

iEND GAME!

DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES REPORT

WP2. Identification and creation of contextualized
media literacy scenarios



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Title

Report of identification of the most pressing media literacy topics for each region (D2.1)

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Executive Summary

The present report, produced under Work Package 2 of the ENDGAME project, identifies the most prominent media literacy topics for youth in Finland, Serbia, and Spain. Through desk research and participatory workshops with relevant stakeholders, the analysis maps dominant mis/disinformation trends across nine thematic areas including immigration, politics, identity, climate change, and health. Despite national differences, cross-country patterns emerge: heavy reliance on social media as a primary news source or high exposure to manipulative content. The present insights will serve as the basis for the development of gamified media literacy tools, particularly educational escape rooms, designed to equip young Europeans with critical thinking skills in response to an increasingly complex information ecosystem.



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1. Introduction

The World Economic Forum's [2024 Global Risks Report](#) ranked mis/disinformation as the greatest risk faced globally over the next two years. While young people know how to access a wide range of media across different digital formats, they are unduly trusting of content and do not possess the foundational familiarity with traditional media formats and language that can act as a natural filter required to safely engage with large quantities and diverse types of media. This leaves young people vulnerable to manipulation and mis/disinformation. In this context, the ENDGAME project aims to **identify relevant cross-border critical media literacy topics and provide an engaging, effective and sustainable way to teach new media literacy through educational escape rooms.**

The present report provides a comprehensive country-level analysis of the most pressing disinformation narratives in Finland, Serbia, and Spain, as identified through research and participatory workshops conducted as part of Work Package 2- Identification and creation of contextualized media literacy scenarios- under the ENDGAME project. The ENDGAME project aims to promote media literacy among European young citizens (adolescents, teenagers and young adults) to become critical thinkers, responsible digital citizens and active participants in a globalized society. Through the development of online educational escape rooms (Work Package 3) that will immerse participants in interactive scenarios that simulates real-life situations of information consumption, participants will develop media literacy skills such as identifying disinformation or manipulated visuals, recognizing AI-generated content or becoming aware of the personal data collected by social media platforms.

This report examines the most recurrent disinformation narratives in Finland, Serbia, and Spain around relevant topics. By using a shared analytical framework, project partners have identified narratives across nine thematic areas –Immigration, Politics, Identity and LGBTQIA+, Feminism, Climate Change, Health, the European Union, Scams, and Conspiracy Theories. The findings arise from a diverse array of sources, including statistical data, fact-checking archives, internal monitoring systems, and media literacy resources. These insights were validated and enriched through workshops with relevant stakeholders including educators, media literacy professionals, journalists, among others. These workshops revealed shared concerns and unique regional dynamics that shape the disinformation ecosystem in each country.

The report is designed to provide a clear and comprehensive view of the findings. The first section presents the insights of each country, highlighting cross-border trends. Findings from each workshop are presented and key contributions. Conclusions and recommendations are presented at the end with the methodology, aligning the findings with the overarching goals of the ENDGAME project. Ultimately, this report lays the groundwork for the design and implementation of innovative and educational escape rooms aimed at enhancing media literacy among young Europeans by equipping them with the skills necessary to critically engage with information in an increasingly complex digital environment.



2. Youth Media Consumption and Disinformation Trends

FINLAND

According to [Eurostat](#), approximately 94% of Finnish youth aged 16–24 were engaged in social media platforms and online communities. Most prominent social media web pages used in all demographics were [YouTube \(3,45M unique visitors\)](#), [Facebook \(2,94M u.v.\)](#), [Instagram \(2,06M u.v.\)](#), [Reddit \(1,39M u.v.\)](#) and [X \(1,16M u.v.\)](#).

In all demographics, the [median weekly use of social media services and apps \(2024\)](#) is as follows: WhatsApp (4,3M), Facebook (3,9M), YouTube (3,6M), Instagram (2,8M) TikTok (1,6M), SnapChat (1,3M) and X (1,2M), while the rest (LinkedIn, Threads, Pinterest, Jodel) remaining under 0,9M weekly users. In the age group of 15–24 years, the five most used social media services are WhatsApp (94%), SnapChat (88%), Instagram (82%), YouTube (81%) and TikTok (72%). Beyond these Top Five services, the use of other social media services appears to sharply plummet to [37% for Facebook, 30% for Jodel and 28% for Discord](#). Of all demographics, 28% reported using Facebook for following news, while 15% reported using WhatsApp and YouTube. However, among respondents aged 18–24, Facebook accounts for 25%, while other services play a more prominent role in news consumption —[YouTube \(26%\), TikTok \(26%\), Instagram \(18%\) and Snapchat \(13%\)](#), highlighting the importance of individual influencers as mediating and filtering news and information for this age group and short videos increasing as a preferred media format. Within the age group of 13–18 years, [TikTok is by far the most preferred source of news](#) (49%).

While Finland is often presented as [one of the most media and information literate countries in the OECD](#), challenges are not completely absent. 34–41% of the age group of 15–24 years reported to have encountered hate speech and discriminatory content and [21–37% reported to have encountered manipulative, false or otherwise erroneous content in social media](#). While these figures give some indications, the actual exposure to dis- and misinformation is in all probability much higher. Paradoxically, the Finnish tend to report relatively [low trust in their own skills to verify suspicious information](#) or identify false information.

Finland as a relatively small country faces certain special challenges in relation to dis- and misinformation. First of all, the number of media outlets is very small with only a handful of large journalistic media houses besides the national broadcasting company YLE. While Finns typically rate the trustworthiness of mainstream media and news high (trust in news media is one of the highest in the world), paradoxically [they also express high levels of skepticism](#) towards the media, perhaps due to the homogeneity of the mediascape. Insofar political polarization in mainstream media has remained fairly low, but politically motivated and skeptical attitudes towards it trend on increasing.

Due to the small size and relative homogeneity of Finnish media as well as the generally high levels of foreign language skills of the Finnish population, English-speaking media has a somewhat disproportionate impact on Finns and their media consumption, especially in the younger population. This means the trends in disinformation narratives tend to reflect more global trends than purely local issues.



SERBIA

In Serbia, as well as in other countries across the region, the level of media literacy is alarmingly low. [Open society institute](#) from Sofia ranks Serbia near the bottom of European nations —holding the 31st position out of 41 countries surveyed. The study notes that these nations exhibit a limited capacity to combat the effects of fake news and disinformation, largely due to inadequate performance in media freedom and education.

Based on the research "[Violent Extremism and Youth: From Disinformation to Radicalization](#)" conducted by the Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) in collaboration with SMART Balkans, when it comes to how young people in Serbia stay informed, a significant proportion (29%) reveal that Instagram is the very first platform they open in the morning to seek information. Beyond social media, youths prefer to keep up with key issues such as social, political, economic, and other important topics through established sources; 23% rely on the public broadcaster RTS, 20% on PRVA, while both Blic (in its print-app format) and N1 reach 14% each. However, about one third (33%) of the surveyed young individuals reported that they cannot clearly identify which media sources they trust or use regularly.

Regarding social media usage, Instagram stands out as the most popular platform, with 84% of youths using it, followed by YouTube at 71%, Facebook at 53%, and TikTok at 50%. In terms of time spent online, the largest segment of respondents (37%) indicated that they spend between one and three hours each day on the internet, while a slightly smaller group (34%) estimates that their daily internet use ranges from three to five hours.

Exposure to hate speech and violent content is also notable. Nearly one-third (30%) mentioned that they occasionally encounter hate speech and violent rhetoric via the media they follow, whereas 20% stated that such exposure is rare. In contrast, 24% reported regularly coming across hate-filled or violent content.

When asked about their concerns over distinguishing real from false information in the content they read, listen to, or watch, the responses were mixed. A total of 7% of the respondents declared that they are not concerned at all or only slightly worried about the veracity of the information, while an equal percentage expressed that they are either somewhat or very much troubled by it. In terms of specific misinformation topics, 26% have seen false or misleading information related to climate change, pollution, and ecological issues, while 40% encountered disinformation regarding politics, political parties, and elections. Moreover, 33% of the young people observed deceptive information concerning health issues, COVID-19, and other diseases; the same percentage also noted the presence of false narratives about the war in Ukraine.

Based on the annual analysis "FakeNews Tragac," the disinformation landscape in Serbia has undergone rapid changes, particularly after the pandemic and the initial phase of the war in Ukraine—events that captivated public attention for months. The study reveals that as the topics of public interest evolve more quickly throughout 2023, media outlets are now compelled to trigger emotional responses in their audiences at an accelerated pace. With the line between truth and falsehood increasingly blurred, those responsible for spreading disinformation have become more sophisticated in their methods to avoid detection.



In 2023, the FakeNews Tragac team [identified and analyzed 201 cases of disinformation](#), the majority of which originated from various social media platforms and content-sharing networks. It was also noted that during this period there was a decline in the disinformation propagated by traditional media, as mainstream outlets adopted a more cautious stance against delivering overtly false or sensational content—a shift from their earlier practice of mixing propaganda, sensationalism, and data manipulation.

In stark contrast, the following year saw a significant change: in 2024, the team [documented](#) 176 disinformation cases emanating from 98 different media sources, along with various social media accounts and websites devised to promote dubious products and services. Some disinformation items were even recorded from multiple sources, bringing the total number of registered disinformation placements to 326. Unlike in 2023, media outlets took the lead in disinformation dissemination during 2024.

The most prevalent inaccurate and manipulative information falls under the “world” category and, as in previous years, primarily comes from social media platforms. For readers inclined to accept such disinformation, the world beyond Serbia appears as a bizarre and alarming place. They might be led to believe, for example, that Americans continue to import Russian oil and will soon be devastated by a volcanic eruption in Yellowstone; that white people are becoming a minority in the armed forces of the United States and the United Kingdom; that the French have banned nettles; that Germans are allowed to freely distribute child pornography—apparently justified by claims about Olaf Scholz’s grandfather having Nazi ties; and that Swedish activist Greta Thunberg is advocating for the use of biodegradable weapons in conflict. These kinds of sensational assertions, among others, create an increasingly distorted picture of the world.

SPAIN

According to the [“Young people – digital world” survey](#), in 2023, 97% of Europeans aged 16 to 29 used the internet daily, and 83% engaged with social media. These platforms have become their primary source of information on political and social issues —particularly in Spain, where 49% of young people report relying on social networks (especially Instagram and TikTok), ahead of television (44%) and family or friends (35%), and well above traditional media (20%). However, only [36% of young Europeans say they verify the information they find online](#), revealing a significant vulnerability to disinformation.

In Spain, this vulnerability is compounded by structural factors. [Recent studies](#) portray it as a nation with a high vulnerability to disinformation, due to its tradition of political polarization, the lack of credibility of public institutions and the media among citizens, and a rather high number of journalism-avoidant internet users. According to the [Digital News Report 2024](#), trust in news in Spain stands at just 33%, and news avoidance has risen sharply: 37% of Spaniards now avoid the news —eight points more than in 2023. This trend is more pronounced among younger people (44%) compared to those over 35 (35%). Furthermore, only 19% of those under 24 trust the news.

