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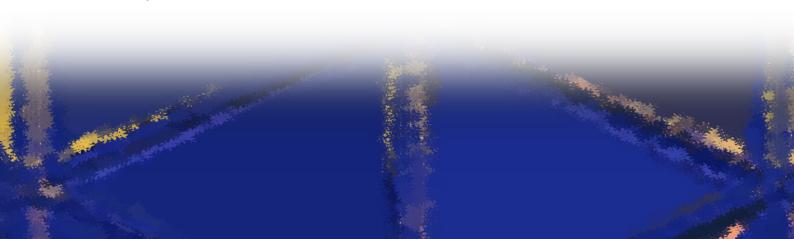
Fact-checking trends in Spain and Portugal

Report

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1. Introduction

1.1   A constant fight for truth

Journalism's main mission has always been to transmit truthful information to citizens. Because of this, interest and concern about the effect of hoaxes, though it has always been evident (Bloch, 1921), has increased significantly with the arrival of the digital society, due to the entry of new actors in the communicative field and the complexity of the societies of the third millennium. The truth, which is often handled and falsified on a massive scale through, for example, the intentional manipulation of images (Arendt, 1968), has become a central topic of debate in the public space in the second decade of the current millennium. The fact that the *Oxford Dictionary* made 'post-truth' its word of the year in 2016 reveals the complexity of the situation.

The emergence of the web, the role of active audiences in the production of messages of all kinds, and the impact of the widespread reach of disinformation across the internet (Castells, 2001) created a new context which caused alarm regarding the dangers of deliberately distorting reality and how it can impact the democratic coexistence of citizens. Warnings of new threats came from different areas of society as a result of numerous cases of large scale disinformation, especially initiatives surrounding the Brexit campaign (Höller, 2021) and Donald Trump's presidential campaign (Allcot & Gentzkou, 2017). Since then, concern has intensified. Technical reports on disinformation and propaganda trends warned of their negative impact on the functioning of the rule of law in the European Union and its member states (Bayer et al., 2021).

Disinformation, previously present though occupying a peripheral place in debates in public spaces, began to become a more central topic of conversation. At the same time, users of social networks were multiplying, transforming public spaces and fueling the platformization of society (van Dijck & Poell, 2015). This intensified the spread of misinformation (Allcott, Gentzkow & Yu, 2019). The media, who were in crisis, made adjustments. They reduced the number of journalists, abolished departments, and reorganized internally, among other things, to survive the negative effects of the 2008 financial crisis (Nützenadel, 2021), something that had eroded their credibility and intensified the loss of quality of the information they disseminated (Gómez-Mompart, Gutiérrez-Lozano & Palau-Sampio, 2015). It also contributed to the participation of some media in the dissemination of denialist hoaxes (Cano-Orón et al., 2021) and introduced more noise into the media ecosystem.

1.2   The need for journalism to reclaim authority

The introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) in technologically-mediated communication processes has facilitated the multiplication of message flows, including both information and disinformation (Bontridder & Poullet, 2021). It has also allowed for the emergence of disinformation initiatives in a context of political and social polarization (Tucker et al., 2018) and added more complexity to a communicative scenario where many citizens have expressed confusion regarding the difficulty in discerning between truthful and false information.

Disinformation and fake news became more prevalent as distrust towards traditional media increased in many countries (Newman et al., 2020). This undermined the authority of

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professional journalism which has always had the ability to determine what is or is not news, what to think about a topic and how to understand it (Carlson, 2017). Indeed, modern cases of fake news exposed certain weaknesses within journalism and its role in society. As such, research has been carried out on the changes and new challenges facing journalism, from the field of Communication as well as other Social Sciences, including both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary studies. In addition to academic research on fake news sites and the drivers of online misinformation (Morosoli, Van Aelst & Esser, 2022), studies have also focused on the causes and consequences of the spread of fake news by mainstream media (Tsfati et al., 2020).

The work of the research community has made it possible to identify the characteristics of the content of intentionally misleading information in the news. These include ideological/partisan bias, the use of negative emotions that provoke anger or fear, long and sensational headlines or the use of informal language, among other things. The tactics employed on social networks are quite similar (Damstra et al, 2021). With the aim of gaining a comprehensive understanding of fake news through the perspective of creators and consumers, effective countermeasures were identified. These included the development of a computational model that considers the characteristics of consumer environments using the principles of social sciences, an understanding of the diversity of news consumers through mental models, and support for transparent access to information and for actions to improve digital media literacy (Kim et al., 2021).

In fact, in recent years the fight against disinformation has provoked two responses. The first is the reinforcement of fact-checking and journalistic literacy (Frau-Meigs, 2022). Secondly, in order to broaden the focus and perspectives of research on disinformation, false messages have been studied as digital objects. This work has demonstrated the need to clarify terminological confusion and establish a new agenda for public and academic debate (Khan, Brohman & Addas, 2022).

1.3   Automation and human talent to combat disinformation in the social media era

With the aim of trying to design automated solutions to detect problematic online content, progress has been made in conceptual approaches and in the identification of the types of online content that are often grouped under the label of "fake news" (Molina, Sundar & Lee, 2019). At the same time, pseudo-media and websites that mimic the format of conventional media offer partisan content based on alternative facts. These sites inject disinformation into the public space (Palau-Sampio & Carratalá, 2022). Developments in technological tools for the intelligent detection of fake news (Meneses-Soilva, Silva & Colaço, 2020) mean greater efficiency in locating disinformation. This is particularly true in the fields of big data and quality data where experts can label information to ensure its veracity (Torabi-Asr & Taboada, 2019).

The fight against deepfakes, one of the newest forms of disinformation, is particularly revealing. It has shown that while the media focuses on training journalists to detect deepfakes, online platforms tend to finance research projects that aim to develop or improve media analysis tools using the latest technology (Vizoso, Vaz-Álvarez & López-García, 2021). Recent advances and experimental research have shown that well-planned

collaboration between humans and algorithms produces good results in detecting fake news and disinformation processes (Snijders et al., 2022).

During the last five years, different voices have warned that one of the biggest challenges faced by the media ecosystem is the unregulated growth of social media platforms and their contribution to a toxic media ecology (Crilley & Gillespie, 2019). At the same time, one of the biggest challenges that journalism faces is the lack of public trust in the field (Fink, 2019). Although the main social media platforms have implemented strategies to minimize the spread of fake news, in the interaction of users with social media content identified or recognized as false, the distrust of some citizens in data fact-checkers is evident, as is the low degree of knowledge of verification processes and the two-dimensional nature – intentional and unintentional – of the exchange of fake news (Ardèvol-Abreu, Delponti & Rodríguez-Wangüemert, 2020).

Journalistic outlets have taken on the dynamic and continuous challenge of strengthening the mechanisms that ensure the quality of their output (Bachmann, Eisenegger & Ingenhoff, 2022). This has been performed within a context in which the tension between reliability and immediacy was forced to be reimagined for a scenario where journalism's authority is largely based on the rapid dissemination of truthful information (Diekerhof, 2021), and in which the technological and social context is favorable for information in real time.

1.4   Fact-checking as a remedy for questionable journalism

Efforts to combat disinformation within this context have fostered the emergence of bodies dedicated to verification, whose models vary in terms of organization, content and verification formulas (Vázquez-Herrero, Vizoso & López-García, 2019). In the Spanish case, this is a relatively recent phenomenon, as the two oldest and most popular examples, Maldita.es and Newtral, were both created in 2018 (Almenar et al., 2022). In Portugal, the digital newspaper *Observador* has had a fact-checking department since 2015. Furthermore, the newspaper *Público* carried out its first experiments in 2016, though it wasn't until 2021 that it was first subjected to international verification rules. Polígrafo, the organization dedicated only to verification, was born in 2018 (Oliveira, 2020). The efforts of both mainstream media (whose reputation and credibility are associated with their trajectory (Villafañe, Ortiz-de-Guinera-Ayala & Martín-Sáez, 2020)) and digital natives (Sixto-García, Rodríguez-Vázquez & López- García, 2021) to strengthen verification and, in some cases, create specific verification departments, have been notable. Furthermore, some within the field have called for educommunication actions to be taken to improve the training of citizens in digital and media skills. All of this has been occurring against a backdrop of recent research on the complexity of misinformation that reveals how subjective perceptions lead to people believing in fake news (Martínez-Costa et al., 2022).

At the beginning of the 20th century, before journalist and fact-checker were two different roles, journalistic outlets began to create departments to eradicate errors and guarantee product quality. In particular, this was done to combat the rise of yellow journalism. Internal procedures for verifying facts before publication first emerged as a distinctive feature of American news magazines in the 1920s and 1930s (Graves & Amazeen, 2019).

Archetypal data verification models from before the appearance of digital journalism in North America are Time[1] and The New Yorker (Young, 2006). Der Spiegel is an example from Europe. Several fact-checking organizations have emerged in recent years, both in English and Spanish. In the former, the first organizations dedicated to publicly assessing the truth of political claims appeared in the United States in the early 2000s, and in some European countries similar organizations emerged in the second decade of the millennium (Graves & Cherubini, 2016). In the latter case, many initiatives in Spanish started out between 2014 and 2016 and remain active (Vizoso & Herrero, 2019). Several networks have also been created, such as the International Fact-Checking Network from the Poynter Institute.

That disinformation strategies were gaining prominence during a global pandemic meant the intensification of hoaxes regarding health issues. With this in mind, Communication Sciences researchers increased their efforts to better understand the hidden details of disinformation, on how to unmask it and better to combat it. At the same time, more research was carried out on how to strengthen journalistic verification and bolster the authority of the institution of journalism as a guarantor of truthful information, as well as research on verification initiatives.

Government authorities in several countries[2] adopted measures, including those at European Union level. The realization that disinformation has become a problem for contemporary democratic societies led the EU to adopt policies that make citizens themselves partially responsible for the promotion of media literacy. This strategy is characterized by a model designed to combat disinformation based on a set of multilevel solutions (Sádaba & Salaverría, 2022).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was joint action by the European authorities. The Commission and the High Representative launched the proposed actions within the framework of a long-term approach as part of the European Action Plan for Democracy, which included legislative and other types of measures[3]. The European Commission tackles online disinformation with an integrated strategy[4].

Since the beginning of the pandemic, disinformation related to COVID-19 has played a role in the handling and development of the situation. Data shows that the internet, social networks and other media have contributed to the spread of misleading information (Ferreira-Cáceres et al., 2022). Studies have shown that hoaxes about coronavirus were

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[1] Time's first fact-checker was Nanci Ford, in 1923. The phrase "fact-checker" was published in a Time advertisement in a 1938 edition of Colliers, as Time itself has published in a paper. https://time.com/4858683/fact-checking-history/. Consulted: 04/11/2022.

[2] A guide to actions against disinformation around the world can be consulted via the Poynter Institute's monitoring of the measures implemented by different countries. https://www.poynter.org/ifcn/anti-misinformation-actions/. Consulted: 04/11/2022.

[3] The Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions to tackle disinformation on COVID-19 is from June 2020. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020JC0008. Consulted: 04/11/2022.

[4] The European Commission addresses the spread of misinformation and disinformation online to ensure the protection of European values and democratic systems. Their actions can be consulted at: https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/online-disinformation. Consulted: 04/11/2022.

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mostly spread on social media. Within these networks, in particular those that are more closed and private such as WhatsApp, four types of hoaxes were identified: jokes, exaggerations, decontextualization and deception (Salaverría et al., 2020).

Data showed that Spanish citizens were interested in information related to coronavirus. However, it also indicated that Spanish people didn't completely trust or view as entirely credible the media, social networks or instant messaging applications, due to the amount of false news they spread (Fernández-Torres, Almansa-Martínez & Chamizo-Sánchez, 2021). In Spain, hoaxes about science and health often contained the following characteristics: For one, information was usually text based and centered on scientific research or health management. Secondly, the information was based on some kind of untruth, though included real sources. Lastly, the stories often had international reach, being disseminated through social networks (León et al., 2022).

In Portuguese-speaking countries, hoaxes also had a strong impact and disinformation regarding the virus was very prevalent (Sousa et al., 2022). The verification of journalistic information has been intense. As the pandemic progressed, rumors about the virus became more complex, which meant more fact-checking actions were carried out: a positive development (López-García, Costa-Sánchez & Vizoso, 2021). Proof of this is the fact that, during the first six months of the pandemic, in southern European countries three out of every five hoaxes were successfully debunked by fact-checkers (Magallón-Rosa & Sánchez-Duarte, 2021).

Verification organizations and media verification departments were very active and demonstrated their effectiveness during the pandemic. This has strengthened efforts to seek contributions from scientific research to advance the fight against disinformation. In fact, it has been consistently found, since the earliest research on the topic, that fact-checking in journalism (as a confirmation) aids the media literacy of both users and journalists (Lotero-Echeverri et al., 2018). Furthermore, it is apparent that the innovation of journalistic tools is necessary (Schifferes et al., 2014) to support the verification of social media content by journalists, since networks act as sources in much of the news produced in newsrooms (Brandtzaeg et al., 2016).

One such tool for automatically rating the journalistic credibility of social media content has been Truthmeter (https://truthmeter.mk/), which helps evaluate the credibility of social media sources (Fletcher, 2017). Research from the field of Communication also confirmed the difficulties presented in different journalistic cultures when introducing new verification protocols in professional work (Edwardsson, Al-Saqaf & Nygren, 2021), though this isn't something that hinders the expansion of verification initiatives. These initiatives come both from departments created by the media, and from independent fact-checking organizations that, in general, are small but multidisciplinary teams, with high levels of transparency and which are constantly improving (Moreno-Gil et al., 2022).

Verification initiatives are multiplying, and their characteristics and work procedures are diverse, both in terms of their models and in their use of technological tools at a time when the authority of the media has been eroded, and the phenomenon of fake news has once again undermined its standing in society (Ricoy, Sánchez-Martínez & Feliz-Murias, 2019). This situation also requires journalists to do even more to develop arguments that re-legitimize their credibility (Carlson, 2018).

