work refer to? Is indecisiveness described as a sin within this value system?

Sources publishing fake content

- <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/hdz-om-upravljaju-mracne-sile-celnik-mosta-ogorcen-potezima-hdz-a-tvr-di-da-premijera-uopce-ne-zanima-kriminal-u-agrokoru-nego-tko-ga-prijavljuje/5980526/>

Sources correcting & reacting to the content

- <https://faktograf.hr/2017/05/02/petrov-dante-neutralne-rezervirao-najmracnije-krugove-pakla/>
- <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2015/01/14/hottest/>

Controversial Claims about Health

What happened?

A Croatian Member of Parliament posted an image of a forest saying „THIS CURES DEPRESSION“ superimposed with an image of pills saying „THIS IS A LIFELONG ADDICTION“, claiming that depression can be cured through pleasant experiences and should not be treated medically.

Ivan Pernar, member of populist political party Živi zid, has gone public with several controversial claims about health. In this particular one, he created a meme of sorts, comparing a stock image of pills (depicting medication in general) to a lush forest. The caption in the picture, written in recognizable "meme" typeface and format read: This [forest] is an antidepressant. These [pills] are a lifelong addiction.

The implication of the meme is that medications cause more harm than they cure, as they cause long-lasting chemical addictions, whereas nature has a curative effect. However, this claim was specifically made about depression, i.e. stating that depression is curable by exposure to and activity in nature, in opposition to taking depression medication, which is a cause of addiction. However, in doing so, Pernar has neglected the scientific consensus that depression is a psychiatric condition that is conventionally treated with medications.

What is the problem?

Nature is certainly beneficial to human health, including psychological well-being. But:

- Is depression merely a sadness or a more profound disorder? Is there a scientifically accepted definition of what depression is?
- Why is depression treated with conventional medication? Are there reasons that pills exist specifically to treat depression?
- Are there risks to harmful effects to disregarding conventional depression therapy? Do the risks outweigh the benefits?

Sources publishing fake content

- <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/ja-bolujem-od-depresije-ponar-prestani-dok-se-netko-nije-ubio/2047265.aspx>

Sources correcting & reacting to the content

- <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/znanstvenici-objasnili-koliko-su-opasne-ponarove-objave-o-depresiji-na-fejsu/2047916.aspx>
- <https://icd.who.int/browse10/2010/en#F33>



Germany

New Year's Eve, Dortmund

What happened?

According to Ruhr Nachrichten (regional newspaper from Dortmund): "Between about 18.45 and 01.30 o'clock predominantly young foreign men moved in large and small groups through the city center. At Leeds Square they formed a large group of at least 1000 people. Pyrotechnics was thrown into the crowd and on police. At the central station, a stranger fired a New Year's Eve rocket at a homeless man and injured him severely. From Kleppingstraße, the fire department had to extinguish a burning fence at the Reinoldikirche. There were no sexual assaults like a year ago in Cologne." (<https://www.ruhrnachrichten.de/Nachrichten/Dortmund/Wie-Medien-die-Silvesternacht-fuer-Hass-Aufbau-nutzen-55127.html>)

What is the problem?

A local news coverage was deliberately twisted with false content aiming for fearmongering fast dissemination of fake news, international reporting, threats to reporters.

Sources publishing fake content

- <https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2017/01/03/dortmund-mob-attack-police-church-alight/> (USA)
- <https://www.wochenblick.at/silvester-in-dortmund-allahu-akbar-und-kirchenbrand/> (Austria)

Sources correcting & reacting to the content

- <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/breitbart-news-eskalation-in-dortmund-14605813.html> (Germany)
- <http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/medien-und-sport/fake-news/246764/falschmeldungen-auf-denkleinkrieg-lassen-wir-uns-nicht-ein> (Germany)

German politician of the The Greens-party defends murder of student

What happened?

The politician Petra Klamm-Rothberger publishes a tweet showing understanding for a perpetrator of a murder by saying: "In the homeland of the offender, raped women are sentenced to death. Therefore, he had to kill her after the rape. We have to understand these cultural differences." As it turned out, the tweet and even the existence of the woman was a fake.

What is the problem?

Total fiction of public opinions expressed as a possible member of a party. Purpose remains unclear fact check delivers reasons to doubt the source.

Sources publishing fake content

- Tweet not available anymore. Screenshot of the tweet on Bildmaterial "Fake News & Social Bots"

Sources correcting & reacting to the content

- <https://www.mimikama.at/allgemein/petra-klamm-rothberger-fake/> (Austria)

“The sun does not care”

What happened?

The AfD-politician Beatrix von Storch reacts on a post by a Greens-Politician on twitter, who was highlighting the effects of the climate change to recent weather conditions, with a vulgar statement concluding with the words “the sun does not care”.

What is the problem?

This way, Beatrix von Storch is indirectly denying the human impact on the climate change (no scientific evidences, use of vulgar language to trigger emotions)

Sources publishing fake content

- https://twitter.com/beatrix_vstorch/status/1024188890603835392?lang=de

“Messereinwanderung” (“Knife-Immigration”)

What happened?

The parliamentary group of the German party AfD (Alternative für Deutschland/Alternative for Germany) published a video on their website and on facebook displaying incidents of “knife-attacks” by foreigners on German citizens. The video with the title “Karte des Schreckens” (“map of terror”) also provides certain statistics underlining the AfD’s purpose to raise awareness to the bad influence and terror of foreigners and migrants on Germany.

What is the problem?

Allegedly, higher number of knife assaults by immigrants (crimes arbitrarily selected, crimes also committed by German citizens, statistics not trustworthy)

Sources publishing fake content

- <https://www.afdbundestag.de/messereinwanderung-2/> (Germany)
- <https://de-de.facebook.com/alternativefuerde/posts/-die-karte-des-schreckens-deutschland-einig-messerland-es-ist-unfassbar-kein-tag/1913363202027343/>

Sources correcting & reacting to the content

- <http://faktenfinder.tagesschau.de/inland/messer-delikte-101.html> (Germany)



Europe

“The Islamization of Europe”

What happened?

Right-/populist-media predict the so called islamization of Europe resulting from the deliberately controlled immigration of muslims.

What is the problem?

Predictions are not based upon scientific data (conspiracy theory)

Sources publishing fake content

- <https://www.compact-online.de/forscher-rechnen-volksaustausch-vor-75-millionen-muslime-in-eu-bis-2050-grenzschiessung-zwecklos/> (Germany)

Sources correcting & reacting to the content

- <http://www.bpb.de/lernen/projekte/270414/verschwörungstheorie-islamisierung> (Germany)
- <https://correctiv.org/faktencheck/artikel-faktencheck/2017/09/22/von-einem-rechten-narrativ-und-zahlen-zweiter-teil> (Germany)