Exposure to disinformation is also widespread: 51% of young Spaniards report encountering it “often” or “very often”. And while 67% feel confident in their ability to detect false content, [only 15% say they are “very confident”](#). Studies show that, despite this self-assurance, many young people struggle to distinguish between accurate and misleading information. The [International](#)



[Computer and Information Literacy Study 2023 \(ICILS\)](#) found that “3 out of 4 do not have sufficient ability to discern the truth from the false”. Similarly, the [2024 Save the Children report](#) revealed that 51% of adolescents have difficulty identifying fake news. Even when they suspect something may be false, one in four does not cross-check it with other sources, and 56% prefer to verify information with family and friends rather than consulting reliable outlets. At university level, [36.5% of students admitted to sharing disinformation without checking it](#), and [44.8% reported taking a passive stance when exposed to false content](#)—simply ignoring it rather than actively trying to counter it.

Finally, although awareness of disinformation is high, the perceived responsibility for addressing it is low: [57% of Spaniards believe this is a task for national authorities and 60% for the media](#), while 22% consider it the responsibility of individual citizens. This limited sense of personal agency—combined with widespread exposure to disinformation and the central role of social media in shaping young people’s information habits—highlights the urgent need for targeted media literacy initiatives, particularly among younger generations.

Aspects shared by the three countries

- **Intensive use of social media as the main source of information.** In Spain, 49% of young people get their news from social media, surpassing television and traditional press. In Finland, platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube and TikTok dominate among 13–24 year olds. In Serbia, 29% of young people say that Instagram is the first app they check in the morning.
- **Widespread exposure to disinformation, hate speech and manipulative content.** In Spain, 51% of respondents say they see disinformation ‘often’ or ‘very often’. In Finland, 34–41% of people aged 15–24 reported encountering hate speech and discriminatory content, and 21–37% reported encountering manipulative, false, or otherwise erroneous content on social media. In Serbia, about a third have encountered hate speech, and 40% have come across political disinformation.
- **High level of subjective confidence in detecting hoaxes, but limited actual skills.** In Spain, although 67% believe they can detect hoaxes, only 15% are ‘very confident’, and studies show clear gaps in information literacy. In Finland, young people report low confidence in their own ability to verify information, despite the country’s high literacy rates. In Serbia, attitudes towards distinguishing truth from falsehood are divided, reflecting insecurity and informational confusion.
- **Low media literacy and limited active verification of information.** In Spain, 75% of young people cannot distinguish between true and false information. Serbia ranks very low for media literacy in Europe, coming 31st out of 41 countries.
- **Limited sense of individual responsibility for disinformation.** In Spain, 57% think that the authorities should take action and 60% think that the media should, compared to only 22% who feel personally responsible. In Serbia, despite concern, 7% have a passive or confused attitude about how to deal with disinformation. In Finland, the growing role of influencers and short formats as mediators of information is highlighted, which reduces critical individual agency.

3. Mis/disinformation Narratives Analysis

Immigration

Across Spain, Serbia and Finland, disinformation targeting migrants reinforces the perception that **immigration poses a threat to societal cohesion, security and national identity**. Although the narratives take different forms depending on the country, they rely on shared tropes –**criminalisation of migrants, accusations of welfare abuse, Islamophobia and fears of cultural replacement**.

Another significant issue in the discourse about migrants is hate speech. Researchers have observed that **hate speech and disinformation often overlap** in these narratives, with false claims serving to incite hostility and mobilise exclusionary sentiments. In Serbia, for example, an [analysis of comments](#) from the 2020 Facebook group “Pokret STOP naseljavanju migranata” revealed that 69.4% of the comments contained elements of hate speech. The dominant narrative in Serbian media and social platforms presents migrants as a threat to society, with **sub-narratives calling for their expulsion, border closures**, or claiming that **migrants harass women, pose security risks, and receive more rights than locals**. Furthermore, it is argued that the ultimate goal of current migratory trends is to Islamize Serbia and, more broadly, the West.

Similar narratives have been prevalent in Spain for years. In fact, it could be said that disinformation about immigration is the most widespread. Migrants from **Morocco** and **sub-Saharan Africa** in particular are criminalised and portrayed as an economic burden. They are falsely accused of committing violent crimes, receiving disproportionate welfare benefits, and failing to integrate. The arrival of **unaccompanied minors** frequently becomes the focus of disinformation incidents, with messages portraying them as inherently violent. Narratives also **exaggerate the number of migrants arriving by sea**, presenting the situation as a 'crisis' or 'organised invasion', and accusing the Spanish government of losing control of its borders. A common trope is that Spain is being 'flooded' by young, strong men 'of military age', while the absence of women, children and older people among the arrivals is questioned. Disinformation content also perpetuates Islamophobic stereotypes by claiming that Muslim **migrants intend to impose their customs and values**, such as Sharia law, on Spanish society.

Finland exhibits many of the same patterns, shaped by its own demographic and geopolitical context. Since the 2000s, immigration has been a highly contested issue, with disinformation often focusing on crime statistics, capitalising on especially sexual and violent crimes as the basis for unfounded generalisations about entire populations. As in other European countries, stories circulate about **migrants abusing welfare systems** or **benefiting from 'positive discrimination' over native citizens**. A widespread narrative is that of 'The Great Replacement', which accuses left-leaning political ideologies of conspiring to replace native Finns with immigrants. The majority of these narratives single out immigrants from Islamic and African countries, whereas narratives about, for example, East Asian, European or South American immigrants are virtually non-existent. One exception is the Roma people, particularly those from southern and eastern Europe. There is also a discourse on undocumented immigrants and their relationship to crime, though clear disinformation narratives about this group seem more or less inconsistent and less of political interest.



One narrative of interest relates to **organised crime and 'street gangs'** involving first- or second-generation immigrant youths, in the wake of Sweden's violent crime epidemic. These narratives project an image of Finland on the verge of complete anarchy and violence, often singling out specific neighbourhoods in Helsinki as 'no-go zones' where even the police are afraid to enter. While surging gang violence is a serious concern, these narratives wildly exaggerate the prevalence of violence and inflate a handful of restless young people into a national-level threat, portraying Finland as being on the slippery slope to becoming a failed state.

Another specific feature of the Finnish context is the country's long border with and historical relationship to Russia. Finland has a large Russian-speaking minority and immigrant population, and the general attitude towards them is conflicted, ranging from indifference to skepticism and even hostility. Due to its long history with Russia, there has always been a varying degree of endemic Russophobia, but consistent, repeated disinformation narratives do not seem to appear as contrasted to more general, endemic stereotypical thinking, implying the lack of particular effort in causing unrest and polarization. **Finland has been the target of deliberate campaigns of so-called weaponised immigration from Russia as part of its hybrid operations** (resulting eventually in the complete closure of the Finnish–Russian border), with Russian officials shunting large numbers of especially African and Middle-Eastern asylum seekers to the Finnish border. The apparent objective of this campaign was to stoke general anti-immigrant sentiment, cast doubt over the entire immigrant population in Finland and push the Finnish parliament into a constitutional stalemate. Disinformation-wise, **this narrative is often directed towards the EU and used to bolster anti-EU, anti-rule of law and anti-liberalism rhetoric.**

Despite national differences, these narratives across the three countries reinforce each other by appealing to shared anxieties about identity, security and belonging. They exploit real or perceived crises to polarize public opinion and undermine trust in democratic institutions and human rights frameworks.

Top narratives by country

FINLAND

- "Immigrants pose a threat to public safety" —e.g., blog posts and opinion pieces have alleged a [link between asylum seekers and rape cases](#).
- "Immigrants are an economic burden" —e.g. claims that immigrants, especially those from non-European countries, [abuse the welfare system](#) due to low levels of education and limited employment prospects, suggesting that they contribute little while consuming public resources.
- "The Great Replacement is underway" —e.g., claims that native [Finns are being replaced through immigration](#) and falling birth rates.
- "Immigration is destabilising society" —e.g., claims that [violent street gangs in cities like Helsinki are a direct result of immigration](#).

SERBIA



- “Neighbouring countries are sending migrants back home” —e.g., a [doctored image](#) falsely showed a sign at the Bulgarian border reading “Dear immigrants, welcome to Bulgaria! No work. No money. No future. Proceed back. Thank you.”
- “Immigrants pose a threat to public safety” —e.g., the case of 12 decontextualised photos of women posted on social media with the message that they were [survivors of immigrant attacks](#).
- “The state is secretly giving citizenship or property to migrants” —e.g., claims circulated that the [Serbian government was buying houses in Alibunar for migrants from the Middle East](#).
- “Islam is encroaching on public spaces” —e.g., disinformation falsely claimed that [a mosque was being built in place of a planned botanical garden](#) in the town of Dučina, framed as part of a broader effort to Islamise Serbia.

SPAIN

- “Immigrants pose a threat to public safety” —e.g., [stabbing of an 11-year-old child in Mocejón](#); [all those arrested for robbery in the DANA-affected areas of Valencia are immigrants](#); [“illegal” Haitian immigrants eat neighbors’ cats in Springfield](#).
- “Unaccompanied minors are violent criminals” —e.g., [no, this video does not show an immigrant ‘child’ beating a woman in Spain](#): it is a boy beating his sister and was filmed in Malaysia in 2022.
- “Immigrants benefit from positive discrimination” —e.g., [no, undocumented migrants do not receive 1,000 euros a month in benefits upon arrival in Spain as this video claims](#).
- “Islam is a threat to European values and culture” —e.g., Islamic customs are being imposed and [endangering Spanish traditions](#), attempts are being made [to impose Sharia law throughout Europe](#), in [schools pork is being banned from dining room](#) and [the teaching of Islam is being imposed](#).
- “The government allows and encourages the arrival of immigrants by sea” —e.g., claims that the Spanish government [gives mobile phones to migrants as soon as they arrive](#), or that [they allow them to arrive](#) on Spanish shores [without doing anything](#).
- “Immigrants are invading us” —e.g., people who arrive on patera are part of an [organised army](#).

Politics

While the exact narratives vary, the overarching goal of political disinformation in the three countries is consistent: to **discredit opposing political forces, delegitimise democratic processes and fuel polarization**.

In Serbia, political disinformation has become a key tool for manipulating public opinion and exacerbating existing social divisions. Narratives frequently depict political opponents not only as corrupt, but also as **pawns of external conspiracies working against the national interest**. Both the media and the political sphere in Serbia are highly polarized. Certain media outlets with a nationalist slant, closely linked to the ruling party, deliberately distort reality, essentially fulfilling a propaganda role rather than providing genuine information. This tendency is also evident among state-funded public media, where topics such as EU integration, foreign policy, and



agreements with China, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates are often manipulated. In recent months, Serbia has witnessed massive protests led by students and citizens demanding adherence to the law, the proper functioning of institutions, and accountability for those responsible for the current state of the country. During this period, both **nationalist and tabloid media have directly targeted young people and students** —portraying them as foreign agents, opponents of the constitutional order and politically motivated disruptors, rather than as ordinary citizens exercising their rights. In addition, a significant number of manipulative narratives have emerged regarding the number of faculties affected and the number of primary and secondary schools engaged in strike action, as well as figures related to the protests, which serve to deepen societal divisions and further exacerbate the overall climate of polarization in Serbia.