2. How was this report created?

To study the phenomenon of fact-checking trends in Spain and Portugal, two phases of analysis were established.

In the first stage, an identification mapping of both countries' existing fact-checking platforms, agencies, and media outlets that have a specific verification section or team, was performed. In regards to selection, those media outlets, whether offline or online, with the highest weekly usage percentage according to the *Digital News Report* (2022) from the Reuters Institute, were considered. In the Spanish case, these were found to be Antena 3, El País, elDiario.es, laSexta and RTVE while in Portugal Observador and Público were used.

Regarding fact-checkers and news agencies in Spain, Maldita, Newtral and Verificat were considered. So too was AFP Factual, the verification project of the France-Press Agency, and EFE Verifica, the EFE Agency's specific verification initiative. In Portugal, Polígrafo and the Lusa news agency were considered. It should be remembered that though Lusa has a website to combat fake news, it does not carry out fact-checking work, but instead publishes articles on the matter, whether current news, reports or academic pieces. The sample was agreed upon by the research teams from Spain and Portugal, as well as by the coordination team of IBERIFIER.

Once a deep analysis of the verification practices in both countries was obtained, a qualitative analysis of an exploratory-descriptive nature was performed on each of the initiatives according to the following items:

- Descriptive data of the initiative (name, date of creation of the verification project, medium, spaces/programs in which verification is applied, level of specialization and ownership/type of entity).
- Links with initiatives related to transparency, cooperation and quality.
- Evidence of internationalization and association with quality standards.
- Corporate marketing and engagement strategies.
- Training and media literacy initiatives.

In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were done with all the entities that make up the study sample (except for the Lusa agency because it does not carry out verification as such). The questionnaires included open questions and Likert scales of numerical assessment, and were structured into five large sections:

Section 1. The importance of verification in today's society and its coexistence with journalism

Section 2. Synergies and the production of information

- The origins of the verified topics.
- The influence of virality.
- Agreements with media, agencies and fact-checkers.
- The quality of sources and transparency policy.

- The issuance of verdicts.
- Mobile journalism's role in verification.

Section 3. Audience involvement

- The importance of citizen participation.
- Social assessment of transparency, cooperation and quality initiatives.
- The importance of media literacy.
- Marketing and user-acquisition strategies and their impacts on editorial independence.

Section 4. Verification trends

- The use of technology in verification (AI, mobile journalism and content automation).

Section 5. Trends to improve democratic and social qualities

- The verification of branded content.
- Platforms, networks and distribution channels for verified information. Consumption metrics.
- The importance of ethics and deontology in verification. Self-regulation and co-regulation.

All interviews were recorded. In each interview, informed consent was obtained from the participants for the recording of images and audio, as well as authorization for use by the IBERIFIER project. In writing the report, responses were anonymized as much as possible.

The data collected from the exploratory analysis and interviews provide valuable insight into the current fact-checking trends in Spain and Portugal, while identifying the main challenges and future challenges that correspondents and fact-checkers will have to face in the coming years.

Throughout the investigation, the most notable scientific literature in the field of disinformation was consulted to detect or locate possible trends, proposals or lines of action to be taken into account when preparing this report. The summary of the most significant findings appears in the introduction to this study. Lastly, in this context of searching for an antidote to disinformation, the role played by IBERIFIER is also noted.

3. Verification initiatives in Spain and Portugal

3.1 Spain

3.1.1 Fact-checkers

Maldita.es

Fact-checker	Maldita.es	
Year created	2018	
General or specialized	General	
Organization model	Non-profit foundation, based on crowdfunding in 2019. Originally established as an association.	

Maldita.es is a non-profit foundation that creates journalistic tools "*para que no te la cuelen*" ("so you don't get caught out"). Under the direction of Clara Jiménez and Julio Montes, Maldita.es does journalistic work in information verification, literacy and technological development. In 2021, they formed a limited company, of which the foundation is the sole administrator, to manage the activity derived from the development of a chatbot for WhatsApp. They value transparency and collaboration, forming part of advisory committees for regulation at the European level, and taking part in research projects and the creation of *Factchequeado* (Fact-checked).

Involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality

In their own words, Maldita.es exists in journalism "so you don't get caught out". Transparency at the content level is reflected in the news topic selection policy. The virality and dangerousness of a false story are taken into account to weigh the benefits of disproving the story against the risk of amplifying it. Thematic sections determine the main areas of interest. These include science, technology, migration, feminism, climate and education. The sources used are identified in each verification. Also, links are provided when possible and there are no examples of sponsored content.

Within the *Maldito Bulo* section, the methodology appears as a multiple verification process with four steps. The first is selection. The second, verification by a team member. Third comes auditing: the presentation of the resolved case to the rest of the team through a Telegram group to raise questions about the verification. Lastly comes the editors' voting and publication. *Maldita Ciencia* focuses on scientific literature and consulting experts, making use of *Maldita Alimentación*'s external advisory board. *Maldito Dato* in fact influences the public statements of Spanish politicians. The process begins by selecting the statements or messages. Then databases, documents and open sources are consulted, and experts are contacted. This includes contacting the person who made the declaration and providing 12 working hours for them to respond. In both *Maldita Ciencia* and *Maldito Dato,* the journalist who verifies, the person who coordinates the section, and a senior editor or editor-in-chief are all part of the intervention process. They must reach an agreement for the verification to be published.

Establishing and strengthening relationships with audiences is of particular importance in Maldita.es' projects. The creation of a community, the fostering of citizen participation and the construction of useful mechanisms for society are all sought. Projects have web forms so that users can make their queries in various thematic sections, as well as via the general portal, telephone, or by contacting profiles on platforms and social networks (Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube, Telegram, TikTok, LinkedIn). One of its most notable initiatives is the creation of a chatbot for WhatsApp that allows the user to automatically verify hoaxes. This was launched in July 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The system compares the content received with the Maldita.es database and generates an automatic response on if it has already been previously verified. In addition, the chatbot can provide the user with the fake story or audio of the day and provide access to organizational resources.

Regarding internal quality systems, there is no record of the existence of a self-regulation code, editorial statute or style book, although there is an ethical code and neutrality policy (stating a commitment to nonpartisanship as a necessary condition for credibility and trust), as well as the constitutional statutes of the foundation. There is also a document of standards for raising awareness, public policy and lobbying activities. These are to be applied when it is necessary for the organization to take a stance in a public debate related to their mission. Maldita.es has a rectification policy that defines how to proceed, assigning the textual label "CORRECTION". In some cases, an archived version of the original article is retained for transparency reasons.

Internationalization and association with quality standards

In its brief history, Maldita.es has established a network of collaborations and initiatives, starting with joining the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) in 2018. Also created were the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN), the EDMO and IBERIFIER observatories, as well as projects from the European Media and Information Fund, EU Hybnet and initiatives with Intermón Oxfam and other organizations. Particularly noteworthy is the creation of the fact-checking initiative *Factchequeado* against disinformation in the United States, following the forging of an alliance with the Argentine organization Chequeado.

Maldita.es has worked with technology companies such as Meta, offering their services to help limit the impact of disinformation through Facebook's external verification program since 2019. This has also been done through the chatbot and with queries regarding potentially false content on WhatsApp. According to data from their website, 34.2% of Maldita.es' 2022 revenue came from these collaborations with technology companies. In addition, they have collaborated in activities with Google, X and other organizations such as the Open Society Foundation or FECYT.

Corporate marketing and engagement strategies

The organization has a community of "*malditos* and *malditas*" who subscribe to the brand with different payment methods. However, they also secure the collaboration of people who are experts in languages or other fields that can be useful for verification: those who have, what they call, "superpowers." The engagement campaign is granted its own dedicated space and reports that there are more than 40,000 people in the community, contributing

4.3% of the income, according to 2022 data on its website. There is also a mobile app, newsletters and collaborative projects with media outlets such as Onda Cero, elDiario.es and Radio Nacional de España (The National Radio of Spain).

Regarding corporate transparency, Maldita.es presents diversified sources of income, with the main contribution coming from technological alliances (34.2%), followed by income derived from public tenders and subsidies (23.5%), as well as scholarships and prizes (20.9%). The accounting is detailed and includes the balance sheets for previous years, as well as an estimate of expenses and income for the current year.

Training and media literacy initiatives

Maldita.es is one of the entities promoting the Master's degree in journalistic investigation, new narratives, data, fact-checking and transparency at the Rey Juan Carlos University of Madrid. It has a section dedicated to education (*Maldita Educa*) with resources for verification and training. They organize courses, workshops and conferences. The schedule is available here.

Newtral

Fact-checker	Newtral	
Year created	2018	
General or specialized	General	
Organizational model	Privately owned, belonging to Newtral Media Audiovisual	

Newtral is an audiovisual production startup company. It has a single shareholder, the journalist Ana Pastor. Newtral also hosts Transparentia, a database containing the salaries and assets of public officials. The company has three areas of business:

a) The production of programs for television and platforms, including *El Objetivo*, the first Spanish program based on data verification, broadcast by laSexta, and the first Spanish team member of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN).
b) New narratives and journalistic innovation through fact-checking.
c) Artificial intelligence protocols.

Involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality

Content transparency is guaranteed, as stated on their website, by the fact that the team is characterized by equal opportunities and by diversity in age, gender, nationality, marital status, sexual orientation, beliefs and physical condition. They contend that this setting is conducive to the flourishing of a diverse range of opinions, and that this fosters creativity, innovation and meaning. The sources used to prepare the verifications appear listed at the end of the texts. In the first instance, they utilize official public sources. The use of private investigations or reports that do not come from public institutions must be justified and treated with caution.

The Newtral project is focused on data, fact-checking and public transparency. They describe their work as serious and rigorous, conducted by independent and neutral professionals who pursue honesty and objectivity in public discourse. Specifically, they define their methodology as precise and exhaustive, and specify a series of phases in the analysis process. Firstly, they carry out what they call "listening", that is, collecting statements from politicians on any platform. Next, they select those statements that are of interest or relevance based on purely journalistic criteria such as, for example, the significance of the author or the statement, or the intent behind the words. Opinions that are part of standard political rhetoric are excluded from verification processes. Thirdly, in the verification phase, public and official data is consulted to contextualize the information. The communication offices of political leaders are contacted to request clarifications or additional information that may clarify a piece of information. In the event that the evidence collected by the team does not allow for a clear classification of the content, an explanatory text is published. This contains everything that the team has uncovered in the *"Nos preguntáis por…"* ("You ask us about…") section.

This verification process passes through three different filters within the team before publication. Then, after a peer review, it is a coordinator who checks the verification before receiving the approval of the editor-in-chief. Depending on the veracity of the information, four types of verdict can be assigned: true, half-true, misleading or false. Once the team of

fact-checkers finishes investigating the content, it publishes an explanatory article signed by an editor detailing the sources used and the expert, technical, official and/or public references consulted.

Newtral also has a designated data team, Newtral Data, dedicated to converting data into journalistic stories using programming and artificial intelligence. This team creates tools to monitor reality, such as a pension calculator and a public salary search engine for mayors. They also automate some data scraping and analysis processes and dump the datasets into the Github profile.

Regarding audience interaction, Newtral was a pioneer in Spain in implementing an on-demand verification service that works through a WhatsApp chatbot (though it is also possible to request verifications by email or through social networks). As a point of contact for the public, they provide the WhatsApp number, an email, a landline and the postal address. That the public help in detecting typos and spelling mistakes is seen as very desirable.

All of the above mechanisms can also be used to report errors. In fact, their rectification policy is advertised as the following: "if we make a mistake during verification, we will transparently rectify it as soon as possible." The correction policy is divided into three parts: correction, modification and the updating of data. All articles subject to modification contain a visible and detailed warning that is published in the subtitle. An asterisk indicates to the reader where in the text the modification occurred and, before the list of sources, it explains what the changes were and why they were necessary. If considered necessary, a specific article explaining the rectification is provided.

Internationalization and association with quality standards

With respect to internationalization networks and association with quality standards, Newtral highlight their commitment to the IFCN and a link to their Code of Principles, as well as to a form in which any user can file a complaint for non-compliance with these standards.

Regarding collaborations, Newtral's clients include Atresmedia, Meta, Google, TikTok and FAD. Newtral works with Meta as members of the IFCN in its third-party verification program with the objective of reviewing content that users or the platform believe could be false. In addition, Meta collaborates with Newtral both technically and financially through the free WhatsApp verification service. Since 2020, Newtral has been working with TikTok to combat false information, advising the company to engage its users in the fight against disinformation and to prevent the disclosure of unverified content.

In terms of internal quality mechanisms, there is no evidence of self-regulation codes, ethical standards or style books. The neutrality policy is based on the independence of journalists, who have no relationship with any political party, private lobby or similar organization. They are committed to ensuring the integrity of the content shared on corporate social networks and do not support any political movement or share organized or partisan campaigns. These journalists do not engage in activism or defend ideologies.

As an audiovisual production company, Newtral produces *El Objetivo*, the laSexta program which gave birth to the company, the documentary series *Nevenka* for Netflix, and the

program *Dónde estabas entonces*, which was also broadcast on laSexta. In addition, Newtral has co-produced a series for HBO, as well as the documentary *Los Borbones: una familia real*. The episodes for this can be found on Atresplayer.

Corporate marketing and engagement strategies

Newtral's marketing strategy states that the company has only one shareholder, the journalist Ana Pastor, and they emphasize that "no other person, company or business organization is part of its shareholders."

Newtral stresses corporate transparency inside and out. As such, they view accountability as important. They offer information on income and benefits in terms of actions and results, investment in talent, audiovisual production, the digital area, and education and media literacy. It is noteworthy that, in 2019, Newtral received support from the European Union to study the viability of an artificial intelligence project applied to verification (Horizon 2020 SME). The company closed the 2021 financial year with revenues of 4.9 million euros and a profit of 158,605.37 euros. Their corporate marketing strategies are based on three fundamental pillars:

1. A single shareholder means the company can maintain economic and shareholder independence.
2. No subsidies.
3. Boost client portfolios.

Furthermore, the *Planeta Finito* (Finite Planet) section is a commitment to social responsibility.

In addition, one of the WhatsApp chatbot options aims to attract users by subscribing to the newsletter, which is free.

Training and media literacy initiatives

Training initiatives include the paid internship program for university students (there are agreements in place with 13 universities) and the delivery of courses and conferences in public and private universities such as the Carlos III University of Madrid, the Complutense University and the Polytechnic University of Valencia. Newtral also has its hand in various higher education courses. For example, there is the Newtral Master's at CEU San Pablo University in Digital Verification, Fact-Checking and Data Journalism, as well as the Summer Course at El Escorial titled Fact-checking journalism and the verification of fake news. There is a further fact-checking course at the University of Barcelona, as well as fact-checking workshops which provide training on verification processes, technology and innovation.

In 2019, to help promote media literacy Newtral launched Newtral Educación, aimed at contributing to further critical thinking in schools, institutes, universities and other training centers. The company has also participated in various research projects to combat disinformation at the universities of Barcelona, Cardiff and Bologna, among others. Newtral

have an email address so that people can request that they provide training at universities, colleges and high schools.

Verificat

Fact-checker	Verificat
Year created	2019
General or specialized	General
Organizational model	Associació Verificat. Non-profit organization.

verificat

Verificat is the first fact-checking platform in Catalonia. It is a non-profit association founded in 2019 to fight disinformation and manipulation online through data verification. They specialize in Catalan politics, hate speech and disinformation related to science. The organization provides an extensive program of media literacy educational activities, via Verificat Escola, aimed at high school and university students. These programs seek to further the training of public administration and citizens in general.

Involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality

Verificat's specialization comes from its geographical location. As the first verification platform in Catalonia, its main purpose is to monitor power through Catalan politics (the politics section), hate speech (the migration section) and disinformation on health and climate change (the science section). They clearly define what is verifiable for their organization, stating that political discourse on social networks, as long as it has public interest, is verifiable and viral. At the same time, the organization does not verify electoral promises, opinions or private conversations. Regarding sources, Verificat's transparency policy states that they must be identified. If an anonymous source is used in the process, the information that it provides cannot be verified if it cannot be contrasted with other sources. Furthermore, the sources consulted are included in the publications. Links are provided to the documents or evidence behind the arguments.

No internal self-regulation codes, bodies like the advisory board, or documents such as a code of ethics or style book, were found. However, reference is made to the role of the fact-checking team as a filter prior to the publication of a verification. There is also a neutrality policy that prevents members of the organization from being linked to political parties or publicly expressing a political position. In terms of other internal quality assurance mechanisms, Verificat has a rectification policy, as evidenced in the corrections. These are listed in a section of the website. A note is also included at the end of each corrected publication.

The methodology details the steps taken to verify information. These include the selection and evaluation of relevance, identification of origin and sources, contextualization and classification. The verification is reviewed by the fact-checking team and must be approved by at least three members for publication. There are five classifications: true, half-true, misleading, false and unverifiable. This decision is translated on a visual and chromatic scale, in addition to being superimposed on the foremost verification image.

Several channels have been enabled to strengthen Verificat's relationship with their audience, serving mainly as spaces to suggest verifications and corrections. A WhatsApp profile and email accounts mean that citizens can get in touch with the organization. To

further expand the scope of their activity, Verificat are present on the social networks Facebook, X and Instagram.

Internationalization and association with quality standards

Verificat is involved in several international organizations such as IBERIFIER and the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO). It is a signatory of the Poynter Institute's IFCN Code of Principles since 2020. At the moment, it is not included in the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN) consortium. Its associative strategy includes several projects with other institutions, such as *Las mentiras intoxican el planeta* (Lies poison the planet) with Kinzen and the C3 Climate Change Center (alongside Universitat Rovira i Virgilli and supported by IFCN and Meta) and *Las mentiras amenazan la salud* (Lies threaten health), a collaboration with the Barcelona Institute for Global Health and supported by Google News Initiative and Aleteia. Verificat is also developing a project funded by the European Media and Information Fund on scientific misinformation in podcasts and YouTube channels. In terms of finance, there is evidence of collaboration with entities such as Barcelona City Council, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area Transparency Agency, the Center for Media, Data and Society (CEU Democracy Institute) and the United States Embassy in Madrid.

Corporate marketing and engagement strategies

Strategies here are limited as the organization's model is not one that revolves around paid subscription. Instead, they establish a way to raise donation income and publish a weekly newsletter, advertising collaborations with companies and networks, such as with media outlets or different institutions that finance projects. In this sense, corporate transparency is reflected in the presentation of financing sources and the origin of income, as well as in the public availability of annual financial reports as a form of accountability.

Training and media literacy initiatives

The website clearly indicates that, for Verificat, the fight against disinformation begins with training. Thus, *Verificat Escola* (Verificat School) is the section dedicated to media literacy through workshops for different audiences: at sites of secondary education, university education, public administrations and for citizens in general. The Infodèmia project was launched due to the misinformation circulating during the COVID-19 pandemic, instructing the population on how to filter information and apply basic techniques that reduce the effects of bad information. Desfake is a program designed to work in the classroom with teenagers, utilizing TikTok videos. It has the support of FECYT and focuses on reinforcing digital skills to improve how the reliability of information is assessed.

3.1.2 Media outlets with a section dedicated to verification

Antena 3 Noticias

Media outlet	Antena 3
Verification project	Verifica A3N
Year craeted	2019
Genreal or specialized	General
Media platform	Television and website
Spaces/programs	*Espejo Público* *Tu Tiempo* *Antena Abierta*

The **Verifica A3N** project was born in 2019 with a twofold objective. Firstly, to clarify false or partially false information distributed widely through social networks or messaging systems. Secondly, to provide correct and confirmed data. At the time, this verification space existed on television and on the web, and had its own profiles on social networks such as Facebook and X. In each space, the public were made aware of false content. Here, internet hoaxes are identified and dismantled. The prevalence of hoaxes during the pandemic led Antena 3 Noticias to dedicate a section of the website to the updating of daily content. This space was converted into television content in 2020 via the program *Espejo Público*. In 2021, this trend continued with other informative programs such as *Tu Tiempo* by Roberto Brasero. In November 2021, the #VerificaA3N magazine was first released through the social application Flipboard.

Involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality

The television program *Espejo Público* announced its verification section A3 Verifica, led by journalist Patricia Escalona, to combat the hoaxes circulating on social networks. Though this initiative emerged on the web, it later had a presence on television programming and on social networks.

On the Antena 3 News website, under the hashtag #VerificaA3N, all information that has gone through a verification process is published. The background of the fake story or misinformation is explained in an informative piece and, later, using official sources, the correct data is provided.

The negation or verification of information by providing audiovisual or textual resources that come from original sources indicates a high level of transparency. In the television program *Espejo Público*, directed by journalist Susana Griso, Patricia is given the opportunity to succinctly expose the falseness of the content presented. The hashtag #VerificaA3N appears on the screen, a sign of the medium's commitment to extending the content verification policy to social networks. Indeed, they have a presence on X, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, LinkedIn, YouTube and TikTok. One of the novelties of this section is the prevalence of audio as an audiovisual resource on the social network X. The week's most prominent false headlines are shared on this platform, as well as other false information that has been circulating across social media.

Furthermore, Antena 3 encourages the audience to participate in the verification of information that they consider false or misleading. For this, they provide different channels through which users can send content that they want verified via the official profiles of @A3Noticias and @EspejoPúblico, with the hashtag #VerificaA3N.

As an internal quality assurance mechanism, the rectification policy is based on clearly identifying the error, correcting it in the shortest possible time and republishing it in the same format as the original text. The corrections must make clear what information was originally incorrect, the time at which the correction was made and whether the piece is an update of a text that previously contained an error.

Internationalization and association with quality standards

Although no concrete alliances have been forged with other associations or quality standards, some information published on the website is relevant. The initiatives of other verification organizations are shared. For example, a collaborative map to monitor the conflict of Ukraine, managed by the Center for Information Resilience (CIR), is featured. It is a resource that was born as a result of the collaboration between the CIR and Bellingcat, Mnemonic and Conflict Intelligence Team.

In its codes and principles of corporate responsibility, Atresmedia assumes responsibility for their content and commercial communications. Also, the importance of paying attention to the accessibility of information and transparency is stressed. The content policy insists on the need to value impartiality, freedom of expression, plurality and the protection of the most vulnerable groups.

Corporate marketing and engagement strategies

On its website, Atresmedia affirms its commitment to truthfulness and rigor, and highlights the creation of initiatives aimed at tackling disinformation. In addition, Antena 3 News leads the rankings in credibility and trust among Spanish media according to the *Digital News Report* (2023).

Training and media literacy initiatives

Levanta la cabeza (Raise your head) was launched in 2018 and became one of Atresmedia's primary training and media literacy initiatives. It is part of the group's set of corporate responsibility projects and seeks to promote the responsible use of technology. As part of this, and in collaboration with Newtral Educación, there exists a digital verification course for middle and high school students, training them in how to question the information that they consume daily via their screens. Within the framework of this wider project, a web application was developed, though it is now inactive. It was aimed at parents with children between 10 and 17 years old to help them establish protocols for the safe use of electronic devices.

In addition, the Atresmedia Foundation dedicates space to the field of Media Literacy (AMI) of children and young people. In particular, they want to ensure that the youth can consume content in a way that is critical, safe and responsible.

elDiario.es

Media outlet	elDiario.es
Verification project	El Cazabulos
Year created	2017
General or specialized	General
Media platform	Digital press
Spaces/programs	El Cazabulos

El Cazabulos is an online space created in 2017 by the digital native newspaper elDiario.es. According to the main website, the space was originally created with the purpose of "verifying data, catching lies and dismantling hoaxes." In their words, the goal is not "about going after other media outlets for their errors, but rather about detecting deliberate lies that are thrown into the public debate to manipulate the situation." This space has not updated its content since 2020.

Involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality

The transparency of the content is evidenced by the fact that the information published in the El Cazabulos section is supported by official sources. Headlines are usually preceded by the word "no", with the aim of highlighting the falseness of the information previously disseminated by other sources. However, the information is not broken down into categories. Methodologically, a certain degree of transparency is also evident in the publishing of links to original data, and of certain sources that help understand the verification process.

The medium complies with the law that regulates the right to rectification as stated in article 50 of the statute of elDiario.es. This is the document that governs the operation of the editorial office, its rights and obligations as a member of the elDiario.es team, as well as those of the partners. Since launching, elDiario.es' editorial team has been involved in shaping this format, working alongside social researchers and other anti-verification projects such as *Maldito Bulo*.

El Cazabulos' use of social networks to generate audience interaction is outstanding. The official X account and the Facebook page @elcazabulos consistently encourage audience involvement. As such, they are the main channels of public participation.

Internationalization and association with quality standards

elDiario.es has taken part in initiatives such as Comprobado, a media network designed to resist the spread of fake news during the electoral processes in Spain. The project has been led by Maldita.es and First Draft News, pioneers in journalistic work on disinformation in Europe and America. elDiario.es is one of the 16 media outlets to participate in this unprecedented collaborative effort in Spain. The objective of the project was to verify politicians' statements, public discourse and other content related to the electoral campaigns that circulated and went viral on social networks or WhatsApp.

On October 9, 2022, elDiario.es presented the first draft of a statute that sought to administer operations from an editorial and economic point of view. The director, Ignacio Escolar, encouraged partners to commit to the creation of this document in which he pledged to defend independence, quality and consolidation over short-term economic benefit. In December 2022, the composition of the first Governing Committee of elDiario.es was endorsed by more than 10,000 members of the newspaper.

elDiario.es' statute recognizes members as "subjects with rights and not just readers, clients or subscribers". The somewhat unusual proposal of "shared sovereignty" between parties is even proposed. Title III, which recognizes the rights and duties of this community, affirms the right to access information transparency, starting with the audited accounts. Not only this, but the right to vote, via a binding vote that entails the appointment of a new director, also appears. In addition, the right to participate, regardless of any future reform of the same statute, and management's obligation to respond within the deadline, are also stated.

Corporate marketing and engagement strategies

elDiario.es' membership recruitment campaign is the medium's primary loyalty strategy. Three types of user subscriptions can be seen on the website. One package offers two free train tickets with the company Renfe. The benefits of the various subscription packages are outlined. This includes access to all content without restrictions, a reading experience that is advertisement-free, the previewing of content, access to the director's newsletter and the *Al Día* newsletter, prominent placing in the comments, participation in meetings organized and tickets/discounts for cultural and/or gastronomic activities.

 The elDiario.es editorial blog posts all the relevant news about the media project, such as the launch of their own newsletters or podcasts, magazines and awards. It also provides information regarding gatherings and meet-ups organized by elDiario.es.

Training and media literacy initiatives

elDiario.es has participated in various initiatives in cooperation with universities, media outlets and other organizations. Alongside the Carlos III University, they promoted a political journalism course in 2022 under the title "Journalistic tools to decipher the message of politicians." Journalists such as Esther Palomera, the newspaper's political columnist, and Ignacio Escolar have aided in this training. In addition, elDiario.es is one of the collaborators, along with Maldita.es, in the Master's in Journalistic Research, New Narratives, Data, Fact-checking and Transparency at the Rey Juan Carlos University.

Head of the company, Ignacio Escolar, has acted as a moderator in different meetings, such as *How does change happen? The street revolt in Latin America*. From protest to proposal'. This was the fourth debate within the *Chile's election* cycle organized by Oxfam and Fundación Avina.

The digital native newspaper has also collaborated in the Second Iberian-American Journalism Meeting, in collaboration with MDIF and Casa América, to talk with Spanish and Latin American media outlets about the challenges of reporting during a pandemic.