In Finland, political disinformation mainly relates to political blame games about responsibility for various political outcomes. Some narratives pick out the **Finnish education system as corrupted by liberal and DEI ideologies**, with allegations of the propagation of sexual deviance in school teaching. Right-wing narratives focus on the financial policies of the previous government, presenting them as abject failures (e.g. increasing the national debt), while left-wing narratives focus on accusations of Nazism, racism and fascism of the current (right-wing) government, often exaggerating or misrepresenting (sometimes factual) evidence. The result of these narratives tends to be **division and apathy towards participation in political processes**. Both narrative styles tend to represent the opposing view as a consistent ideological whole and as an **“enemy camp”** with which all negotiations are impossible, thus fueling political polarization. During and after Finland's NATO vote, Russian-originated narratives about the vote began to spread, mainly repeating the message that membership was a mistake and that Finland had placed itself in grave danger, becoming a lapdog of the West and in risk of losing its independence. As these narratives are readily identified by the somewhat resilient majority as coming from Russian sources, they seem to have very little or no influence, circulating mainly in Russian-influenced fringe groups and bot accounts, and rarely appearing elsewhere.

In Spain, **political disinformation intensifies around electoral periods and major policy debates**. These narratives often exploit sensitive issues such as **vote security** or **immigration** and are amplified through social media and partisan networks. Common strategies include spreading false claims of **electoral fraud**, **questioning the legitimacy of postal voting systems**, **promoting confusion around the voting process**, and disseminating **attacks against specific politicians**.

Top narratives by country

FINLAND

- “Children are indoctrinated at school age to turn them into ‘perverts’” — e.g., the Finns Party claimed that [schools are engaging in ‘brainwashing’](#) by teaching young children about gender diversity and sexual topics.
- “Political elites are corrupt or ideologically dangerous” —e.g., claims that [Marin’s government ruined the economy](#) or allegations that Minister Vilhelm Junnila’s [raccoon-patterned tie was a form of crypto-nazi dog-whistling](#).



SERBIA

- “Protesting students are violent and fascists” —e.g., pro-government outlets accused student demonstrators of “[terrorising journalists](#)” and blocking access to media buildings —portraying them as privileged agitators linked to the opposition — and even [targeted them as terrorists](#). An outlet accused demonstrators of terrorising citizens by blocking Belgrade’s Branko Bridge and claimed that [they displayed fascist symbols](#).
- “The opposition spreads lies with the help of foreign influencers” —e.g., an article claimed that [Serbian opposition figures paid a Canadian influencer \\$6,000](#) to falsely accuse the police of using sonic weapons against peaceful protesters.

SPAIN

- “Election results are manipulated by external forces” —e.g., allegations during the 2023 general election suggested that [Indra had manipulated the results](#) despite official oversight to ensure the integrity of the process —e.g., [it's a 'pucherazo': hoaxes and disinformation about electoral fraud in the 23-J election; narratives on alleged electoral fraud in the US](#)).
- “Mail-in voting is untrustworthy and manipulated” —during the 2023 general election, false claims alleged that postal votes could be identified or manipulated, reviving discredited narratives from previous elections —e.g., [facts, questions and misinformation on undelivered postal votes](#). Disinformation about the [destruction of absentee ballots in the U.S.](#) was also common.
- “Incitement to spoil votes” —e.g., [messages](#) during the European Parliament elections advised voters to place [two ballots in a single envelope](#) or to [write in fictitious candidates](#), effectively invalidating their votes.
- “Political leaders are corrupt, illegitimate or dangerous” —e.g., narratives that seek to discredit political figures, whether by [accusing them of corruption](#), [abuse of power](#), or [privilege](#) or by [ridiculing them](#).

Identity and LGBTQIA+

Disinformation targeting LGBTQIA+ communities functions as a potent vector for reinforcing traditionalist values, fuelling moral panic, and stoking political polarization. Although national contexts differ in cultural attitudes and legal protections, the narratives share common patterns: **framing LGBTQIA+ identities as ideologically imposed, morally corrosive, or socially destabilising**—often by leveraging fears about children, science, or the erosion of “national values”.

In Spain, disinformation content frequently constructs the LGBTQIA+ community —**especially trans people and gay men**— as a **threat to public safety, children's welfare and traditional family structures**. These narratives link LGBTQIA+ individuals to paedophilia, disease (e.g., during the monkeypox outbreak), or suggest the existence of a coordinated “**LGBTQIA+ ideology**” that seeks to **indoctrinate children** and dismantle social norms. Periods of intensified public debate—such as the approval of the Ley Trans or LGBTQIA+ Pride celebrations—often act as triggers for spikes in false narratives. These are amplified on social media and by far-right actors,



who depict equality laws as favouring minorities at the expense of the majority, contributing to a climate of perceived victimhood and “reverse discrimination”.

While Finland has traditionally been fiercely egalitarian and is still mainly very accepting towards sexual minorities, transgender youth have increasingly become a flashpoint in a wider backlash against the **“liberal DEI ideology” promoting “delusions” and overemphasizing the importance of identity**. Disinformation often reframes support for gender diversity as a dangerous illusion promoted by activist elites –portraying schools and universities as ideologically hijacked spaces where scientific objectivity is replaced by “gender” and DEI ideologies. Allegations of “cancel culture” are central to this narrative, suggesting that **conservative students and academics are silenced by a militant liberal consensus**. While there have been some tangible public cases of overshoot, these narratives often exaggerates these incidents, equating criticism with censorship and representing ideological disagreement as evidence of “cancel culture”.

In Serbia, one of the central arguments in rhetoric targeting homosexuality—and anti-LGBTQIA+ discourse more broadly—is the claim that it is driven by so-called Western propaganda. Discussions about **rights and the so-called Western values are often manipulated and presented as a threat to the “traditional family,”** which is portrayed as an essential element of the Serbian national identity and a bearer of positive values. Furthermore, certain organizations advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights and equality are delegitimize through suspicion about their work methods, funding sources, and operational practices.

While the intensity and framing of the narratives vary, a shared structure is evident across all three countries. LGBTQIA+ people also become proxies in broader culture wars, symbolising contested ideas about modernity, sovereignty, science, and the role of the state. Whether the mechanism is moral panic in Spain, ideological backlash in Finland, or nationalist rejection in Serbia, the effect is similar: reducing complex identities to political battlegrounds, and transforming minority rights into touchstones of polarization.

Top narratives by country

FINLAND

- “There is a gender ideology trying to indoctrinate children” —e.g., messages that [children are identifying as ‘therians’](#) (non-human animals) due to the influence of LGBTQIA+ and gender ideology in schools.
- “Cancel culture is silencing student and academic freedom” —e.g., claims that [academic freedom is being curtailed by identity politics and ideological conformity](#) in universities.
- “Gender identity is only a matter of biology and not rights, and liberals are to blame for thinking otherwise” —e.g., narratives argue that gender identity should not be legally recognised if it contradicts biological sex, claiming that [liberal governments are promoting gender laws that disregard science and are not required by human rights treaties](#).

SERBIA



- “The realization of the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community prevents parents from making decisions that are in the best interest of the children, but leaves that decision to others (most often dubious experts) who act in accordance with someone’s (sinister) interests.”
—Narrative based on distortions about advances in LGBTQIA+ rights in other countries, with a particular focus on minors—such as [false messages that children in Germany can change their gender without parental consent](#)—, and which present these legal changes as alien to democracy or contrary to traditional values.
- “LGBTQIA+ rights in Europe are being imposed, especially on children” or “the exercise of the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community poses a threat to the safety of our children” —e.g., A post on X misleadingly claimed that Vulkan’s edition of Sally Morgan’s book A Guide to Life for Smart Girls [promotes “pedophilia and LGBT among children”](#).
- “LGBTQIA+ people benefit from positive discrimination” —e.g., Serbian media outlets falsely claimed that parking spaces in the German city of Hanau were [reserved exclusively for LGBTQIA+ people](#) and migrants.
- “LGBTQIA+ organisations are criminal or morally corrupt” —e.g., Serbian media accused the association [“Da se zna” of being involved in drug trafficking](#) using unrelated individuals and misleading images to delegitimise the group’s activism.

SPAIN

- “LGBTQIA+ people are paedophiles or pose a threat to children” —e.g., It is not true that [six young homosexuals drugged and raped a 13-year-old](#) boy after the Gay Pride parade in Malaga; false messages that [homosexuals are more likely to sexually abuse minors](#).
- “Being LGBTQIA+ is linked to disease” —e.g., During the monkeypox outbreak, false claims spread that it was a [“gay disease”](#), reviving stigmas similar to those seen during the HIV/AIDS epidemic; [“trans people are mentally ill”](#).
- “There is an LGBTQIA+ ideology trying to indoctrinate children” —e.g., Narratives claiming that schools are [“indoctrinating”](#) children into becoming LGBTQIA+, or that inclusive education is part of a global agenda to destroy traditional values.
- “LGBTQIA+ people benefit from positive discrimination” —e.g., Assertions that LGBTQIA+ individuals receive special protections or privileges through laws like the Ley Trans, or are [politically favoured](#) at the expense of the “majority”.

Feminism

The main gender-based disinformation techniques in Spain revolve around denying the existence of sexist violence, attacking the Gender Equality Law and spreading falsehoods about women and gender policies. Women —particularly those in politics, public life, or advocating for gender equality— face attacks that seek to undermine their credibility, authority and legitimacy, while also discouraging others from pursuing leadership roles or entering public office. Rather than addressing their professional qualifications or policy positions, disinformation focuses on their personal lives, physical appearance, or perceived behaviour, and tends to intensify around political debates, feminist mobilisations (such as International Women’s Day on March 8th), or when women gain greater public visibility or influence. In addition, this type of disinformation often intersects with other forms of discrimination, particularly when directed at racialised and LGBTQIA+ women. Trans women, in particular, are frequently targeted with false claims linking



them to criminal activity, including mass shootings in the United States—despite statistical evidence showing that, of 52 school shootings since 2012, only one involved a trans person.

In Serbia, more than 36,000 articles were published about violence against women between 2019 and 2021, according to a media analysis conducted by the group "Journalists Against Violence." In 40% of these publications, media outlets violated ethical guidelines by revealing the identities of victims or their family members. Besides portraying women as victims, the media often blame them for the violence they experience. In both traditional and new media, women are still predominantly seen in roles of sex symbols, wives, mothers, or housewives, while women as experts, whose opinions and expertise are considered relevant, remain a rare occurrence. Despite progress, media often perpetuate stereotypes by limiting the representation of women to these traditional roles, overlooking their multifaceted presence and contributions to society.

On the other hand, and as mentioned before, Finland has had a long tradition of egalitarianism (at least in theory), e.g. being the first European country to adopt universal suffrage in 1906. Withstanding, political contestations and disinformation narratives about feminism are not completely absent in the Finnish discourse. For example, during Sanna Marin's female-led administration 2019–2023 the public space was ripe with gender-based narratives attacking the competence of female leaders (with coinage such as "girl administration", "doll government" etc.), highlighting that these atavistic models of thinking have not yet gone anywhere.

Regardless of some female influencers separating themselves publicly from "feminism" or even disowning it every now and then, feminism still remains a somewhat neutral topic in the Finnish public discourse. However, specifically intersectional feminism has roused some stronger narratives, as its vocal claims for DEI and anticolonial policies tend to verge on the abrasive. Main narratives related to feminism are related (again) to institutes of higher education, specifically social sciences, and reflect the discourse projected globally from the American "culture wars".

In a similar vein, the Finnish national broadcasting company Yle was recently at the heart of a social media conundrum for offering DEI education to its journalists, causing allegations of politically biased journalism, censorship and demands for defunding the company from the conservative right.

Top narratives by country

FINLAND

- "Women in power are incompetent, immature or unprepared to lead" —e.g., during Sanna Marin's female-led administration 2019–2023 the [public space was ripe with gender-based narratives attacking the competence of female leaders](#) (with coinage such as "incompetent", "inexperienced", "girl administration", "doll government" etc.).
- "Feminism is irrational, extremist and harmful to society" —e.g., this narrative includes claims that [feminism is an incoherent and fanatical ideology](#) that censors literary works and limits critical thinking, distorts science (on gender, wages, or power), emotionally manipulates public discourse, and gains social advantages at the expense of men.



- “Diversity initiatives are ideological impositions that generate censorship, insecurity among staff and pressure to adhere to a single worldview” —e.g., DEI training at Yle [described as mandatory](#) ideologically rigid, and led by activists rather than neutral experts.

SERBIA

- “The exercise of gender rights leads to the destruction of traditional family values” —e.g., the [tweeter Vukša Dragović made the claim](#) that “85% of divorces happen at the initiative of women”, and explained his need to “fight for family values” by presenting statistical data on the high proportion of suicides among young people, running away from home, behavioral disorders, on the proportion of rapists, children who do not finish school, children in correctional facilities and young people in prison among those raised by single mothers.
- “Gender equality courses are just LGBT propaganda to indoctrinate children” —e.g., a video falsely accused a kindergarten in Temerin of introducing a gender equality course without parental consent, claiming that [it was actually promoting "left-wing, woke LGBT propaganda"](#).
- “Women in power are incompetent and only get ahead through sexual favours” —e.g., claims portraying them as unqualified, immoral or anti-national. The daily newspaper Objektiv falsely claimed that opposition politician [Marinika Tepić](#) was “the main propagator of anti-Serbian genocidal hysteria”, while journalists like [Nataša Kovačev](#) were accused of “loving migrants and hating the Serbian church” based on fabricated quotes.

SPAIN

- “Women gain power through inappropriate or sexual means” —e.g., Kamala Harris has been falsely portrayed as [advancing her political career through relationships with powerful men](#), in an attempt to delegitimise her success and leadership.
- “Feminists say absurd things” —e.g., viral false claims that feminists said “[throwing a baby in the trash is a right](#)” or “[guitars are sexist](#)”.
- “Women fake abuse to manipulate or punish men” —e.g., a [scripted video](#) shared as real showed a girl claiming to self-harm to falsely accuse her ex of abuse.
- “Female public figures are reducible to sexual objects” —e.g., [AI-generated pornography and sexualised deepfakes of women](#) like Scarlett Johansson, Taylor Swift or Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez are used to humiliate them, trivialise their achievements, or discredit their public image; 99% of victims of this type of deepfake porn are women.
- “Female politicians and government officials are unreliable, unintelligent or too emotional or libidinous to hold public office” —e.g., Irene Montero was falsely linked to a [video showing a woman giving a sexual tutorial](#); Ada Colau was falsely quoted as proposing a [male curfew](#), and Isabel Díaz Ayuso was targeted with a [manipulated image](#) to sexualise her appearance.
- “Women enjoy exclusive privileges from the government” —e.g., fake ads claimed [women receive 600€ or 800€ government](#) handouts just for being women; another [hoax](#) claimed free public transport for women only in Vitoria-Gasteiz; and another claimed that [Muslim women receive money without working](#).



- “Trans women are not real women and are dangerous” —e.g., claims that trans women are “biological men” [who infiltrate women’s spaces to assault women or gain unfair advantages in sports](#); or that [US school shootings are carried out by transgender people](#).
- “Born a man” —a transphobic theory that falsely claims that several [first ladies and prominent women in politics were born male and are secretly transgender](#). This unsubstantiated narrative has targeted figures such as Brigitte Macron, Michelle Obama, and Begoña Gómez, relying on photo manipulation, decontextualized images, and fabricated claims to discredit them or their partners.

Climate change

These narratives **seek to obstruct environmental policies, erode public trust in climate science, or channel social or political discontent** toward institutions, experts, or environmental policies perceived as imposed by elites or “green” ideologies. Climate change disinformation in Finland builds mainly on the narrative of “**green insanity**”, displaying environmental measures as costly and economically disastrous, often exaggerating their impact on the everyday life of the typical Finn and dismissing the costs of non-action. Along the globally familiar narratives about climate change present in virtually all countries, a **Finland-specific narrative focuses on geographical and cultural specifics** —namely, long distances in the sparsely inhabited country, with fuel prices affecting disproportionately those living in rural areas combined with unreliability of EV:s in the cold temperatures, and the importance of wood-stove sauna for the Finnish lifestyle as something climate activists seek to ban. While the geographical narrative has some merit, as far as anyone knows, nobody is trying to ban Finns from going to sauna. Another more localized stream of narratives relates to the Finnish forestry industry and **the role of Finnish forests as carbon sinks**. During several years a record amount of forest has been cut in anticipation of EU regulations and reforestation initiatives, which has stoked harsh criticism about exploitative strip cutting from the scientific community and risking Finland being heavily sanctioned by EU for overblowing its carbon quotas. Denialist narratives have been issued in response, distorting the issues and e.g. **accusing the natural resources administration of using wrong metrics**.

In Serbia, the media often manipulate the issue of climate change, balancing between pessimism and optimism regarding the future of our planet. While on a global scale, the phenomenon is taken seriously and recognized as the greatest threat to humanity, **domestic media often select data that supports denialist theories, minimizing its significance and rejecting the role of human impact**. Similar tendencies are visible in media reporting, where scientific forecasts indicating the dramatic consequences of rising global temperatures are often ignored. This approach may result from a combination of political, economic, and social factors, as well as the media’s need to satisfy interest groups that financially benefit from ignoring climate risks. In this context, Serbian media often fail to provide enough space for education and raising awareness about the importance of urgent action for environmental protection, and instead focus more on sensationalist headlines and the denial of scientific facts.

In Spain, climate disinformation takes on more **conspiratorial forms**, often **linked to global narratives about social control**. For instance, alternative explanations for extreme weather



events are proposed, or elites are accused of manipulating the climate. Although denialist discourse often adopts a more moderate tone, its main goal remains the same: **to discredit scientific evidence, sow distrust in institutions, and delay climate action.** These narratives focus on discrediting solutions —such as the energy transition or emissions regulations— rather than openly denying climate change, which makes them harder to dismantle in public debate.

Top narratives by country

FINLAND

- “Green insanity” —this narrative displays environmental measures as costly and economically disastrous, often exaggerating their impact on the everyday life of the typical Finn and dismissing the costs of non-action, [targeting e.g. electric vehicles](#).
- “Climate activism threatens traditional Finnish lifestyles and rural survival” —ecological measures are perceived as alien to Finland's geographical, climatic and cultural reality, especially in rural areas. This includes claims questioning the viability of EVs, or falsely asserting that climate activists or the [EU want to ban wood-stove saunas](#).
- “Criticism of Finland’s forestry practices is exaggerated or politically motivated” —e.g., [narratives claim](#) that accusations of excessive deforestation are misleading or based on false metrics.

SERBIA

- “Climate change is exaggerated or misunderstood” —e.g., claims that [global warming is “slowing down”](#) or that temperatures will “slightly decrease,” and that [CO₂ is not harmful](#) but beneficial for plants —even suggesting we should “celebrate CO₂”—, despite scientific evidence showing otherwise
- “The climate is being artificially manipulated by humans or elites” —this narrative suggests that [extreme weather events are not natural but the result of deliberate interventions](#) —e.g., claims that rain and snow can be artificially created through cloud seeding; that military projects secretly control the climate using chemicals like silver iodide; or the chemtrails conspiracy, alleging that dangerous substances are sprayed into the atmosphere under the orders of powerful actors.
- “Climate change is natural and not caused by humans” —e.g., claims that global warming is due to Milanković cycles [rather than human activity](#); that the planet has been warming for centuries as part of natural solar cycles; or that current temperature increases are unrelated to industrial emissions.

SPAIN

- “The Spanish government is deliberately worsening the drought by demolishing dams” —e.g., this narrative claims that [current water shortages in Spain are intentionally caused by national authorities or the EU through the removal of water infrastructure](#). It includes claims that the government is destroying fully functional dams during a drought; that demolitions are part of an EU agenda that ignores national needs; that usable reservoirs



are being dismantled to create artificial scarcity; and that dismantling small water barriers directly reduces Spain's ability to retain water.

- "Other countries and elites should fix climate change, not citizens" —e.g., this narrative accepts the reality of climate change but [shifts the burden of action away from one's own country or individual action](#). It includes claims that China and India are mainly responsible for the climate crisis and [should act first](#); that the EU emits less than 10% of global CO₂ and, so its efforts are pointless; that only the rich or corporations should take responsibility, not ordinary citizens; and that acting alone would hurt national competitiveness while others continue polluting.
- "Electric vehicles don't help fight climate change" —e.g., this disinformation narrative argues that the transition to electric vehicles is either useless or counterproductive. It includes claims that electric cars catch fire more easily, that [charging stations rely on polluting diesel generators](#), that they have a [greater environmental impact than combustion-engine cars](#), and that governments are pressuring people to switch to electric cars [based on the false promise that they will "save the planet"](#).
- "Extreme weather is man-made and engineered by elites" —e.g., the HAARP research program is at the center of conspiracy theories that claim it can manipulate weather and climate. These narratives attribute extreme phenomena such as floods, droughts, hurricanes, and even earthquakes to deliberate attacks supposedly enabled by HAARP technology. Claims include that [the 2024 hurricane season was "engineered,"](#) the DANA storm in Valencia was ["a meteorological attack,"](#) or that [HAARP has caused Spain's droughts](#).
- "Chemtrails are evidence of climate manipulation or population control" —e.g., this narrative suggests that condensation trails left by airplanes are actually [deliberate chemical releases](#) aimed at controlling the weather, damaging crops, or harming public health.
- "Climate change is not real and/or is not related to human activities" —e.g., disinformation that Arctic ice has reached its highest level in 30 years when [it hasn't](#); or [misleading messages that the number of deaths from natural disasters is falling](#), so climate change is not having a significant impact on our lives.

Health

In Finland, counter to expectations, e.g. vaccine-themed dis- and misinformation narratives seem at least at the moment rather absent. Instead main topics seem to revolve around diets, exercise and lifestyles especially in the young demographics' social media, again reflecting more global and general trends rather than local and capitalizing on appearance and fitness obsessed youth culture.

Perhaps as a counter-reaction to official, science based nutrition recommendations and the growing presence of more or less vocal demands to go vegan or vegetarian, or at least prefer plant based nutrition, long-standing and influential narratives about meat eating being healthy and e.g. fruits and vegetables being unhealthy seem to have stormed the social media, with many influencers promoting a meat-based lifestyle with miraculous results —despite the growing evidence for contrary. Main techniques in these narratives appear to be cherry-picking (selective



induction) and quote mining (misleading reference) scientific literature, testimonial stories and sometimes making nebulous allegations about scientific consensus being biased or corrupted. These narratives gain traction occasionally from meat industry pundits.