El País

Media outlet	El País
Verification project	El Tragabulos
Year created	2017
General or specialized	General
Media platform	Digital press
Spaces/programs	El Tragabulos

EL PAÍS

El Tragabulos was a section of the *Verne* supplement intended to debunk hoaxes and identify fake stories that became viral on the internet and social networks. Although the service is not currently active, it served as an interesting tool for verifying specialized content for years.

Involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality

El Tragabulos section appeared on El País' main website under the title *Bulos* (Hoaxes). The first debunking of a fake story was made on April 14, 2017 and the last instance of information being verified was August 7, 2020. A year after its launch, the newspaper joined The Trust Project, an international consortium that affirmed a commitment to transparency, accuracy, inclusion and impartiality.

All the information that was published in the *Bulos* section was done so by the author. It was signed by El País journalists who rigorously explained the nature of the false information that was going viral. In their texts, original sources were also included, thus allowing the reader to verify the contents. As a way to channel audience participation, an email address was provided (eltragabulos@verne.es) for users to forward information chains of dubious origin that they had seen on social networks. *El Tragabulos* was present on the social network Facebook and on the instant messaging channel Telegram (https://t.me/tragabulos).

Internationalization and association with quality standards

El País is linked with The Trust Project, an international media association that establishes standards of trust and works with technological platforms to bolster journalism's commitment to transparency, accuracy, inclusion and impartiality, so that readers can make informed decisions.

Corporate marketing and engagement strategies

El País' engagement and marketing strategies include campaigns to attract subscribers, which have been carried out over the last few years. Particularly noteworthy is the campaign that included the motto *Suscríbete a los hechos* (Subscribe to the facts) as part of the launch of the digital subscription model. This initiative sought to connect the audience with the most important topics published by the newspaper. Through the campaign, as the newspaper announced at the time on its website, the aim was to highlight the work of El País as a bulwark against disinformation.

laSexta

Media outlet	laSexta	
Verification Project	Pruebas de verificación	
Year created	2015	
General or specialized	General	
Media platform	Television	
Spaces/programs	*El Objetivo*	

Ana Pastor created **El Objetivo** in laSexta as a television program based on data journalism and the verification of political discourse. In 2018, the International Fact-checking Network (IFCN) awarded her the International Award for the Best Audiovisual Project of fact-checking journalism.

Involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality

Due to low audience numbers, Ana Pastor's *El Objetivo* was cancelled by laSexta in January 2023 after running for almost ten years. It is considered to be the first Spanish television program to verify a live electoral debate. However, the program still has a presence on the internet, serving as a reference when it comes to the application of content verification. What's more, specific special broadcasts of the television program are broadcast.

With content transparency in mind, a "verification team", which can be consulted on the website, was created. This team is dedicated to verifying interviews, press conferences, statements, government control sessions, and tweets made by major political figures. They claim to apply journalistic variables regardless of political affiliation and state their main objective as informing the public so that they can, based on the data available, form their own opinions on important issues.

The team's texts are based on official sources such as the INE or Eurostat, thus ensuring transparency. They say that they compare all the information with the press offices of the protagonists and also with experts on the subject matter. Regarding the methodology, a series of processes and filters are used that allow for the content to be classified as false, misleading, half true or true. The verification team's editor first presents his findings to the rest of the group. Then, they are presented to the management team where they are again subject to review. Any content that does not have data or facts that support it, but that cannot be outright disproven, is considered "unprovable." *El Objetivo* was a prime-time program. While the "verification tests" section was being developed, data was used in graphics and videos, always indicating the origins of the official sources. The results of the verifications that were presented every Sunday on the program can be accessed on the laSexta website.

As an internal quality assurance mechanism, the audience could report errors in the verifications through a form that was published on the website. *El Objetivo* encouraged the public to report any errors or lack of vigilance in the content they published. Furthermore, if an error was noticed during the broadcast of the program, they responded immediately by clarifying the information on their website.

Internationalization and association with quality standards

As part of their commitment to adhere to internationalization networks and quality standards, *El Objetivo* is a member of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN). In addition, in 2017 in Madrid, together with Poynter, it co-organized the Global Fact 4 International Congress. This was the fourth edition of an event that brings fact-checkers worldwide together to share experiences and formats, improve methodologies and address new challenges.

That the program has been bestowed various awards related to quality standards is noteworthy. These include the award for the best audiovisual journalism project in 2018, which was given by the members of the IFCN. Specifically, the IFCN recognizes the innovative work that Newtral (the startup created by Ana Pastor) produces for *El Objetivo* on Instagram. These efforts help to expose younger audiences to data and verification journalism. In addition, in 2019 the verification team received an award from the Engagement and Transparency Foundation, an organization that recognizes the work of fact-checkers who fight against fake news, for having one of the 10 best transparency and good governance practices.

Corporate marketing and engagement strategies

Of note are the marketing and engagement initiatives promoted by the corporation Atresmedia, such as AMIBOX, a Foundation project that provides resources for teaching in schools and institutes in order to train them in the correct use of technologies and media consumption. However, strategies directly related to the *El Objetivo* program weren't found.

Training and media literacy initiatives

In terms of media literacy, the initiatives promoted by the Atresmedia Foundation with educational institutions promote spaces for critical reflection. The Mentes AMI project, for example, trains young people in how to be responsible citizens in the information society.

VerificaRTVE

Media outlet	RTVE
Verification Project	VerificaRTVE
Year created	2020
General or specialized	General
Media platform	Television and website
Spaces/programs	*VerificaRTVE*

VerificaRTVE is a section of RTVE that is dedicated to the internal verification of content broadcast on any of the corporation's platforms, whether on television, radio or on the different digital platforms. In 2019, the entity had already developed a collaborative verification project called *Comprobado* (Verified) in which 16 media outlets coordinated by First Draft and Maldita.es came together with the aim of fighting political misinformation ahead of the general, regional and European elections.

Involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality

VerificaRTVE is a team that works within the wider RTVE website to detect any falseness within the information on the network. The process goes beyond indicating whether content is true or not. It entails explaining the debunking in detail to users based on George Lakoff's "truth sandwich" technique. To do this, the headline is examined first, using different labels that indicate if information is misleading, if context is missing, or if it is not verifiable. They then investigate the false content to get to the truth.

The web toolbox stands out as an effective transparency measure, containing a set of resources that help verify digital content. It has 16 categories that bring together tools for the following: archives, photography, videos, search engines, geolocation, chronolocation, metadata, users, websites, monitoring, network analysis, email/telephone, companies, transportation, social networks and tutorials. The "advanced toolbox" tab can also be accessed from the website, providing an extensive list of resources and links to various tutorials and verification manuals.

The audience has various ways of participating and cooperating in content verification. Queries can be sent over the phone, WhatsApp or by email. People can also subscribe to RTVE's RSS service.

RTVE has signed an agreement with the illustrious Official College of Physicians of Madrid, making them part of the Digital Observatory of health information in collaboration with EFE Verifica, Maldita Ciencia, the Association to Protect the Sick from Pseudoscientific Therapies and SEOM (Spanish Society of Medical Oncology). All of these are bodies that are active in the fight against fake news related to health. VerificaRTVE also collaborated with the General Council of Official Colleges of Pharmacists during the pandemic, offering verified information on the use of medications and coronavirus.

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Corporate marketing and engagement strategies

One of RTVE's best-known engagement strategies is the *La gran consulta* (The Great Consultation) initiative, a transmedia citizen participation campaign that has sought to find out what people want and expect from public radio and television programming. This campaign is rightly considered to have been pioneering as it marked the first time that a public discourse of such scope was carried out by a media outlet.

Training initiatives and media literacy

One of RTVE's most notable training and media literacy initiatives is the IVERES project, carried out in collaboration with the following higher education institutions: The Autonomous University of Barcelona, Carlos III University of Madrid, the University of Granada and Polytechnic University of Catalonia. It is a research project funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation that is focused on developing techniques to detect manipulated images, audio and videos, and for the monitoring of social networks to impede the circulation of disinformation. As a result of this macro-project, training programs for Spanish communicators have been delivered, as have verification courses in alliance with other institutions such as the EFE agency. In addition, there have been academic forums like the conference against disinformation organized by the Observatory for News Innovation in Digital Society (IO2) and the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB).

Additionally, the medium is committed to training its professionals, who have regularly attended various workshops since 2016, in verification processes.

There are various instances of the company developing educational content. For example, a video on sexist discourse, cybersecurity tips to avoid falling victim to digital fraud or phishing hoaxes, investigative series on digital crimes, advice on how to deal with denialist discourse, and interactive documentaries on disinformation (*Guerra a la mentira*).

3.1.3 Agencies

AFP Factual

Agency	AFP Factual	
Year created	2017	
General or specialized	General	**AFP** ● Factual
Organizational model	Agence France-Presse Initiative	

AFP Factual is a Agence France-Presse initiative. It was originally formed by journalists from Colombia and Mexico. It currently covers six Ibero-American countries, acting as an extension of the CrossCheck collaborative project that was created for the 2017 presidential elections in France.

Involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality

Since its foundation in the 19th century, AFP Factual has undertaken the verification of information. It has always been an integral feature of the agency. The news topic selection policy, which is said to be in the hands of journalists themselves, is firmly based on the concept of content transparency. Among the criteria for deciding what content should be verified is editorial interest, the magnitude of dissemination and relevance to the public. In any case, verification must comply with AFP's overall mission of providing accurate, impartial and reliable information. Preferred topics appear as sections on the website: health, environment, science, politics and sports. Nonetheless, there are also stories related to current affairs, and those that are focused on a particular geographic region. Links to sources consulted are included. There is no evidence of sponsored content.

The verification process contains various stages. Firstly, the source is identified. Then the information is compared to known reliable sources using the internet alongside other mediums. Finally, the verification is published on the AFP Factual channels and on other associated channels. They employ Open Source Intelligence and link data and original sources within the verifications. Though they are not detailed in the methodological section, the verdict regarding the news story will be one of the following: false, misleading, staged, unregistered or without context. In addition, each verified piece of content has a textual explanation and indicates the verdict with a chromatic visual marker and a question headline above the picture included in the publication.

To maintain contact with their audience, AFP have a form on the website, and can be contacted by email and on social networks (Facebook, X and Instagram). The phone is visible in their WhatsApp profile, where a chatbot introduces the AFP digital verification service and provides access to a series of options: to check if content is false, to review the most recent publications, or to subscribe to the weekly newsletter.

The agency's internal quality assurance mechanisms are fundamentally supported by the AFP Charter and the AFP Charter of Good Editorial and Deontological Practices. Both documents include the agency's regulatory principles, its guidelines and specific practices such as citation, the attribution of sources and content generated by users. The need to verify content disseminated on social networks is recognized in said documents, and

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included as part of its mission. Also laid out are a series of parameters to be consulted when verifying an image. These include place, date, source, publication medium and copyright. Regarding neutrality, though the agency is committed to neutrality, it is pointed out that verification can of course confirm the veracity of information that some people may not have originally believed. The rectification policy establishes that modified content must be labeled with the word "CORRECTION" along with the date and reason. If it is a major error, the post is deleted and an explanation is posted in its place.

Internationalization and association with quality standards

AFP has been a signatory of the code of principles of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) since 2018. It is part of the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN) consortium and the EDMO observatory. With support from the European Media and Information Fund and in collaboration with the Austria Press agency, it is carrying out a project to convert the Ukrainian agency Ukrinform into a fact-checker. They have participated in initiatives such as CrossCheck by First Draft, *Projeto Comprova* (Project Check), Fact Check EU and Claim Review, a fact-check labeling system to be displayed in search engines.

Regarding collaborations with technology companies, a paid contract was signed with Facebook. Through this agreement, the platform gives AFP access to an updated database with content that users have previously indicated is dubious. The agency selects the content to verify and, if it is false, Facebook reduces its circulation, notifying users who distributed the disinformation or intend to do so and redirecting them to the AFP information. Repeat offenders can be penalized by having the visibility of their page reduced. In any case, the content is never actually removed from the platform.

Corporate marketing and engagement strategies

There is no user acquisition strategy beyond social networks and WhatsApp via the weekly newsletter. Instead, AFP have launched a media engagement campaign in which they respond to misinformation. This content is available in 24 languages. Three plans are offered: standard, full and custom. Organizations such as Facebook, First Draft or Asharq News work with AFP on this.

The initiative puts corporate transparency into practice regarding its financing, though exact figures aren't provided. This data indicates that AFP receives a third of its income from the French government, and that the remaining part comes from commercial income. In addition to advertising the program with Facebook, they acknowledge that thanks to this alliance, specialized journalists were hired for AFP Factual. Nonetheless, never is there any implication that Facebook have interfered in the selection of content or influenced editorial decisions.

Training initiatives and media literacy

There is no evidence of any activities focused on media education or specialized training.

EFE Verifica

Agency	EFE Verifica	
Year created	2019	
General or specialized	General	
Organizational model	Integrated within the activity of the EFE Agency, EFE Verifica is a state-controlled company. The sole shareholder is the State Society of Industrial Participations (SEPI), which is linked to the Ministry of Finance and Public Function.	

EFE Verifica is an anti-disinformation instrument of the EFE Agency. Its objective is to offer useful information against disinformation and fake news that circulate in the Spanish language on the internet (whether messages, videos, photographs, memes or statements). During the pandemic, it launched a consultation system through WhatsApp that also covered Latin America. They argue that their journalistic work helps improve citizens' knowledge and understanding of society, allowing them to contribute to public debate and make informed decisions.

Involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality

EFE Verifica aims to offer clear, simple and useful information. Content transparency is based on the verification of facts and data, never on opinions or promises. The agency centers their fight against disinformation and the polarization of public opinion on: (1) the verification of the veracity of viral content on the internet or in public discourse. (2) The explanation and contextualization of events that divide or confuse society. Verifications include the original sources on which they are based. No examples of sponsored content are found.