Other than that, health related narratives seem to go through rapid cycles of short-lived “health crazes” and bursts of rather local popularity, mostly based on unwarranted and unrealistic promises, vague marketing claims and (again) influencer testimonials, e.g. drinking raw (unpasteurized) milk is healthy, eating (poisonous) apricot seeds provides vitamin B16, drinking one’s own urine “cleanses”, etc. Most of these are not so much symptomatic of science denialism as they are of just complete lack of critical, scientific thinking.

The landscape of health disinformation in Spain has also changed significantly since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. While vaccine-related hoaxes remain prominent, the focus has broadened to encompass a wider range of topics such as nutrition, reproductive and sexual health, disease treatment, and even animal health. These narratives share a common thread: they undermine scientific knowledge, foster distrust in health institutions and promote unverified or pseudoscientific alternatives. False claims about vaccines now coexist with alarmist messages about contraceptives, distorted portrayals of abortion, and miracle cures framed as “natural” solutions to complex medical issues. Nutrition-related hoaxes—such as those linking additives or everyday foods to cancer, or promoting unproven “miracle” diets and detox practices as safer or more effective than conventional health guidance—have become especially widespread, often exploiting fear and lacking any scientific foundation. Other messages focus on discrediting medications or suggesting that pharmaceutical companies hide effective treatments, reinforcing a conspiratorial view of the healthcare system. These narratives circulate primarily through messaging apps and social media platforms like WhatsApp and TikTok, often bypassing traditional media and fact-checking filters. In many cases, the disinformation adopts political or ideological tones, particularly when addressing issues tied to public health policy or gender.

An [investigation](#) by the 'Fake News Tragač' portal, which analysed deconstructions of false news stories from its archive between December 2017 and December 2021, identified several mechanisms through which medical disinformation campaigns operate in Serbia. These include reporting non-existent studies, using flawed research methodologies, inaccurately reporting facts and embellishing or distorting scientific findings. Many of these false narratives echo themes prevalent in Serbian media, such as the idea that modern society is in decline and that Western medicine is harmful and ineffective, often serving the interests of the pharmaceutical industry. Ironically, this narrative positions modern science not as a tool for truth and progress, but as a tool hijacked by powerful groups for their personal gain.

Top narratives by country

FINLAND

- “Meat-based diets are healthier than plant-based ones, and official nutrition guidelines are misleading” —e.g., [narratives promoting a meat-based lifestyle](#) as uniquely healthy or even miraculous, while portraying fruits and vegetables as unhealthy or harmful; often relying on personal testimonials, selective use of scientific literature, or claims that



mainstream nutritional science is biased or corrupt. Another strange diet that came up was [fritarianism](#).

- “Alternative practices offer hidden benefits mainstream science ignores” —e.g., drinking raw (unpasteurized) milk is healthy, [eating apricot seeds \(which are toxic\) provides vitamin B17](#), or [consuming one’s own urine “cleanses”](#).

SERBIA

- [“Modern science and medicine are untrustworthy and aligned with elite interests”](#) —e.g., disinformation based on fabricated studies, flawed methodologies, or misrepresentation of scientific results, promoting the idea that Western medicine is harmful or ineffective and primarily serves pharmaceutical industry profits rather than public health.
- “Plant-based diets are unnatural and harmful to health” —e.g., claims that [vegetarian diets lead to sterility due to lack of fat intake](#); assertions that vegetarians cannot obtain essential amino acids through diet alone and must rely on supplements; suggestions that human anatomy is not suited to a plant-based diet because we lack large jaws and flat teeth like cows.

SPAIN

- “Vaccines are harmful” —e.g., false claims suggesting that [autism is more common among vaccinated people](#); that [COVID-19 vaccines are dangerous and cause death](#); that [vaccines cause sudden death](#); or that [mRNA vaccines alter human DNA](#)—.
- “Cholesterol is a medical invention to manipulate public health” —e.g., [disinformation](#) suggesting that people with high levels of “bad” cholesterol live longer, and that cholesterol-lowering medication is actually harmful—.
- “Food can cure cancer” —e.g., Misleading content promoting so-called alternative cancer treatments based on diet, with no scientific basis —such as [restrictive diets](#), [“superfoods,”](#) or substances like [ivermectin, fenbendazole, hydroxychloroquine, and methylene blue](#)—.
- “Superfoods have miraculous effects on health” —e.g., claims that consuming specific foods directly improves health, when in reality these [“superfoods” do not exist](#) as such, what matters is our overall dietary pattern—.
- “They are trying to sell us fake food” —e.g., hoaxes claiming that [China is distributing plastic rice](#), that [fake meat is being sold in supermarkets](#), or that [rubber fruit](#) is being sold in the U.S.—.
- “The government is imposing harmful restrictions on pet health” —e.g., decontextualized claims about a [supposed ban on antibiotics for pets](#), including fines of up to €1.2 million—.
- “Contraceptives are harmful or unreliable” —e.g., claims that hormonal contraceptives cause serious [long-term health problems or infertility](#), or that emergency contraception is a [“hormonal bomb” that can only be taken two or three times in a lifetime](#)—.

European Union

Euro-skepticism is naturally present in the Finnish social media, and a number of narratives can be identified relating to it. **Most of these narratives originate either from the anti-EU far-right party True Finns, or more or less Russia influenced political fringe groups.** The bulwark of **these narratives build on general economic and regulatory issues**, such as shared financial responsibility over Southern European countries being unjust and EU initiatives against hate speech being infringement of freedom of expression and a covert attempt to silence (ethno)nationalistic groups within EU. Russian influences on these narratives can be identified as more straightforward attacks on democracy and political liberalism itself, with coined slamwords such as “Gayropa” etc.

On the other hand, Serbian media often circulate disinformation about the European Union with the **aim of creating a negative perception of EU membership and discouraging support for European integration.** These narratives commonly portray **the EU as a threat to traditional values**, claiming it imposes an LGBT agenda and undermines the traditional family model. There are also frequent claims that **Serbia would lose its sovereignty by joining the EU**, be forced to recognize Kosovo, or adopt laws it did not create. **The EU economy is often depicted as failing, while Serbia is presented as stable and self-reliant**, with manipulated images—such as empty supermarket shelves from the pandemic—used to support this view. Migration policies are framed as dangerous, with **claims that Serbia would have to accept thousands of migrants.** Additionally, the EU is sometimes portrayed as anti-Serb and anti-Slavic, and disinformation includes conspiracy theories about microchipping, banning cash, and digital population control. All of these narratives aim to incite fear, distrust, and resistance toward European values.

Similarly, disinformation narratives in Spain against the European Union **exploit perceptions of loss of sovereignty, unfair regulatory impositions, and favoritism toward minorities or foreign countries.** These narratives tend to link the EU to policies that allegedly harm Spanish citizens—whether by damaging the countryside, funding migrants, or imposing cultural and food restrictions— and seek to undermine its legitimacy by portraying it as a distant, elitist entity disconnected from national interests.

Top narratives by country

FINLAND

- “The EU imposes unfair financial burdens on Northern countries to subsidise the South” —e.g., Finnish far-right actors claim that [EU financial mechanisms force the country to bail out Southern European economies](#)
- “The EU uses hate speech laws to suppress nationalism and free speech” —e.g., narratives allege that [EU efforts to combat hate speech are a covert strategy to silence patriotic or ethnonationalist voices.](#)

SERBIA

- “The EU and the Vatican wants to control citizens through digital surveillance and loss of autonomy” —e.g., claims that [the Vatican had prepared seven million microchips](#) for



Serbia as part of an EU plan that would soon become mandatory across member states. The claim alleged that [the EU and IMF would stop issuing loans to countries that refuse to chip their populations](#).

- "The EU punishes sovereign states and is politically intrusive" —e.g., multiple Serbian and regional media outlets falsely reported that [the EU had officially revoked Poland's voting rights](#).
- "Hungary is plotting to integrate Serbia into supranational structures" —e.g., claims that Hungarian Prime Minister [Viktor Orbán wanted Serbia to join a future European army](#), when no official proposal mentioned Serbia's inclusion. Similar false claims had previously suggested that Serbia would join "Orban's Union" as an alternative to the EU.

SPAIN

- "The EU and global elites want to destroy Spanish agriculture" — e.g., during the 2024 farmers' protests and extreme weather events like the DANA in Valencia, Telegram channels spread conspiracy narratives accusing [the EU, the 2030 Agenda, and Morocco of plotting to destroy Spain's rural sector](#). False claims included that EU environmental policies were designed [to force Spain to rely on Moroccan imports](#), that the EU was paying farmers to abandon crops, or that climate manipulation tools like [HAARP or "chemtrails" were being used to sabotage Spanish harvests](#). Viral posts also falsely accused Morocco of creating storms and spreading contaminated produce to weaken Spain's food sovereignty.
- "EU funds are used to favour immigrants and reward gender violence complaints" — e.g., narratives claiming that a quarter of the [European Social Fund is reserved for immigrants and unaccompanied minors](#), or that EU money prioritises foreigners over Spanish nationals. Viral claims also suggested that [Spain would invest €45 billion in Moroccan infrastructure](#) or that EU funding was based on [the number of gender violence reports filed](#). These narratives exploit antifeminist sentiment and xenophobia, [particularly among young people](#), and often go viral during electoral periods.
- "The EU bans traditional foods while promoting insects due to cultural or ideological agendas" —e.g., following the decision not to renew authorisation for certain smoke flavourings deemed genotoxic by the European Food Safety Authority, viral posts claimed that [the EU had banned ham-flavoured crisps](#). Some narratives framed the move as a consequence of "Islamisation", alleging [the snack was removed to avoid offending Muslims](#), or linked it to the "Great Replacement" conspiracy. Others claimed that traditional products were being phased out [in favour of insect-based alternatives](#).
- "The EU manipulates elections and silences dissent" — e.g., during the 2024 European Parliament elections viral claims falsely alleged [that results were rigged to harm Se acabó la Fiesta \(SALF\)](#), that [ballots with protest messages were systematically annulled](#), and that a [three-hour delay in publishing results was a cover for electoral fraud](#) coordinated by Brussels and the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party.
- "EU recovery funds are being mismanaged or stolen by the Spanish government" — e.g., a recurring narrative accuses the Spanish government of diverting or misusing EU cohesion and recovery funds, claiming that ["millions have disappeared"](#) or that [the money has been frozen by Brussels](#) due to a lack of transparency. Viral posts have falsely stated that [the EU blocked payments until Spain explained its spending](#), that [the EU Court of Auditors](#)



[declared the funds untraceable](#), or that the government used the money exclusively for ideological agendas [like gender equality or green policies](#).

Scams

This category includes digital fraud techniques designed to **manipulate, scam** or **steal users' information**. Online scams and digital security issues include messages with false offers, prizes, gifts, and surveys that promise benefits in exchange for personal data or upfront payments. Beyond specific narratives, this category focuses on the characteristics and structures of the most common scams that may particularly affect young people.

In Spain, **young people are frequent targets of digital scams that exploit their desire for quick financial success and their high exposure to platforms such as TikTok, WhatsApp or YouTube**. Phishing and smishing tactics are increasingly used to impersonate trusted entities, using urgency and credibility to extract personal or financial information. The most common scams include **false cryptocurrency investment opportunities, unregulated trading academies operating under pyramid schemes, and fraudulent job offers impersonating well-known companies**. The [case of IM Academy](#), which attracted thousands of young people in Spain with promises of rapid wealth through trading courses, is a notable example of how these tactics can have a significant impact on youth.

In Finland and Serbia, we found the same thing: most scams targeting young people revolve around cryptocurrencies and online betting, reaching them mostly through advertisements in social media and games. A particular type of scam targeting young internet users in Finland involves online marketplaces for second-hand goods, which usually involve a copied or AI-generated image of a product for sale, and once the financial transaction is completed, the seller simply ghosts the buyer. Here, young people stand out as both victims and perpetrators, not limiting to them though.

Top theories by country

FINLAND

- A phishing scam in the popular online marketplace [Tori.fi](#) tried to lure a user to reveal sensitive data [by a faked ToriDiili procedure](#).

SERBIA

- Fake investment scams —promotion of investment opportunities often linked with public figures to create a sense of security or promising high returns with minimal effort —e.g., a fraudulent article impersonated Serbia's Minister of Finance, falsely claiming he had endorsed the cryptocurrency platform "Bitcoin code" during a public TV interview. The piece [promised users they could multiply their investment "a hundredfold" with only a small initial deposit](#), and included fabricated testimonials using stock photos and invented identities.



- Fake “miracle” products —promoted through fake celebrity interviews, impersonating media outlets. Technically, a [“miracle” product](#) is one that has not demonstrated effectiveness or safety, lacks any health control, and is illegally marketed for the purposes and/or advertising attributed to it —e.g., [DiaTea for diabetes or Hemomax for liver damage](#) —using fabricated endorsements by fake doctors and fake news reports impersonating outlets like CNN.
- Fake prize giveaways impersonating trusted brands —e.g., a [fraudulent Christmas giveaway](#) circulated via Facebook Messenger claimed that the German retail chain DM was offering 30,000 dinars to users who completed a survey and shared the link with friends. The scam prompted users to disclose personal data through a manipulated website.

SPAIN

- Fake investment scams —e.g., a fake article impersonating RTVE falsely claimed that [Irene Montero had endorsed a crypto platform during a televised interview](#); or, on TikTok, hundreds of viral videos targeted young people with few resources through the narrative of [“getting rich at the click of a button”](#), promoting trading and e-commerce courses that lead to unregulated platforms such as Mined, which offer paid subscriptions and promise high returns despite lacking official oversight or guarantees.
- Fake “miracle” products —e.g., [Miracle products promoted through fake celebrity interviews: why they can be dangerous and how to identify them](#).
- Fake offers and prizes —scams promising rewards (trips, lotteries, free products) or large discounts in exchange for personal data or a small initial payment —e.g., [a fraudulent summer giveaway claimed that Shein was offering €500 gift cards](#) in exchange for completing a survey, sharing the link and providing credit card details, ultimately enrolling users in a paid subscription service; similarly, a [fake Nike promotion on Facebook advertised Air Force 1 shoes for €1.95](#), redirecting users to a counterfeit site where they were asked to submit their personal and payment data under the guise of paying shipping fees.
- Identity theft or phishing —cyberattacks involving messages that impersonate trusted entities in order to obtain personal or banking information —e.g., [fraudulent messages impersonated El Corte Inglés](#), and [Amazon](#) to offer seemingly well-paid, flexible remote jobs via WhatsApp or Telegram, directing users to provide personal or financial data through fake registration websites or chat interactions, in all cases confirmed by the companies as phishing scams. Users were also tricked by [fake rental listings for apartments on Idealista or Booking](#), redirected outside official channels to provide documents or pay deposits.
- Smishing —Identity theft of a company or institution through SMS to obtain your personal data or distribute malware —e.g., [users received SMS messages claiming to be from InfoJobs](#), offering job offers, but redirecting to fake websites designed to steal personal and financial information.
- In-game payment scams and predatory monetisation —scams and exploitative mechanisms that target young players through misleading offers and data collection practices in popular games —e.g., fake websites and [“V-Bucks generators”](#) mimicking Fortnite’s branding tricked users, especially kids, into sharing personal data or login

credentials; many scams spread via YouTube or social media also [redirected to malicious apps or surveys promising free in-game currency](#).

Conspiracy theories

Conspiracy theories offer **alternative explanations** for events or situations, based on the belief that **a powerful group is orchestrating hidden actions** with sinister or controlling intentions. The conspiracy explanation is presented as **the ‘truth’ that others are trying to hide**, often defying expert consensus and relying on insufficient, distorted or non-existent evidence. This type of theory is characterised by its **resistance to falsification**: contrary evidence, or even the absence of evidence, is interpreted as confirmation of its veracity. The result is a closed system of beliefs that appeals more to faith and emotions than to verifiable evidence.

As aforementioned, the global trends reflect somewhat in the Finnish conspiracy theory scene, and all the familiar and traditional narratives (flat earth, hollow earth, conspiritualistic theories, etc.) are also present in their well known forms in Finland. One recent, more or less locally specific conspiracy theory however involves a special demographic, namely **the Arabic speaking minority**. Preying on limited language skills, knowledge about Finnish society and tight-knit communities of Middle-Eastern immigrants and leveraging their uncertainty and possible distrust towards the Finnish state, in 2021 a disinformation campaign termed LVU was targeted them and to Finnish child protection officials, claiming that they were kidnapping moslem children and selling them for medical testing and sexual abuse. The same campaign has been present in other Nordic countries as well, causing unrest in the moslem minority.

Conspiracy theories in Serbia are most commonly centered around a few key themes that provoke fear, distrust, and a sense of threat. **Prominent narratives involve global elites allegedly controlling politics, the economy, and the media —often through organizations such as NATO, the EU, or the World Health Organization**. There are frequent claims about the dangers of vaccines, chemical trails (chemtrails), 5G networks, and other supposed tools for population control. **Theories about migrants and population replacement are also widespread**, along with those involving alleged secret plans to seize land, natural resources, or even children. Religious and identity-based narratives are common as well, such as claims about **the threat to Orthodox Christianity** or conspiracies targeting the Serbian people. These theories rely heavily on emotional appeal and are mainly spread through social media, private messaging groups, and sensationalist media outlets.

In Spain, conspiracy theories targeting young people often spread through platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Telegram, leveraging viral content and influencers to disseminate unfounded claims. These theories range from flat Earth beliefs and reptilian elites to false narratives about celebrities and historical events. Notably, figures like “Míster Tartaria” and “Míster Empírico” [have gained significant followings by promoting such content](#). Additionally, theories such as the “[Great Replacement](#)” have been linked to real-world violence, highlighting the potential dangers of these narratives. These theories often intertwine scientific phenomena, political actions and global initiatives with unsubstantiated claims to create a sense of urgency or fear. By targeting institutions, political figures and widely recognised symbols, they embed disinformation in public discourse, which is particularly effective in polarizing debates around climate change, public



health and social norms, as we have seen recently with the case of the DANA Floods (the Spanish acronym for high-altitude isolated depression) in Valencia.

Top theories by country

FINLAND

- “Child protection services kidnap Muslim children for exploitation” —e.g., a conspiracy theory known as LVU targeted Arabic-speaking communities in Finland, [falsely claiming that social services abduct Muslim children](#) for medical experimentation or sexual abuse.

SERBIA

- “Weather is being secretly controlled by governments or global powers using hidden technologies” —e.g., articles that referred to [chemtrails as deliberate poisoning operations, presented cloud seeding as a covert military technique, and cited a “secret Yugoslav project”](#) allegedly first used to clear the sky during Putin’s visit to Serbia in 2014.
- The “Golden Billion” theory —e.g., messages claimed that Bill Gates was the mastermind behind the “Golden Billion” depopulation strategy, which aims to reduce the global population to one billion privileged people in the West. Claims tied [Gates’s investments in COVID-19 vaccines to this theory](#), portraying immunisation efforts as a tool for mass population control.
- “The COVID-19 pandemic was orchestrated or manipulated by powerful actors for control or profit” —e.g., conspiracy theories that offer [cheap explanations](#) such as: the virus spread via the 5G network. The virus is being spread across Serbia by migrants from the Middle East. The virus was produced in a laboratory to destroy America. The virus was produced in a laboratory to destroy China. The virus was designed by Bill Gates to implant chips in all of us.

SPAIN

- “The DANA was orchestrated to damage Spanish crops” —following the severe storms in eastern and southern Spain in October 2024, various conspiracy theories claimed that the DANA (a high-level isolated depression) was artificially induced. These narratives invoked alleged [weather manipulation through HAARP technology, chemtrails](#), and even claimed that [Morocco was behind the storm](#) to weaken Spain’s agricultural competitors. Others blamed the [supposed destruction of dams and reservoirs](#), despite official data confirming that only small obsolete river barriers had been dismantled.
- “Engineered drought” —the claim that [Spain’s water crisis is artificially induced](#) falsely blames authorities, the 2030 Agenda, and foreign actors, citing alleged techniques such as chemtrails, the destruction or draining of reservoirs, and HAARP weather control.
- “Climate change is natural, not man-made” —e.g., these narratives downplay the anthropogenic origins of global warming by attributing climate change to natural factors such as [Earth’s orbital cycles \(Milankovitch\), solar activity, volcanic eruptions, El Niño/La Niña events](#), and [plate tectonics](#).



- “The Rainforest Alliance frog logo means insect-laced, poisonous food” —this theory claims that the Rainforest Alliance frog symbol on food packaging indicates the presence of insects, [allegedly as part of a plan linked to Bill Gates and the 2030 Agenda to poison the population](#).
- The Great Replacement —the theory that there is a [deliberate plan to replace the native European population with immigrants](#), orchestrated by elites.
- The “Birds aren’t real” movement —a satirical theory that suggests that [birds have been replaced by government surveillance drones](#).
- Flat Earth —conspiracy theory claiming that the [Earth is not a sphere but a flat disc](#), often surrounded by an ice wall (Antarctica) to prevent people from “falling off.” Popularised on platforms like TikTok by influencers such as “Mister Tartaria” and “Mister Empirico,” who argue that [gravity doesn’t exist and that water cannot adhere to a sphere](#).
- “The WEF is killing bees to cause a global famine” —based on a misleading article from the disinformation website The People’s Voice, the claim distorts isolated cases of hive destruction in New Zealand and Australia due to bacterial infections and parasitic mites, presenting them as part of [a World Economic Forum directive to governments to create a global food crisis](#).
- “Agenda 2030 will ban meat and dairy” —theory claiming that the 2030 Agenda and the World Economic Forum plan to [legally ban meat and dairy, limit calorie intake, and restrict clothing purchases](#). The claim misrepresents a non-binding academic report by C40 Cities and partners.

4. Media Literacy Workshops

As part of Work Package 2, the partners organised three workshops focused on the identification and creation of contextualized media literacy scenarios. The aim was to explore the most relevant media literacy topics to each region of the project (Finland, Serbia and Spain), ensuring that the developed content aligns with the unique challenges faced by each country.

Through a collaborative and participatory approach, the workshops identified the most pressing disinformation-related topics in each region. The results, together with the country-level analysis of disinformation narratives within the specific national information spheres, will ultimately feed into the development of escape room scenarios for promoting media literacy.