They define their methodology as rigorous, precise and transparent. Their protocol contains four steps: selection, verification, evaluation, and lastly, review and publication. In the selection process, viral content on the internet that may contain erroneous data is located. That content will undergo verification if it falls into at least one of three categories. The first, if it has been widely disseminated. The second, if it presents a danger to public opinion. The last, if it can be considered useful information. The central topics of analysis are those related to health, education, politics, science, the environment, technology, security and human rights. Content based simply on opinions is excluded. In the verification of statements, the agency either contacts the original source, or locates the original material or the first disseminating user in the case of photographs or videos. In addition, official and public data are collected from alternative sources and academic and technical experts are consulted. In the evaluation they provide a conclusion that determines the extent to which the information is real. Lastly, before being published, at least two members of the EFE Verifica team and an editor from the EFE Agency must review the verification.

EFE Verifica attach great importance to citizen participation, both in the verification of facts and data and in the selection of story topics. Nonetheless, in the latter case, opinions and statements about future events are excluded from the verification processes. A number of

participation methods are provided. Firstly, there is a web form for queries. It requires providing an email address. There is also a WhatsApp number (part of the service uses a chatbot to offer automatic responses prepared by the EFE Verifica team) and an email. It is also possible to contact them through Facebook or X. With that being said, though these networks are not specifically used as verification platforms, they are utilized as spaces for disseminating the activity carried out by the brand. Citizen queries are handled through a triage system defined by two parameters. The first is that the matter represents a danger to public opinion and/or provides useful information for the citizen, the second that it involves viral content on the internet. The platform reserves the right to not verify content that does not meet the above requirements.

Regarding internal quality systems, EFE Verifica's verification activity is governed by the same deontological standards as the parent agency to which it belongs, EFE. They do not have specific codes or bodies, but rather refer to the editorial statute and the editorial council of the agency. However, they specify that their actions are based on impartiality and independence. There is no bias towards any political party, and the verification process shows no favoritism or bipartisanship.

A correction policy was established to deal with any possible errors made. It is based on the editorial statute of the EFE Agency. A rectification is identified as a "CORRECTION" and the details of the mistake are explained. As of the writing of this paper, there are only three corrections on the website: one in 2019, another in 2020, and an update in 2021. Topics are not deleted from the website, but erroneous or inaccurate data is corrected.

Internationalization and association with quality standards

The agency states that public service is their vocation. It has links to the main international fact-checking networks, like the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN) and the IBERIFIER observatory.

EFE Verifica too has been collaborating with large tech companies, having a paid arrangement with Meta since 2020. Their aim has been to fight disinformation on Facebook, though this has no impact on the selection of news topics or on editorial decisions. Furthermore, in furtherance of the verification of video content, they have launched the *Experts explain the facts* project, which has obtained support from the IFCN and YouTube. *VacunaCheck* (Vaccine Check) is another noteworthy initiative. In collaboration with the General Council of Official Colleges of Pharmacists of Spain, the aim is to refute fake news regarding COVID-19 vaccines. According to what appears on the corporate website, it should be noted that the funds received as a result of these collaborations are not directly used to pay for verification activities.

Corporate marketing and engagement strategies

A tab appears on the website that links directly to the parent brand. In addition, there are frequent references to the agency on their About us page. However, on the EFE Verifica website there are no specific initiatives designed to attract users or media as is the case on the parent website.

With respect to corporate transparency, it is indicated that EFE Verifica is financed from the general budget of the EFE Agency. There is no specific information on the financing of EFE Verifica. There is, however, information on the income of the EFE Agency, coming primarily from state funds for providing a Service of General Economic Interest, as recognized by the European Commission regarding basic services that are provided in exchange for funds, and the sale of services to third parties. The annual accounts and the rendering of accounts corresponding to the year 2021 appear on the corporate website.

Training initiatives and media literacy

The agency's participation in the Third Africa-Spain Journalists Meeting, designed to train Kenyan journalists to combat disinformation in the 2022 elections, is an example of a training initiative.

With respect to media literacy, there are various examples. Firstly, EFE Verifica promotes the expansion of their WhatsApp channel in the Spanish-speaking world, especially in Mexico and the United States. There is also the #FactFeed campaign on TikTok to teach users how to identify disinformation circulating on that platform. In collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security, the agency contributed to the study titled, *The fight against disinformation campaigns in the field of national security: proposals from civil society*. They have also been active in the search for technological solutions to minimize the impact of disinformation via, for example, participating in the Global Fact 9 summit and in the Tech Against Disinformation initiative.

3.2   Portugal

3.2.1 Fact-checkers

Polígrafo

Fact-checker	Polígrafo
Year created	2018
General or specialized	General
Organizational model	Polígrafo is owned by the company Inevitable and Fundamental, which has two partners and is registered in the Lisbon Commercial Registry Office as a single legal entity (number 515112178) and in the Communication Regulatory Entity under number 127212.

Polígrafo is the first newspaper in Portugal to have specialized in fact-checking. It was founded by its director, journalist Fernando Esteves. In addition to being a digital newspaper, there is also the television program Polígrafo SIC, which is broadcast on the SIC channel every Monday night

Involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality

Polígrafo's main objective is to get to the truth of the information that circulates in the public space. For this reason, they do not describe themselves as enemies of the media that they evaluate, but as allies of the readers and defenders of liberal democracy. Their transparency in content is based on the topic selection policy. As part of this, they not only analyze the evolution of political discourse, but also dedicate a significant amount of time and effort verifying viral rumors about the environment, health, economy and technology that appear on social networks. Content on the Polígrafo SIC television program is based on materials taken from the Polígrafo website. This section of programing has been broadcast since April 1, 2019, and included in the *Jornal da Noite*, which is the SIC station's primary news program.

In addition to the specific tabs on the environment and the war in Ukraine, it is noteworthy that the website dedicates space to (1) science and the universe, (2) their own portfolio, (3) innovation and (4) sponsored content. In relation to the last of these, a space called *Espaço LACS* is used to present topics related to different companies and organizations. However, here it isn't possible to establish a common thematic thread between the different verified information.

Regarding the transparency of sources, texts are based on credible sources. Furthermore, other types of material such as links, videos or photos that are particularly relevant to the debate are provided wherever possible. To ensure that they never participate in the spreading of rumors, anonymous sources aren't accepted. Information relating to the private lives of the protagonists is also excluded, unless it somehow relates to the public interest.

In terms of methodology, Polígrafo has a team that, on a daily basis, analyzes the rhetoric of key societal figures. Indeed, these statements, and how they pertain to the public interest, constitute the main selection criteria for the preparation of the verifications. As such, Polígrafo does not evaluate the media or journalists, but rather the protagonists that pertain to the news stories. The verification process contains five steps. Firstly, consulting the original source and secondly, consulting documentary sources. Thirdly, listening to the authors of the statement and giving them the right to explain themselves. The fourth step is the contextualization of the information, and the last is the evaluation of the information in accordance with an evaluation scale, which contains the following seven grades (1) true; (2) true, but…; (3) imprecise; (4) decontextualized; (5) manipulated; (6) false; and (7) *pimenta na lingua* (pepper on the tongue), which implies the maximum degree of falsehood (shockingly false or satirical).

Polígrafo wants audiences to be able to verify themselves and reach their own conclusions. To do so, they provide detailed information on the sources. Furthermore, the audience is encouraged to send proposals to verify, report deficiencies in compliance with the transparency policy, and to report any errors they notice (no matter how small they may seem). For contact purposes, a general email address is provided, as are lists of electronic addresses so that the public can directly contact the authors of the verifications and/or the director of the medium. The postal address, a contact telephone number and links to social networks can also be found on the website.

The website has a specific space for audiences to request verifications. The stated aims are to include the readers, to empower them and for them to participate in the community. They provide four mechanisms to request this type of verification. The first is a WhatsApp number, the second a landline phone number, the third a general email address and the last the email addresses of the journalists themselves. They ensure that any topic of public interest is verifiable. However, they also make clear that Polígrafo is especially receptive to topics related to changes in the rhetoric of politicians, commentators and influencers on any public platform. The WhatsApp account is a business account, but it does not use a chatbot for automated verifications or automatic responses.

As an internal quality assurance mechanism, the rectification policy is based on clearly identifying the error, correcting it in the shortest possible time and republishing it in the same format as the original text. It is essential that the corrections clearly identify what content was originally incorrect, the time at which the update was made, and that the new text is an update of a text that had previously contained an error.

Internationalization and association with quality standards

To ensure their adherence to internationalization networks and quality standards, Polígrafo has been a member, since 2019, of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN). It is also part of Facebook's Third-Party program and is integrated into IBERIFIER.

Regarding internal codes of self-regulation and quality, the Portuguese fact-checker has its own editorial statute which includes guiding principles on journalistic practice, transparency, ethics and deontology. By asserting the absence of a political or ideological agenda, and that their staff are not active in any political party, they ensure the absence of any conflict of interest in terms of political parties and organizations.

The 11 awards that the project received over the years clearly indicate the quality of their online work. These awards can be grouped into three categories:

1) Media & Advertising Awards for Creativity and Innovation:

- Grand Jury Prize
- Launch of a Digital Project
- Editorial Innovation
- Newspaper Launch
- Innovation in Media (Polígrafo SIC)

2) Media & Advertising Awards for Communication
- Best Digital / Social / Influencers Site (2019 and 2020)
- Best Information Technologies / Media and Telecommunications Project (2019 and 2020)

3) Digital Economy Association Awards (Navegantes XXI):
- Best Media Site
- Best New Digital Project

Polígrafo's collaboration with the Meta group is noteworthy. Together, they launched an initiative in several countries to work together with external fact-checking organizations certified by the IFCN to impede the spread of disinformation on Facebook and Instagram. The running of this program is based on five key steps. The first is the identification of fake news, then content review. The third step is the clear labeling of disinformation and notifying users, and then implementing measures so that fewer people see disinformation. Lastly, measures are taken against repeat offenders.

Corporate marketing and engagement strategies

 "*Ayúdanos en la búsqueda de la verdad de los hechos. Todos juntos seremos mucho más fuertes*" ("help us to find the truth within the facts. Together we're stronger)" is the slogan implemented to entice audiences to send verification proposals. As part of the company's corporate marketing strategies, they advertise that the use of new technologies is in their DNA, as is the creation of innovative solutions to uncover the truth and to bring audiences closer to the media. There is evidence of synergies with subsidiary companies in the sponsored content tab, specifically with *Espaço LACS*, a creative community and co-working space in Lisbon and Cascais.

The transparency policy, apart from adherence to the IFCN principles, is based on five principles: (1) commitment to non-partisanship and justice; (2) commitment to transparency of sources; (3) commitment to funding transparency; (4) commitment to methodology transparency; and (5) commitment to open and honest corrections.

Regarding funding sources, the company indicates that any funding coming from other organizations will not affect the work performed on the articles. To ensure that this is the case, the professional profiles of all the key figures in their organization are detailed, as is

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Polígrafo's overall structure and legal status. Lastly, a way for readers to communicate with the organization is also provided.

As a private company, Polígrafo's income comes from advertising investments resulting from their commercial partnership with the Sapo portal and with other editorial entities. Examples include the partnership established in 2019 with the Francisco Manuel dos Santos Foundation for the organization of various thematic cycles, and the Third Party program with Facebook.

In terms of accountability, an organization based in Dubai called Emerald Group accounts for 40% of the shareholding. Episódio Inédito, a company 100% owned by the director of Polígrafo, has the remaining 60%. In 2020, editorial collaborations accounted for 94.09% of revenue and advertising for 5.91%. It is explained that income was mainly invested in the payment of payroll, in the purchase of computer equipment and in subscriptions to specialized health publications to compare information related to COVID-19. The latest accounts with updated data for the year 2022 can be consulted on the website.

Regarding engagement strategies, they have a newsletter and use the corporate website as a way to implement affiliate marketing aimed at encouraging free subscriptions. They are also extremely compliant with the data protection policy as a way to ensure a trusting relationship between the fact-checker and the audiences.

Training and media literacy initiatives

There are no specific training or media literacy initiatives beyond the thematic cycles organized with the Francisco Manuel dos Santos Foundation, an entity whose mission is to promote and deepen knowledge of the Portuguese reality.

3.2.2 Media outlets with a section dedicated to verification

Observador

Media outlet	Observador
Verification Project	Fact Check
Year created	2015
General or specialized	General
Media platform	Digital press and television
Spaces/programs	*Hora da verdade*
	Sección fact-check

Observador started to work on verification in 2015. At the beginning of 2017, it joined the IFCN. *Hora da Verdade* later emerged in collaboration with TVI, giving rise to a television program that was broadcast between January and November of 2021. Though this was cancelled, today Observador continues with its Fact Check project. This media outlet also carried out a specific initiative during the 2022 legislative elections, which was the verifying of the live debates for the Legislative Elections between António Costa (PS candidate) and Rui Rio (PSD candidate). In 2023 the newspaper started a specific section dedicated to content verification called Fact Check.

Involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality

Hora da Verdade, a verification initiative between TVI and the newspaper Observador, was broadcast daily as a part of the 8:00 p.m. news. It functioned as a space dedicated to verifying facts related to the topics most relevant to the media, and was based on investigations carried out by Observador journalists. Additionally, every Friday, TVI's main evening news program dedicated an entire segment to verifying information. It would feature specialists who helped deconstruct the false data that had contaminated public debate.

Hora da Verdade had a daily section on the website that produced at least one verification a day and an extended version in the *Jornal* program on Fridays. There was also *Laboratorio Hora da Verdade Laboratory*, in which evidence, stories and recommendations that had been widely disseminated online were put to the test with the aim of verifying their effectiveness, functionality and validity.

This Portuguese newspaper's content transparency policy can be seen in the refutations that appear on the website. From the main media interface the Fact check category can be reached. Here, there is access to a repository in which all the verified information is published. The classification methods used by Observador are not new in the field of verification practice, that being the image of a speedometer with different colors (three shades of green, yellow, orange and red). They use a six-point scale that grades the truthfulness of the contents: (1) true, (2) basically true, (3) approximate, (4) inconclusive, (5) misleading, and (6) erroneous. The text itself is classified into categories, beginning with the primary controversial phrase, then providing an overall conclusion and a verdict.