The workshops were held online between 7 and 16 May 2025 and brought together a diverse group of 56 participants aged between 18 and 45 from the three countries. The sessions lasted between one and two hours and included students, civil society actors, educators, researchers, media professionals, and digital content creators. This mix of professional backgrounds contributed to dynamic discussions and enabled the exchange of perspectives from education, media, and digital design. All participants gave informed consent prior to participation, and the sessions followed a common structure agreed upon by project partners, including the presentation of visual examples of disinformation and guided group discussions.

Specific workshop objectives:

- Validate and enrich the selection of dominant disinformation narratives.
- Understand young people’s real-life exposure to disinformation.



- Explore emotional, cognitive, and behavioural responses to disinformation.
- Assess perceived and actual media literacy capacities.
- Identify opportunities for gamified learning in future educational activities.

3.1 Key findings and transnational patterns

3.1.1. Most relevant or impactful narratives to participants

Overall, the focus group discussions suggest that the most impactful disinformation narratives tend to exploit emotional, identity-based or existential themes, such as safety, belonging and personal well-being. Despite differences in prominence across countries, **immigration, gender and health consistently emerged as key areas of concern.**

Spanish participants reported that young people were heavily exposed to disinformation related to immigration, climate change and online scams, followed by narratives targeting feminism and the LGBTQIA+ community. **All participants had encountered narratives about migrants that primarily focused on their perceived privileges and violence.** Participants linked such representations to hate speech and fear-based rhetoric, frequently reproduced by students who hear them at home and then replicate them in school. With regard to climate change, participants emphasised the difficulty of distinguishing factual content from disinformation, particularly due to the consumption of simplified or misleading content on platforms such as TikTok. Some teachers said that the narrative that climate change is not real is more prevalent among adults than young people in their schools, and that **students tend to believe the conspiracy theory about chemtrails more readily.** Scams were also a common theme: **all participants had encountered fraudulent messages,** with several recounting examples of phishing, such as those involving undelivered packages that steal your data if you click the link, and fake job offers.

In **Finland,** the most prominent narratives similarly revolved around immigration, gender (including feminism and LGBTQIA+ issues), and health and lifestyle discourses. Participants highlighted the spread of **narratives about street gangs and “roadman culture” linked to immigration,** while some participants pointed out that the narrative about welfare abuse has been expanded and diluted beyond immigrants and is no longer prevalent on young people’s social media. In the health and lifestyle domain, the discussion extended beyond vaccine-related disinformation to **dietary controversies** (e.g. the ongoing debate about meat versus vegetarian diets, or the spread of disinformation about seed oils, which are blamed for being toxic despite contrary research results), **hyperindividualistic success ideologies** (e.g. the “grindset lifestyle”), and **unverified fasting protocols.** Feminist and LGBTQIA+ narratives were also noted for their presence, often framed through antagonistic tropes such as **“feminism is now about hating men”** or through derogatory representations of former female-led political administrations. One example of the latter is the **“lipstick administration” narrative** in reference to former Prime Minister Sanna Marin’s government. Another identified phenomenon was the **“tradwife” genre,** whose conservative ideology is very visible and commentary seems very dismissive.

In **Serbia,** participants identified disinformation targeting vulnerable groups and women, and scientific disinformation, as the most pressing issues. Although immigration-related narratives were recognised, they were considered to have declined in visibility compared to previous years.



In contrast, gender-related disinformation —particularly that which manipulates statistics about single mothers to insinuate that **most criminals and suicide victims come from single-mother families**, or stokes **moral panic over LGBTQIA+ content in educational materials**— elicited strong reactions and prompted suggestions for educational tools to encourage critical thinking. Health-related disinformation, including extreme claims such as NATO allegedly engineering a virus to target Slavic populations, also attracted significant attention and critical reflection. Although political disinformation was also recognised, participants emphasised the need for caution when addressing such content in youth-focused educational initiatives, given the sensitive local context. After discussion, the Serbian participants concluded that conspiracy theories were the most suitable topic as they are easily adaptable and appeal to young people while offering substantial learning opportunities through critical analysis. They added that certain conspiracy theories have a dark aura that could create an intriguing atmosphere for an escape room experience.

Finally, while all narratives sparked some degree of engagement, certain themes were discussed less prominently or attracted lower levels of concern. In particular, **political disinformation**, while acknowledged in all three countries, was often described as **less prevalent among young people** or as **too context-specific to address directly in educational settings**, as seen in the Serbian case. Similarly, **climate change narratives appeared to generate comparatively limited interest in Finland and Serbia**, either due to their reduced visibility in youth media ecosystems or due to the complexity of the scientific content involved.

3.1.2. Media trust, digital skills and youth engagement with information

Participants in all three countries demonstrated a high level of digital engagement, yet expressed limited trust in traditional news outlets. In Spain, several participants highlighted the widespread distrust of mainstream outlets among young people, who tend to rely on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube Shorts and podcasts for news. Similarly, participants in Serbia indicated that social media, television and online media outlets were their most common sources of information. In Finland, meanwhile, short-form video platforms (TikTok, Instagram and YouTube) and individual influencers were described as being particularly important for youth audiences. **Social media emerged as the dominant space for acquiring information** across contexts, eclipsing more traditional formats such as radio or the print press, which were described as marginal.

While participants reported being highly active online, the results of the digital skills questionnaires suggest that their ability to identify and verify false information is limited. In Spain, for example, fewer than half of participants expressed confidence in their ability to recognise disinformation, and only 29% reported knowing how to verify information or which tools to use. Participants described a media environment characterised by information saturation, which leads to skepticism and disengagement. Several comments highlighted the difficulty of distinguishing truth from falsehood, especially when disinformation incorporates both factual and fabricated elements. This cognitive overload was perceived as contributing to a form of defensive disbelief or resignation, whereby **individuals end up trusting nothing at all**. The challenge is further exacerbated by time constraints; **many participants reported not having enough time to verify information**, thus increasing their exposure to false content. In Serbia, although most respondents believed they could recognise disinformation, only five out of 23 stated that they

actively used fact-checking tools. In Finland, participants described young people as largely uninterested in fact-checking and lacking basic skills to assess expertise. These self-reported gaps point to a **discrepancy between the frequency of media use and the critical capacities needed to navigate such interconnected environments.**

Across the focus groups, **individual content creators or influencers** –especially those active on short-form video platforms– emerged as **key nodes in youth information ecosystems.** In Finland, participants stressed that influencers play a significant role in shaping young people's opinions, often functioning as the main channel through which disinformation spreads. The authority attributed to these figures is frequently disconnected from actual expertise, yet their content is perceived as relatable and trustworthy. This dynamic was also implicitly present in the Spanish and Serbian cases, where platforms like TikTok and Instagram were identified as central to youth information practices, reinforcing the influence of visual, personality-driven communication.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This report provides a twofold basis: first, a background map of recurring disinformation narratives that can inform cross-country interventions; and second, insights into socio-cultural dynamics that require country-specific approaches. The intersection of common vulnerabilities and unique contextual factors will be critical in developing effective and sustainable solutions to combat disinformation and build resilience among young people.

In terms of narratives, we observed clear convergence between the three countries on certain recurring themes, such as **immigration, gender, LGBTQIA+ issues and health.** Spain stands out for disinformation about climate change, while political disinformation narratives generally attract less attention among young people in all three countries, according to the results of the discussion groups. In Spain, for instance, many narratives are characterised by conspiracy framing and emotional content, particularly with regard to immigration (e.g., "invasion" tropes and the criminalisation of unaccompanied minors), climate manipulation (e.g., HAARP) and gender ideology. Anti-feminist and transphobic narratives are particularly prevalent in all contexts and often intersect with broader conspiracy theories, for instance targeting the EU. In Finland, narratives related to immigration stand out, as does the role of health and lifestyle discourses among young people. In Serbia, disinformation is rooted in a nationalist media environment with a strong geopolitical agenda and a strong presence of conspiracy theories (e.g., viruses created by NATO and anti-EU narratives), as well as politically instrumentalised content. Here, gender and LGBTQIA+ narratives are closely linked to anti-Western sentiment and moral panic.

When analysing **youth media consumption patterns,** the three countries show a clear displacement of traditional media in favour of social platforms, particularly TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and messaging apps like WhatsApp. These platforms serve as both sources of information and primary environments of socialisation, where young people encounter everyday content as well as manipulative narratives. Regarding **digital skills and verification capacities,** participants across the three countries report **high digital activity but low actual ability to verify information.** In Spain and Serbia, young people express confidence in detecting disinformation but rarely cross-check information systematically. In Finland, however, the perception is reversed: youth display lower self-confidence despite a generally high level of



education, highlighting a discrepancy between perceived and actual competence across contexts. Furthermore, time constraints and information overload are cited as barriers to deeper engagement with content in all three countries.

The theme of cognitive overload and disaffection also emerges as a transversal challenge. Spanish participants, in particular, report an **environment of saturation and contradiction that leads to resignation or total distrust**.

Regarding **trust in media**, all three contexts reflect a crisis of credibility –albeit in different directions. In Spain, trust in mainstream media is particularly low, especially among the under-24s, with only 19% of this group expressing confidence in the news. In Finland, trust in institutions remains relatively high, but a sense of media homogeneity leads to increased skepticism. In Serbia, the highly polarised media landscape fuels distrust across the board, reinforced by political instrumentalisation of media content. As a result, **institutional information loses ground to peer-shared content, influencers and short-form platforms**. The **role of influencers** is particularly prominent in Finland and Spain, where participants describe them as **key intermediaries of information** –regardless of their expertise. Their perceived authenticity and emotional proximity grant them legitimacy, making them powerful (and often unchecked) disseminators of narratives.

Finally, when it comes to media literacy and sense of agency, the three countries exhibit **low levels of active verification** and a **limited perception of personal responsibility in countering disinformation**. In Spain, a large majority of young people delegate this responsibility to institutions. In Finland, young people appear disconnected from the concept of verification as a personal habit. In Serbia, the low media literacy index is compounded by limited awareness of available tools and resources. Across contexts, and according to the workshop's participants, there is a **clear demand for accessible, engaging, and emotionally relevant media literacy interventions**, particularly those that can compete with the fast-paced and attention-driven logic of digital platforms.

On the basis of the above, we consider it appropriate to focus on the following actions:

- **Focus on vulnerable formats and channels.** TikTok, Instagram and YouTube Shorts should be prioritised, as they represent a critical entry point for disinformation and scams targeting this group.
- **Focus public awareness and media literacy initiatives on vulnerabilities.** Building social resilience in the face of disinformation requires a strategy that goes beyond traditional digital literacy to address the social, emotional, and cognitive vulnerabilities of different demographic groups. As observed in the focus groups, many participants were overconfident in their ability to detect disinformation but failed to correctly identify manipulated content. Therefore, we believe that initiatives should focus on tools that enable people to recognise their own biases and encourage critical self-reflection, so they can identify their cognitive tendencies and emotional responses to information.
- **Design participatory and gamified learning tools** that make media literacy engaging and relevant for diverse youth audiences. We emphasise the value of creative methods such as humour and positive storytelling at this point, as well as the need to reinforce elements of social cohesion that bring communities together rather than deepening

divisions. Such initiatives should avoid a paternalistic tone, prioritising collective building and promoting activities that foster a sense of community and collaboration over individualism.