This Portuguese newspaper contains a section on rectification policy. There are also corrections on the website.

Internationalization and association with quality standards

Since February 2017, Observador has been part of IFCN. In April it became part of the #CoronaVirusFactsAlliance, a global network of fact-checkers promoting accurate information during the pandemic. More than 100 media outlets, publishing in 40 different languages, from around the world are part of this alliance. All are dedicated to verifying information related to COVID-19. Previously, Observador had been part of the European data verification network FactCheckEU during campaigns for the 2019 elections for the European Parliament.

In April 2019, Observador allied with Facebook, joining a global network of independent fact-checkers dedicated to verifying the authenticity of the information disseminated on that very social network. All members of this association are also part of IFCN and are guided by the code of conduct of the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, a code that Observador has of course been following since February 2017, when it first joined the IFCN.

Observador's editorial statute defines the newspaper as one that is online, independent and free. This document reinforces their commitment to transparency as it indicates that they will not allow their integrity to be compromised by partisan or economic interests or by any other group.

Corporate marketing and engagement strategies

Observador's primary engagement strategy is their premium subscription campaign, which guarantees unlimited access to all the newspaper's content. In addition, it allows for unlimited reading on four different devices, with reduced advertising and access to exclusive newsletters.

Training and media literacy initiatives

This Portuguese newspaper participates in multiple training and media literacy initiatives. All this information can be found in the Events section of their main website: https://observador.pt/eventos.

One example is the conference entitled *What can be done to improve the speed and effectiveness of Criminal Justice and the fight against corruption?* This was sponsored by the Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry to analyze the dangers that, in the eyes of citizens, pose a threat to the credibility of the democratic system. As for literacy and media education projects, the *Mais fortes a Observar* (Observer Strongest) initiative was created to reflect on issues related to social development, volunteering and education.

Of note also are the courses organized by the newspaper in cooperation with other entities, such as the speech techniques workshop with *Rádio Renascença* (RR) or the seminar on writing and political journalism in collaboration with Booktailors.

Público

Media outlet	Público
Verification Project	Prova dos Factos
Year created	2016
General or specialized	General
Media platform	Digital press
Space/programs	*Prova dos factos*

Prova dos Factos is a verification section of the Portuguese newspaper Público. It was started in 2016 in order to verify statements made by politicians and other public figures.

Involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality

Prova dos Factos can be accessed via the Projects section of the Público website. Here, the idea is more than just the identification of false content. Indeed, the project seeks to contextualize the content being examined and delve deeper into the relevant issues. For this reason, the team uses a verification scale based on different categories:

1) True: When a particular statement or publication is clearly true, beyond any doubt.
2) Partially true: when a statement or publication is true, but there are some aspects or parts of it that need further clarification.
3) Inconclusive: when a particular statement or publication is impossible to contextualize.
4) Partially false: when a certain statement or publication is determined to be false. Nonetheless, there are still some aspects that need further clarification.
5) False: when a certain statement or publication is clearly false, beyond any doubt.

In Prova dos Factos, the user can filter all the information that has been classified as true, partially true, inconclusive, partially false or false.

As a tool to build audience cooperation, there is an open channel through which readers, via WhatsApp or email, can send their suggestions. In addition, every Saturday a *Prova dos Factos* is selected that can be read in the printed edition of the newspaper. A monthly newsletter was also created. Via the website, the newspaper also encourages readers to report any suggestion for text correction. Within the corrected information, reference is made at the end to the parts of the text that have been modified, and the moment in which the modifications were made.

Prova dos Factos follows a clear and transparent methodology. The refutations are rigid in structure, prioritizing context so that the interests behind the narratives are made apparent. Although the contents are usually brief, they are precise, consult the appropriate sources and use the most relevant evidence to reach irrefutable conclusions. This fixed structure also facilitates the participation of all newsroom professionals in checking facts and publishing in the section. For the Público newspaper, the virality of an article is not of particular importance when considering whether it will be subject to verification. Instead, proposals are analyzed by the editors based on the article's potential to clarify information for citizens.

Internationalization and association with quality standards

Público's editorial statute makes clear that the newspaper understands that the new technical possibilities of information imply effective, attractive and imaginative journalism in its permanent communication with readers. This is a fundamental principle in an era in which much information consumption takes place through digital platforms and collaborative information networks, such as social networks.

One of the medium's objectives is to contextualize wide-ranging content on social networks, whether that content is true or false in nature. The idea is to establish the most accurate contextualization based on criteria of thoroughness and editorial creativity. In line with its statute, there is to be no dependence on ideological, political or economic interests. Público's website contains its style book, an extensive document that regulates the principles and standards of professional conduct, ethics and genres, and writing techniques, among other things.

Since 2021, Público has been part of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), and since 2022, part of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO).

Corporate marketing and engagement strategies

Público's newspaper has extensive experience regarding corporate marketing strategies and user acquisition. It has a branded content area specializing in the production of content for brands. They produce content for online and offline campaigns in various formats and for different platforms. Projects with Allianz, Mimosa, Worten and Samsung, among others, are notable in regards to this.

Training and media literacy initiatives

The Portuguese newspaper has the project *O Público na escola* (Público at school), an educational initiative developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Belmiro de Avezdo Foundation. It seeks to play a key role in the training of new generations of readers, which is crucial for the construction of enlightened and plural societies, as stated on its website. It is a participatory project in which synergies between the media and schools are sought. Competitions are organized and teaching materials are provided for educational centers.

Público is also active in initiatives that seek to further the media literacy of university students through the PSuperior project, in which several partners such as Google and MediaBrand also participate.

In terms of training courses, the newspaper has (with the help of various Portuguese educational institutions) developed the Public Academy project, offering different training courses mostly related to literature.

3.2.3 Agencias

Lusa

Agency	Lusa	
Year created	2019	
General or specialized	General	
Organizational model	The initiative Lusa Agência de Notícias de Portugal, S.A., is governed by a multi-year public service contract. The main shareholder is the Portuguese Republic.	

Lusa launched an initiative called *Combate às Fake News, uma questão democrática* (Combating Fake News, a democratic endeavor), after holding a conference in Lisbon with the participation of the EFE Agency in 2019. It offers articles on reports and training to combat disinformation through the use of various tools, games and links to media literacy resources. The agency has its own training plan through *Escola Lusa*, both for professionals from the organization and for students and other interested parties. The agency's mission is to provide the Portuguese State with a public information service that values meticulousness, the separation of facts and opinions, the identification of sources, independence, neutrality in the face of political forces and reliability.

Involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality

Lusa does not publish fact-checks on its website, but rather informative notes related to current events or reports on disinformation and media literacy. For this reason, it is understandable that no specific transparency policies for this initiative, or information on the methodology they apply, have been located. Furthermore, a rectification policy could not be identified, though there are corrections and updates to published information in their files, which are labeled with the word "UPDATED."

Cooperation with audiences is channeled exclusively through the social networks Facebook and X. In each, there is a specific profile for this initiative. However, there is no contact web form, email, telephone, postal address or instant messaging channel to answer questions/receive suggestions from the public.

Regarding internal quality systems, documentation published by Lusa that refers to the company was reviewed. No bodies such as an editorial board, advisory board or others specifically related to the verification initiative were identified. Nonetheless, Lusa does have corporate bodies such as an advisory council. It also has Statutes and a Code of Ethics, as well as a Journalist's Code of Ethics and Style Book. The neutrality policy is not explicitly stated in any document, but is addressed in the company's bylaws and other codes.

Internationalization and association with quality standards

Regarding networks and internationalization projects, Lusa is part of IBERIFIER and the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO). The agency is not a signatory of the IFCN

Code of Principles and is not included in the European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN) consortium, though both codes appear on the website. Therefore, despite efforts to connect resources and relevant actors in the fight against disinformation, Lusa's associations are limited. A long list of fact-checker and organizations that work in this field are presented, though there are no shared projects. No collaborations with technology companies have been identified.

Corporate marketing and engagement strategies

There is no evidence of any specific strategies (such as, for example, advertising collaborations with companies) except for the already mentioned link with its parent company, the Lusa agency. Neither is there evidence of measures regarding user acquisition, affiliation, subscriptions or newsletters. However, due to its nature as a news agency, products and services that may be of interest to the media are shown. This includes text, photography, video, audio, archives and agendas, though not fact-checks explicitly.

Regarding transparency in terms of financing and accountability, it is only addressed on the wider Lusa agency's website.

Training and media literacy initiatives

The Lusa project against disinformation focuses on education and dissemination. The proposal is sustained by its own training and media literacy initiatives, and by building a space with useful resources. It has collaborated with media and other information entities, such as the EFE Agency, in the organization of the conferences that kicked-off this initiative in 2019.

Regarding media literacy, the two main features are *Escola Lusa* and *Cidadão Ciberinformado*, as well as support for ISCTE postgraduate courses (*Pós-Graduação em Informação, Desinformação e Fact-Checking*). Escola Lusa is a training project aimed at reinforcing journalistic values, principles, rules and techniques for professionals. They provide training internally, for young university students and for writing staff from other Portuguese-speaking countries. *Cidadão Ciberinformado* resulted from the agency's collaboration with the Portuguese National Cybersecurity Center to help citizens differentiate real news from manipulated and fraudulent information, through a free course (one currently unavailable).

The agency offers a wide variety of resources on the verification initiative website. This includes the following: games on disinformation from the Portuguese government, Publico.pt and Tilt Studio, among others; literacy content and programs from AFP, the Informal Group on Media Literacy, the resource aggregator *Literacia e Educação para os Media Em Linha*, the European Union, the *Associação Literaria para os media e Jornalismo, the Observatório* Media, *Informação e Literacia*, and the Secure Internet Center.

Regarding automatic verification initiatives, there is the *Contrafake* project. This centers on the development of computational resources and tools based on artificial intelligence, to counter disinformation on social networks and digital information sources. The project also includes the development of a browser plugin, the publication of a manual and the *Cidadão*

Ciberinformado online course. Two conferences have been held that centered on the *Contrafake* project.

4. Verification from a professional perspective

4.1 Spain

4.1.1 The importance of verification in today's society

Interviewees agree (AVG.=4.78 out of 5) regarding the need to assess the importance of fact-checkers in evaluating the journalistic and democratic quality of a country.

Interviewees view the existence of verification platforms in today's society as important given that the internet means anyone is a potential transmitter of information. This constitutes a departure from previous times when the journalist was the sole transmitter. It is necessary, therefore, to identify and highlight what is true, what is distorted and what is false, pointing out which websites or media are reliable and which are not.

Verification means a more transparent version of the content on social networks. It sheds light on, and increases confidence in, an uncontrolled digital environment in which there are increasingly more ways to receive mis-/disinformation.

There is a general consensus among those interviewed that disinformation threatens modern society and democracy. It is seen to be a danger that emanates from both traditional media and from social networks. Narratives are promoted that disinform and have nothing to do with real events. Disinformation is harmful and dangerous to society, from the reinforcement of stereotypes to the undermining of the free exercise of democracy. According to those interviewed, the internet accelerates the spread of disinformation in a very effective way, something that others can profit from. Furthermore, online content is designed to be more impactful and emotional, and to make people react. This means that the original is more efficacious than the verification that follows.

Interviewees contest that fact-checkers are the first line of defense against disinformation. The role of verification platforms is key to stopping disinformation and contributing to a healthy information ecosystem in which there is verified information that citizens can turn to when they have doubts about the content they are consuming. Therefore, verification platforms both stop disinformation and provide verified information.

The results of the interviews demonstrate the differences between media and fact-checkers, assuming that the main function of journalism is the verification of facts.

The fact-checkers argue that the media explain reality from a specific perspective to large audiences. They therefore are therefore bound to the interests of their audience. This does not happen with fact-checkers, who deliver a certain level of objectivity. The people interviewed maintain that, although the verification process should be implicit in journalistic work, the fact that information circulates from multiple paths has made it necessary to implement fact-checking. While within journalism, verification is a task that is part of daily work, verification platforms are dedicated to analyzing viral content produced by different actors, whether companies, political parties or individuals. Fact-checkers focus on the content of a specific lie that circulates across a number of platforms and can reach people in many ways. Fact-checkers concentrate on verifying disinformation. As such, the main

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difference between the media and fact-checkers is that the latter focus on both political discourse and disinformation, while traditional journalism internally verifies any story that they have written.

Interviewees agree that the difference is in the focus. Yes, in verification agencies, journalistic work is carried out in a different way. However, there is no difference in the essence of the work, which is to consult sources and make sure that everything that is said corresponds to reality.

Social networks favour the spread of disinformation. Consequently, journalism has to specialize, segment and act more concretely and quickly on these threats. That information often circulates very fast is a differential factor in all of this, and something that the fact-checkers must be able to deal with and overcome.

- **The importance of fact-checkers to determine the journalistic and democratic quality of a country.** Fact-checkers are the first line of defense against of disinformation. The role of verification platforms is key to stopping disinformation and creating a healthy information ecosystem.
- **The differences between media and fact-checkers are in their focus**. While for journalism verification is a task that is implicit in daily work, verification platforms are dedicated to analyzing viral content that comes from different actors (companies, political parties, individuals). Fact-checkers focus on the content of a specific lie that circulates across a number of platforms and can reach people in many ways.

4.1.2   Synergies and the production of information

The origin of verified news topics

The origin of the topics of verification is very broad and comes mainly from interventions, speeches and interviews with politicians. It also comes from conversations on open social networks, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok and YouTube channels.

There are fact-checkers that apply double verification: internal and external. This means that, on the one hand, they monitor topics that move on social networks. In a team meeting with journalistic criteria, they make a decision on which one is going to be examined based on criteria such as virtualization and risk, whether they be videos, photographs or documents. On the other hand, internal verification has to do with everything that directly affects the corporation itself.

All those interviewed mentioned virality and the potential for societal damage as two of the main factors when filtering content that can be verified. However, there are times when it is necessary to look at content that is not excessively viral, but is still dangerous. In these cases, interviewees argued that it was important to demonstrate the tactics used by spreaders of disinformation so that such content does not reach the population quickly.

When selecting the topics that require verification, viral content on social networks takes precedence over information in the media. Therefore, priority is given to those issues that have been intensely introduced into the conversation, whether on social networks or political

statements given elsewhere that have gained relevance. Stories that have to do with health, electoral processes and attacks on social minorities are prioritized. In short, information that may be especially harmful, that has the capacity to alter or endanger democratic institutions, is most likely to be considered.

There are examples of fact-checkers who understand the crucial importance of monitoring the media. However, this process is more complicated because a broader audience is targeted and, therefore, it is even easier to spread fake news. In this sense, those interviewed maintain that it is important to detect where public debate is going and whether or not attempts at manipulation or disinformation are evident, and whether this fake news comes from the media or not. For the media, it is also important that there is a process for public rectification of errors. This is something that does not always happen.

Although many fact-checkers are members of international verification networks such as IBERIFIER, EFCSN, IFCN or LATAM Chequea, they do not have specific agreements with the media to carry out their work outside of specific projects, though alliances have been established. One example is the verification work around the war in Ukraine. However, ways are being sought to create synergies to generate content that may be useful to certain media. In this sense, they participate in different programs with the aim of finding a space to disseminate interesting information and reach more people.

Quality of sources

When determining the quality of the sources, experts in the subject matter are usually consulted. For instance, when the sources contain information relating to health issues, those examining the sources should be able to demonstrate their experience researching or teaching within that field. Other types of topics require the examiner to have a direct connection to the content that is to be verified. For example, if the source concerns electoral issues, the examiner may be from the Electoral Board, or an expert in political science. In this sense, the importance of conferring with national and international public institutions is underlined. Furthermore, it is vital that a variety of sources affirm the opinions collected. Reports undergo thorough analysis noting the manner in which the study was carried out, the sample size, whether they are pre-prints already validated by experts and whether they are published in high-level journals, as well as other variables.

On the other hand, there are fact-checkers who have a database of committed experts across various fields to pull from. These specialists understand the dynamics of the medium and can help in the debunking process. Therefore, official sources, direct sources and expert databases constitute the main resources that fact-checkers utilize when carrying out their work.

All interviewees strongly supported making public the sources consulted in the refutation of a piece of information (AVG.=5.00). In most cases, this is something that is included in the methodology as a mandatory requirement as it is seen to be crucial for transparency. The idea is that credible information on a controversial topic – one which is subject to disinformation – should be highlighted. The audience themselves must be able to follow the same path to reach the same conclusions as the fact-checkers.

Similarly, though there is interest in issuing a verdict (AVG.=4.11) on the verification performed, so that the audience understands its importance and/or can arrive at the conclusion more quickly, those interviewed did not consider it as essential. Nonetheless, explanation and context are increasingly necessary. For this reason, there is a tendency towards explanatory articles that do not go into specific statements, but that provide context on the topics which generate confusion, disinformation or doubts.

The role of mobile platforms

Platforms are considered essential to fact-checkers because they enable continuous access to social networks. They also allow fact-checkers to locate the origin of disinformation and to trace its circulation. Information flows through these types of devices, and through applications such as Telegram, X or Facebook. It is in these spaces where fact-checkers can encounter the topics and narratives that are being shared.

It is imperative that fact-checkers have a presence on the channels where disinformation exists. This is so that the general public can consult fact-checkers to check if the information that they are consuming themselves is false or not. Fact-checkers use instant messaging applications, mainly WhatsApp and Telegram, to encourage audiences to share content they consider potentially suspicious. Podcasts or newsletters are also useful in the dissemination of verifications. As such, they can be used to enhance user participation.

However, interviewees also argue that mobile platforms are conducive to misinformation. Beyond the fact that they are used for disinformation and propaganda, they are also increasingly essential in verification, especially when it comes to OSINT (open source intelligence). Thanks to mobile phones, images are being captured that allow us to take fact verification further.

- Virality and the potential societal damage that fake news can cause are two of the main factors when filtering content that can be verified. Misinformation that comes mainly from social networks is verified.
- **The quality of the sources is determined by the presence of experts in the subject matter.** It is of upmost importance that the sources consulted are published to ensure transparency.
- Fact-checkers use mobile platforms to encourage audiences to share content they consider potentially suspicious and to disseminate the results of their verifications.

4.1.3 Audience involvement

Spanish fact-checkers see public participation in verification as relevant (AVG.=4.56) through various mechanisms and types of interaction. The most prominent way is by identifying false content that they share with fact-checkers (via social networks, instant messaging, email or forms). In this way, they provide a warning of a potential case of disinformation, even in spaces that are inaccessible as they are private. Therefore, the audience participates in the detection, but not in the verification process.

This collaboration between the public and the organization goes further with the dissemination of verified information. In addition, citizens raise questions about the information that circulates, occasionally beyond what is viral: for example, regarding health risks or digital scams. In some cases, the connection with the community is fundamental, as the organization may even have a person dedicated to that task. From this give-and-take relationship, feedback is obtained on how the organization is developing and possible improvements to be made. In addition, relevant information can be extracted from this feedback and used in specialized verification processes.

The fact-checkers here do not consider involvement with initiatives relating to transparency, cooperation and quality to be especially relevant for citizens (AVG.=3.44). They define it as a quality seal that guarantees that standards are met. In that sense, it is valuable for organizations. However, they contend that the average user either does not value involvement in these kinds of initiatives, or is unaware/barely aware of it (though some of those people who are aware of it may indeed value it).

Media literacy achieved the highest rating and consensus among all participants (AVG.=5.00). It is seen as imperative to tackle misinformation through audience training. Compared with the traditional verification model which starts from a fake story that goes viral, increased media literacy gives a head start. Preparing citizens to take a more active role, forming their own "line of defense" supported by critical thinking, means that they can use their own criteria to determine what to trust and what not to trust.

Initiatives undertaken include educational activities for professionals (journalists and journalism students) and citizens, such as courses on digital verification or workshops and conferences, as well as informative activities through podcasts and specific networks such as TikTok. Corporate social responsibility strategies are also evident, with commitments to media and information literacy, which implies didactic activities, masterclasses and projects with secondary school teachers.

On the other hand, the implementation of marketing and user acquisition strategies received a moderate response (AVG.=3.75). Some participants see it as a pending issue. The limited implementation of strategies in this sense is evident in a model where subscriptions (generally without payment) coexist alongside financing channels, such as forming strategic alliances with platforms, awards, projects, crowdfunding and donations. Interviewees don't see the business model as affecting editorial independence, since transparency is prioritized above all else. There is, however, the recognition of certain risks, like featuring advertising from a company, and some organizations stay away from alliances with organizations that could threaten their independence. Some maintain that financing through partners provides a greater guarantee of independence than depending financially on advertisers.

- **Fact-checkers are active in open channels of audience participation**. The public can participate in detection, but not in verification.
- **Involvement in initiatives related to transparency, cooperation and quality is important for fact-checking organizations** since it guarantees that standards are met. However, interviewees don't regard it as relevant to the audience.
- **Media literacy is one of the most relevant courses of action for fact-checkers**, allowing them to get a head start on misinformation through citizen education.

4.1.4 Technology

The interviews demonstrate the importance of technology in the field of information verification (AVG.=4.89). Fact-checkers use simple tools available online, like reverse image and video search, advanced search, translation services, geolocation, image forensics and text detection in images. Reverse searching through search engines such as Google and research with open sources (OSINT) in particular stands out among the organizations consulted. It is of particular use when a conflict occurs in a distant or difficult to access place, as has been the case during the war in Ukraine, and is effective in identifying how long a piece of content has been circulating or if it was already in circulation before a certain date. Some organizations offer an array of tools so anyone can verify content. Although technology is key, more traditional techniques can also be utilized, such as talking to sources or collecting clues in the comments of the publication to be verified.

Outside of online techniques, fact-checking organizations may take a chance on developing other technologies. The objectives are diverse and are intended to meet the needs of the different stages of digital verification. On the one hand, systems are developed that allow databases to be optimized for automation, thus improving the categorization of information and the inputting process. Another focus is on communication systems such as chatbots to manage interactions with users, receive queries and clues, identify alerts, and keep information up to date. There is also evidence of organizations developing their own software to transcribe political speeches, something that frees up time for journalists to work on other things.

Given the usefulness of automation in this field and its ability to deal with large volumes of data, some organizations have a team of engineers dedicated to the development of specific AI fact-checking mechanisms. In other cases, development arises from collaborative projects and networks, as in the case of InVID WeVerify. Described as the "Swiss army knife" of verification, it focuses on content from both social networks and audiovisual formats. This includes the retrieval of contextual information, keyframes and

Aware of the impact of technology, the fact-checkers recognize the importance of the use of mobile journalism (AVG.=4.56), especially in dissemination, and of artificial intelligence (AVG.=4.11). The same is true of automation to a lesser extent (AVG.=3.78).

Looking to the near future, the responses indicate a focus on artificial intelligence as a broad concept that also encompasses automation. The prevailing view is that this technology, though also presenting certain challenges, can be useful in combating disinformation.

On one hand, AI could provide a more general view of what is happening to detect verifiable content. It may be able to detect potentially misleading content, patterns and signs of virality, and could be applied to the systematization of databases, the monitoring of accounts on social networks, the filtering of statements and claim matching. In this way, early alerts could be generated while a fake news campaign is still brewing, allowing for the management of queries with automated responses for cases already verified.

On the other hand, AI presents great difficulties as a double-edged sword, as it is capable of producing fake news that is increasingly more efficient, polished and difficult to distinguish from the real world. Deepfakes are a prime example of this. It seems that the only solution

to this problem is AI itself ("there will come a time when only an AI will be able to detect if that image is real"). Nonetheless, those interviewed aren't aware of current examples of content that can't be determined as true or false (though this is expected in the future).

In today's world, the recent arrival of AI and the popularization of certain tools is noteworthy. In fact, underneath this is the potential for even greater technological advances. At the same time, the interviews indicate that it remains difficult to access powerful tools that are reliable in identifying falsehoods. It is more a matter of AI being able to lighten the tedious and automatable workload of digital investigation, to optimize resources and function as an "assistant or co-pilot" that helps journalists.

- **Technology helps fact-checkers**, who use tools available online and OSINT techniques, in addition to developing their own solutions for the most advanced challenges.
- **Fact-checkers apply technology in different phases** such as database optimization, query management automation, and comparisons of content and verifications.
- **Artificial intelligence is emerging as the technology of the modern age**, both for its potential for verification and for the risks and challenges it entails.

4.1.5 Trends to improve democratic and social qualities

Verifying sponsored content

The verification of sponsored content is problematic and has raised much concern among fact-checkers. They affirm that the quality standards for the verification of this type of content must be kept very clear, and the same is true in terms of thoroughness and transparency. Some fact-checkers who do not partake in such work are indeed aware that others do, and have no doubts about the quality of their work. Though the complicated nature of such tasks is recognized, they add that it is always possible to maintain a position of independence.

One fact-checker points out that in electoral campaigns, politicians sponsor their own electoral content and advertisements, the contents of which are verified so long as all the criteria implied by their methodology is met. They emphasize that the risk of the content going viral, and the damage it may cause, is more important than whether the content is sponsored or not.

Another highlights how sponsored content is designed to position a message, meaning that one must be particularly attentive when seeking to identify any misinformation that may sneak in. The fact-checker must know what to look for and be very clear with the sponsor, as the latter often wants to include a message that serves to advertise, something that would transform the piece into advertising rather than journalism.

Other fact-checkers warn of branded content. It is becoming practically indistinguishable from regular journalistic content for the average reader. Some fact-checkers understand that an explanation of what sponsored content is, what tactics it uses, and instructions to audiences on how to detect it, must be provided.

From the media's perspective, sponsored content can be verified so long as that media outlet is not involved in the sponsorship. Take, for example, fake medicines. The media has tried to tackle this, yet these hoaxes maintain a presence online thanks to sponsorships. Therefore, content must always be checked prior to being published, regardless of whether it is sponsored or not. Put another way, content cannot be immediately published simply because it is sponsored.

Therefore, if there is any doubt as to the truthfulness of sponsored content, it shouldn't be published. The Facebook ad library has made it possible to see how much money political parties and companies invest, as well as how much they spend on their paid publications designed to reach the maximum number of people. With this information, it can be confirmed if a publication is sponsored and that there is a campaign behind it.

Platforms for the distribution of verified content

There are no differences between fact-checkers and media that carry out verification for the dissemination of verified content. The main stages for the distribution of verified content are corporate websites and social networks. On the latter, a certain preference for X is noted, as is the tendency to adapt to the formats of audio-visual networks such as Instagram and, to an even greater extent, TikTok

When Meta partners evaluate on Facebook, the verifications are stated and justified openly so that users can see the reasons behind the ratings (whether false, partially false, out of context, etc.). The most popular social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok and YouTube are used to disseminate this content.

Other examples of broadcast spaces are podcasts, blogs, newsletters (both traditional and through instant messaging), windows on Twitch, broadcasts to subscribers, corporate group channels group (in the case of television channels) or other television programs related to verification, and even direct contact with the audience through WhatsApp. Ultimately, the aim is to ensure that verified content is distributed on the same channels in which disinformation is spread, and to do so in as many spaces as possible. Particular attention is paid to those channels that are most innovative or relevant at the moment.

Mechanisms to verify the public's consumption of verified information

Among fact-checkers, there are no other established systems used for measurement except their own metrics. For example, although they receive quick replies, most users do not confirm receipt of newsletters that are sent weekly on WhatsApp. However, sometimes it is the audiences themselves that perform and send off the verification. In other instances, word of mouth, and what the people closest to them say, remains very important. In these cases, fact-checkers pay close attention to community feedback, rather than focusing on purely quantitative data.