- **Foster emotional resilience.** Emotional manipulation is a key tactic used in disinformation content. Actors exploit existing societal tensions and vulnerabilities to provoke fear, nostalgia and moral outrage, thereby maximising their impact. To counter this, media literacy interventions should prioritise teaching young people to recognise the emotional triggers embedded in such content. By focusing on the psychological aspect of disinformation, these efforts can empower individuals to resist emotionally manipulative narratives and foster a more critical awareness of the tactics employed to influence them.
- **Engage influencers as allies in countering disinformation.** As young people are generally not interested in fact-checking, it would be interesting to consider recruiting influential and well-known individuals to show young people how to fact-check and think critically.

6. Methodology

This report aims to identify the most prominent disinformation narratives circulating in Finland, Serbia and Spain, with particular attention to those affecting young people. By mapping key narratives across nine thematic areas –Immigration, Politics, Identity and LGBTQIA+, Feminism, Climate Change, Health, the European Union, Scams and Conspiracy Theories— this analysis seeks to inform the development of context-sensitive media literacy interventions and the design of narrative-based educational tools.

The findings presented here are the result of a multi-stage qualitative methodology carried out by project partners in each country. The research process involved a desk review of the partners' disinformation databases and participatory methods with key stakeholders.

1. **Identification of narratives:** Each national team conducted a systematic review of recent disinformation cases drawn from fact-checking archives, internal monitoring systems, and media literacy resources. Partners identified the most recurrent and impactful disinformation narratives affecting young audiences by applying a shared analytical framework. This framework, designed by Maldita.es, included:
 - A predefined typology of nine disinformation topics.
 - Guidelines to distinguish between claims (specific false statements) and narratives (structured messages that connect claims into a coherent explanatory framework).
 - Prompts to identify target audiences, dissemination tactics, emotional framing, and contextual triggers for each narrative.
 - A shared template to harmonise the format and granularity of each contribution, ensuring comparability across countries.

Given the project's target audience, we placed special emphasis on disinformation strategies that exploit vulnerabilities specific to young people. These include high dependence on social media and alternative platforms; low verification habits and reliance on peers, influencers or family for



information; susceptibility to emotionally charged content linked to identity, health, or moral panic; or exposure to appearance-driven or conspiratorial messages that resonate with adolescent concerns about body image, independence, justice or authority. In reviewing the narratives, partners assessed how these vulnerabilities intersect with broader national dynamics –such as distrust in institutions, politicised media environments, or cultural resistance to ideological diversity.

For each topic, partners provided:

- A contextual summary explaining how disinformation in that area typically manifests in their country.
 - A set of top narratives, each with a short explanatory label and at least one illustrative example (typically a viral hoax or manipulated message documented in their monitoring work).
2. **Insights from stakeholder focus groups:** Each partner conducted an online focus group with stakeholders, including educators, journalists, civil society actors and media literacy professionals. The purpose of these sessions was twofold: (1) to validate the initial analysis of disinformation narratives, and (2) to gather experiential insights into the perceived impact of these narratives on youth, as well as on effective pedagogical responses. All participants were informed of the purpose of the session, and informed consent was obtained before participation, in line with ethical research standards.

Focus groups followed a shared structure:

- Pre-session questionnaire on participants' demographics, media habits, and self-assessed digital skills.
 - Presentation and discussion of 6–7 real examples of disinformation content.
 - Guided reflection on emotional reactions, perceived risks for youth, and media literacy needs.
 - Post-session evaluation of key learnings and suggestions for educational tools.
3. **Comparative analysis:** The data collected was analysed to establish a background map of both transnational narratives and themes, as well as country-specific ones, which will inform the subsequent development of cross-country media literacy strategies and interventions tailored to local audiences.
4. **Integration of complementary sources:** In addition to identifying disinformation narratives, the report summarises the most common scams and the consumption habits of young people in each country. This analysis is based on data provided by project partners following analysis of their databases and focus groups, and is complemented by a review of recent reports and studies on young people's information consumption habits and digital participation.

APPENDIX

A1. Narratives research guidelines

Youth Media Consumption and Disinformation Trends

- This section should include a brief overview of the context in each country in terms of young people's information consumption habits and their perceptions of disinformation, etc. In this way, we will establish a background map that supports the importance of the project and justifies the report.

Guiding questions:

- What are the main sources of information for young people in each country? What platforms are most used (social media, messaging apps, etc.)?
- How do young people perceive the issue of disinformation?
- What are (if any) the unique challenges each country faces regarding youth and disinformation?

***The data should be supported by hyperlinks to their sources (academic, reports, surveys, etc.)*

Mis/disinformation narratives analysis

The sections for each topic should include: (1) an introductory statement that places the topic in its national context and describes how disinformation typically occurs in that area, and (2) a section listing the key narratives identified by partners as most relevant or impactful for young people in each country.

Topics – what to include:

- a) Topic introduction: brief description of key characteristics of disinformation in this topic and main tactics observed (if possible). What are the common features of disinformation in this area in your country?
- b) List of key narratives with specific examples (with links to real content):
 - Guiding questions: What are the most repeated or viral claims?
 - List of 3–6 key narratives relevant to young people
 - Examples (debunked headlines, videos, posts) – including links.

Immigration

- How is immigration-related disinformation characterized in your country? Are there specific groups of immigrants (e.g., nationality, religion, age) that are more frequently targeted? What fears or emotions do these narratives exploit (e.g., security, economic instability, cultural identity)? Are there recurring claims that migrants receive “special treatment” or disproportionate access to public services?

Politics

- What are the most common political narratives that circulate in your country? Are there narratives that discredit political institutions, democracy, or electoral processes? Do these narratives try to create division or apathy among young people toward political participation?

Identity and LGBTQIA+



- *What are the main narratives in your country? Do they target one group more than others? Are there specific events or policies that trigger waves of such disinformation? Are there false claims that associate LGBTQIA+ people with danger, disease or "ideologies"? Are equality or anti-discrimination laws framed as threats to "traditional values" or to children? Are there narratives suggesting LGBTQIA+ people receive unfair advantages or political favouritism?*

Feminism

- *What types of disinformation target women in your country (e.g., women in politics, public life, activism, etc.)? Are there narratives that seek to undermine gender equality movements or paint feminism as a threat? Are specific groups of women (e.g., feminists, trans women, politicians) more frequently targeted? Are women portrayed as incompetent, overprivileged, or morally corrupt in these narratives?*

Climate Change –CC disinformation narratives present alternative explanations for climate phenomena or attempts to delay environmental policies. They can also falsely promote efforts to support climate goals that actually contribute to global warming or contradict mitigation and adaptation measures and are linked to climate obstructionism.

- *What are climate change disinformation goals in your country? What techniques are used to discredit scientific consensus on climate change? Which subtopics accumulate the most disinformation? Are there narratives that deny or downplay the human impact on climate change?*

Health –Messages in this category tend to sow mistrust in scientific and medical institutions and to propose unsubstantiated alternatives for health issues. For example, they tend to question the credibility of medicine, presenting unsupported theories that create confusion or scepticism on issues such as vaccination and food safety.

- *What are the main themes in health-related disinformation in your country? Are there specific alternative health practices that are promoted through disinformation? Do these messages discredit scientific or medical institutions? Are alternative health "influencers" spreading unsupported claims that gain traction among young people?*

***Some clues to identify health and science denialism:*

- *They contradict scientific consensus or promote simple solutions to complex problems.*
- *They use testimonies or unverifiable sources to give credibility to anti-scientific theories.*
- *They manipulate or deny scientific data, such as that which demonstrates the effectiveness of medical treatments or the impacts of climate change.*
- *They tend to sow mistrust in scientific and medical institutions and to propose alternatives without evidence for health issues.*

European Union

- *How is the EU portrayed in disinformation narratives in your country? Are EU policies (e.g., migration, climate, digital regulation) framed as harmful to national interests or*



young people? Are there false claims that the EU limits national sovereignty or imposes “foreign values”?

Scams

- *What types of scams seem to be most frequent targeting young people (crypto, “get rich quick”, fake jobs)? Through what channels do they reach young people or are they disseminated? What techniques are most commonly used (e.g., phishing, vishing, miracle products, smishing, false investment scams, etc.)? Are there examples of scams that misuse influencers’ images, fake authority or create false urgency?*

****Some clues to identify these contents:*

- They promise quick benefits or free products in exchange for personal data or payments in advance.
- They include urgent messages (‘Last chance’) or false guarantees of security (‘Verified by experts’).
- They use famous personalities or impersonate recognised institutions to gain trust.

Conspiracy theories —offer alternative explanations for events or situations, based on the belief that a powerful group is orchestrating hidden actions with sinister or controlling intentions. The conspiracy explanation is presented as the ‘truth’ that others are trying to hide, often defying expert consensus and relying on insufficient, distorted or non-existent evidence. This type of theory is characterised by its resistance to falsification: contrary evidence, or even the absence of evidence, is interpreted as confirmation of its veracity. The result is a closed system of beliefs that appeals more to faith and emotions than to verifiable evidence.

- *What are the most popular conspiracy theories/themes among young people in your country? How do these theories spread and gain traction among this group? Are there any recent local or national events that have sparked a conspiracy theory?*

****Some clues to identify this content:*

- *They present a group or institution as manipulative or controlling without verifiable evidence.*
- *They challenge the general consensus of experts and scientists, suggesting that there is hidden information ‘that they don’t want you to know’.*
- *They use circular reasoning where any contrary evidence is interpreted as part of the conspiracy.*

A2. Focus groups structure

1. Welcome and introduction (5 minutes)

Greetings:

Welcome participants, introduce yourself, and provide a brief overview of the session. Emphasize



that their input will contribute to the validation of the analysis carried out and to an important educational tool aimed at empowering young people against disinformation.

- **Ground Rules:**

- Encourage open and respectful discussions.
- Ensure them of confidentiality and that there are no right or wrong answers.

2. Discussion of disinformation narratives (40 minutes)

Presentation of 6–7 Narrative Examples:

Prepare 6–7 slides that include: visual examples of disinformation narratives (e.g., a specific health myth, and AI image used to deceive, a scam...) and explain how the narratives are found in different contents through time. These should be linked with the narratives you have selected during the analysis.

- **Tip for facilitator:**

- To facilitate the exchange of opinions and give everyone time to participate, it is advisable to work in rooms with small groups.

Guided Discussion on Each Example

For each example, ask key questions:

- Have you seen this or similar content?
- Where did you come across it? e.g., social media, WhatsApp, friends, etc.
- How did it make you feel? Gauge emotional reactions (confusion, fear, anger, etc.) to identify emotional impact.
- How does it affect young people? Which one do you think affects young people the most?
- Have you had any experience with young people related to similar content?
- What skills are necessary to avoid "falling" for this type of content

3. Assessment on Media Literacy and Digital Skills

Brief Questionnaire

This corresponds to the initial form that will be used to register participants.

- Preferred sources of information (e.g., TV, newspapers, online news).
- Confidence in identifying fake news or scams.
- Social media usage: Platforms, frequency, and purpose.
- If they are able to verify disinformation autonomously

4. Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

Thank participants for their time and valuable insights. Briefly explain how their feedback will contribute to the escape room development. Ask if they have any final thoughts or suggestions.