Similarly, fact-checkers have begun to develop protocols outside of the publication of verified content, both in terms of media literacy programs and specific sets of actions with political parties, so that verification is performed prior to the dissemination of disinformation. It is noted that fake news is more consumed than verified information.

In the case of television, more immediate feedback is seen as users send queries on relevant topics. This practice aids audio-visual services and provides confirmation of the audiences' belief in the work they do as fact-checkers. It also fosters an atmosphere of loyalty among an audience that can collaborate and demand more, making them active participants in the fight against the disinformation.

In addition to the importance of their own daily consumption data, some media outlets emphasize the importance of reports on the overall communication landscape. Those consulted include the Reuters Institute's *Digital News Report* and those from IAB Spain.

Expectations regarding the involvement of platforms in the fight against disinformation

Media outlets and fact-checkers agree that platforms have a key role to play in the fight against disinformation because they are the primary means through which this type of bad information is spread. There is significant disparity between the actions taken by some platforms when compared to others. For example, Facebook has the Third-Party Fact Checking Program that collaborates with verification organizations to verify content and disable it.

It is noted that Google promotes verifications. When a Google search is performed, verifications are more relevant than disinformation. However, interviewees point out that other platforms such as YouTube or X have been less proactive in taking steps to reduce the amount of disinformation, or deactivate it, on their platforms. It is also mentioned that users who share fake stories may be punished.

Fact-checkers allude to the new legislative context of the European Union following the enactment of the Digital Services Law. They also refer to the commitments acquired by the platforms adhering to the Code of good practices on disinformation and the risk of being sanctioned if they do not do enough in the fight against disinformation. It appears that, so far, many fall short of these requirements. As such, platforms will have to improve accountability and be more responsible in the use of the information they handle.

Alongside this, more drastic measures are needed to eliminate content that furthers disinformation, especially when it is dangerous. Greater transparency regarding decision-making processes is also required. At the European level, the role of the EFCSN as an interlocutor with community institutions to verify whether the platforms are acting in line with the agreements is significant. In fact, this compliance or lack thereof will be one of the criteria that the European Commission will consider when deciding whether to sanction a platform. It is believed that the EFCSN or IBERIFIER themselves could act as pressure groups to help ensure that platforms observe these agreements. However, those interviewed hint at a double standard: on the one hand, the platforms allocate funds for fact-checking and create mechanisms to report content, while on the other, it is on these platforms that disinformation is most spread. They aren't convinced, for example, that dealing with bad information is a priority for X.

The media argue that we should have the right to know how algorithms work and that platforms should be more accessible. Furthermore, they argue that if a piece of content is refuted, the platform hosting the content should take some kind of action. On TikTok, for

example, videos proven to be untruthful aren't taken down. In fact, 20% of their news videos contain some misinformation.

Ethical considerations

When asking fact-checkers and the media about the importance of ethics and deontology in information verification, the response is resounding. The maximum score is achieved (AVG.=5.00). Both agree that the journalistic process must be based on facts and data, and that independence and neutrality must be maintained. With this in mind, it is essential to explain the methodology and the steps through which conclusions are reached. Similar to how a scientific experiment is conducted, the implementation of the same steps leads to the same results.

Also highlighted is that information should never be hidden based on one's own prejudices. There must be transparency with respect to sources, meaning that anyone can access that person's profile and see what they do for a living. It all comes down to the right to truthful information, since information is considered to be the medium through which democracy flows.

Rigor means the quest for maximum precision. The task at hand here is even more delicate as someone is being accused of lying. Honesty means telling the truth and therefore is the appropriate approach. Neutrality does not entail granting the same space to those who say one thing as to those who say the opposite. Rather, it must be understood as transparency and, hence, the importance of always citing sources and being able to replicate the research if the citizen wishes. The investigation of data is the most important part of checking information and verifying facts.

Media often don't feel the need to discredit fake news stories unless they are viral; claiming that giving them attention and treating them as real news stories isn't journalism. As such, in their eyes, the level of virality determines the level of risk. Honesty and impartiality are also cited as fundamental ethical considerations. Consequently, the need to always utilize at least three filters is noted.

When producing accurate information, the image and brand of the medium are also at stake. Organized collaborations between journalists dedicated to verification and the editorial staff are evident. This can go as far as the fact that correspondents act as fundamental sources for international information.

Self-regulation mechanisms

Fact-checkers combine self-regulation with methodological rigor as guarantors of accurate information. Their combined use constitutes an almost scientific process. Editorial councils have been created to ensure compliance with editorial statutes. The absence of an editorial line is thought to deliver, by definition, journalism that is both descriptive and neutral. In the specific case of agencies, they are aware that any mistakes made on their part would actually be understood as errors committed by the media outlets that they work for.

IBERIFIER
Iberian Media Research
& Fact-Checking

Some fact-checkers allude to the field's international expansion to highlight the strength of the editorial system in providing different perspectives and guaranteeing accurate information. Others claim that their methodologies are totally transparent processes and that their policies were formulated to ensure that all necessary corrections are made.

Media outlets see themselves as separate cogs of the same machine, working together. Some hold preparatory news meetings in which specific verification topics are discussed. Other meetings concern verification on the web. In other initiatives, the media are developing their own editorial statutes as fundamental tools to provide explanations regarding verification-related decisions. Public television is subject to parliamentary control and has an audience ombudsman that gives viewers a voice. Furthermore, as it belongs to the European Broadcasting Union, quality standards are also required.

International alliances with verification organizations and associations

The international efforts of fact-checking communities such as the IFCN or the EFCSN deserve to be highlighted. The yearly membership evaluations of the former represent an exercise in credibility. Membership of IBERIFIER entails the unification of the academic and professional worlds, so that verifications shared in the repositories stimulate academic research. This means that fact-checkers can benefit from ideas and visions that are strictly theoretical.

Alliances with the European Commission are also seen to ensure standards of quality, independence, impartiality and transparency. These types of connections seem very necessary for digital platforms, since the verification of information on these spaces can generate substantial insecurity and uncertainty for users. International associations and organizations help guarantee reliability. Similarly, the idea of not limiting disinformation to a local phenomenon is also stressed.

The importance of alliances in providing data and collaborating with other sectors also plays a fundamental role in media literacy and promoting projects. The media still see these current formations as insufficient and argue that working alongside fact-checkers would be a step in the right direction to combat disinformation.

- **Nothing prevents the verification of sponsored content.** However, the quality standards and analysis methodology must be very clear, as sponsors always have their own interests. Branded content poses a threat that transcends verification, affecting journalism as a whole since audiences lack the level of media literacy to identify this type of content.
- **Expectations are low in regards to the intensification of the fight against disinformation on social platforms**. A paradox exists. On the one hand, platforms allocate funds to fight against disinformation, but on the other, they do not implement mechanisms that reduce the spread of such stories, since it is on these types of platforms where fake news is most likely to go viral.
- Regardless of the self-regulation mechanisms that each fact-checker or medium implements**, links to international organizations and associations improve the quality standards and methodological rigor** of the verification.

4.1.6 The main challenges that verification will face over the coming years

Fact-checkers face a huge challenge given that the forces of disinformation are more technologically advanced than that of verification. Indeed, technologies not even originally designed to disinform, are now being used for just that. It is believed that artificial intelligence could produce even more false online information. Furthermore, it is warned that AI has different tools at its disposal to generate even more sophisticated disinformation about certain groups.

However, it has also been observed that AI has the ability to obtain a more general view of the viral online content that may contain bad information. By recognizing patterns and generating early alerts, verification work is actually made easier. There will likely come a time when the only way to distinguish something generated by one AI is through use of another AI. Of further note, that sections of society place more faith in what they consider 'alternative' media, than in traditional media outlets, is noted here. These people believe that these former mediums are more likely to tell the truth, something that the elites in society want to keep hidden from the public.

For media that practices verification, it is very difficult to eradicate disinformation in more private communication spaces such as WhatsApp and (to an even greater extent) TikTok. This is because of the type of audiences that receive and consume such content. Media and fact-checkers agree that the relevant technologies need to be fed messages, statements and constructions that unveil the common traits that appear within fake news. With this, they can start to screen and weed out bad information. The importance of technology for translation, transcription and identification of manipulated images is also highlighted. Regarding engagement with audiences, entertaining information techniques that have the audience in mind and build connections with the user are favoured. For this purpose, measures are proposed such as the preparation of investigative reports to reveal the actors behind the disinformation. The media recognizes that they are having a hard time keeping up with the extremely fast speed of social networks and fake stories.

As a solution, fact-checkers and media see media literacy as the best way to educate society on the risks of disinformation from a very early age. To this end, they argued that media literacy should be a subject taught in formal education, starting at primary school. Media also point out that literacy implies taking the media to the streets and paying special attention to the most disadvantaged groups.

- **Fact-checkers admit that artificial intelligence poses significant challenges to their work.** They understand that it is both able to generate sophisticated disinformation and identify content that may be false.
- **Automation must be used to detect hoaxes on social networks.** The importance of applying technology for translation, transcription and identification of manipulated images is noted.
- **Media literacy is key to fighting disinformation.** According to media, it should be a subject taught from primary education onwards.

4.2   Portugal

4.2.1   The importance of verification in today's society

Those interviewed agree (AVG.=4.00) that the existence of fact-checkers is important in determining the journalistic and democratic quality of a country.

The interviews performed demonstrate that verification has always been part of journalism. It is important to remember, however, that fact-checking refers to a language associated with social networks and the amount of information available, the result of a series of technological and social factors that allow the distribution of information 24 hours a day. Interviewees contend that this is a response to a new phenomenon caused by social networks that use their own language. It is primarily understood as a reaction to the dissemination of information on social networks.

Verification platforms are doing what traditional journalism doesn't do. One of the interviewees points out that fact-checking media has a mission to fulfil, and this is because other newspapers have also failed. Verification is a response to the inability of today's newsrooms to react to modern phenomena. The precariousness of newspapers, examples of journalists with little experience, and increasingly younger editorial staff indicate the deterioration of the situation. Through continuous and systematic use of the verification process, fact-checkers guarantee accuracy far greater than that of the general press. Some believe that the quality of political discourse has improved thanks to verification. It is also important to note that verification has expanded to respond to the actions of other actors who demand different journalism.

When it comes to differentiating between the function of media and fact-checkers, interviewees argue that the latter group perform a more refined and focused version of verification. Their work is extremely systematic. As such, they have perfected the verification process. Sometimes, the secret to success is doing the same thing a thousand times every day. Another important difference is that the method is central to the verification exercise. In traditional journalism the story is central, whereas in verification it is the method. It is always necessary to identify the sources of the research process.

According to one of the interviewees, the level of specificity is what distinguishes an economic journalist from a political journalist. A fact checker must be skilled enough to analyze types of language that are different from traditional journalism. In essence, the roles are the same apart from this. Furthermore, identifying mistakes takes on greater relevance on social media. For example, it is necessary to verify a statement by the prime minister, or a debate, in real time. However, it is also necessary to verify its veracity after the fact. This second action, in which the statement is checked against the facts, is needed when analyzing certain assertions made by politicians and those responsible for social intervention.

- **A response to the growing use of social networks.**
- **Verification is a more robust job.**
- **The need for a secondary verification of statements after they are made.**

4.2.2   Synergies and the production of information

The origin of verified news topics

The choice of topics depends mainly on the current landscape. Several criteria are used to decide which specific stories to pick. Those interviewed do not all agree in terms of the importance of virality when deciding which stories to debunk. Some consider virality to be one of the most important criteria, as it reveals a topic of interest, while others focus mainly on editorial criteria, highlighting current affairs, political issues, health, terrorism and climate change. One of the media outlets also expressed concern over giving visibility to issues that do not deserve much attention, believing that verification can also contribute to the dissemination of issues that are irrelevant to society. These stories may get caught in echo chambers and form "filter bubbles". Meanwhile, the people who consume said content aren't interested in knowing if it is real or not.

It is also important to consider the notoriety of the people involved, or who appear as prominent figures in the content.

Only one of the media outlets here has an agreement with Facebook. 50 posts are analyzed a month. They maintain that the choice of topics is their own and therefore they uphold their editorial independence. Basically, Facebook shares a database with content, though the media outlet chooses what to verify. Lastly, Facebook analyzes the scope of the refutation and can determine, for example, that 50 pieces of content were shared that generated around 500,000 interactions.

Current affairs, politics and health are of central importance. For each, the perception of what is most relevant in the current context is key. For example, during an electoral campaign, when politicians are most prominently in the spotlight, their statements are sought above all else. A person's notoriety becomes relevant. If someone is a politician or a well-known figure, that determines their status in the fact-checking hierarchy.

Then, there are several defining periods, such as the pandemic, during which there was a lot of misinformation about health issues. Doubts were raised regarding the truthfulness of some content. Of course, at that time, health problems were the most pressing issues. When a state budget is presented, economic considerations become more important. One media outlet presented topics in the following order: health, war, politics and environmental issues, the last of which are on the rise. The editor explains an apparent migration of ideologies that has been observed: many groups that were associated with COVID-19-related disinformation are now supporting Russia and opposing Ukraine.

Quality of sources

When determining the quality of sources, primary sources, original reports and statements are sought. Sources similar to traditional journalism, especially peer-accredited experts, are considered reliable. Finding the primary source is essential. One of the editors mentions that his journalists may tell him that they read something on X, which is a credible platform, though this is not enough. Instead, what is needed is the primary source, the first medium where the information was published. It is also preferable to speak to the people directly

involved. In addition to the original source, the interviewees highlight the importance of institutional reports and specialists in various areas. Those who covered the topic of the pandemic cannot now express opinions on environmental issues. The editors agree on the importance of using experts accredited by both academia and peers. The list of specialists is created editorially and is carefully selected, taking into account the expert's training.

All those interviewed expressed very positive attitudes (AVG.=5.00) towards making public the sources consulted in the refutations that are published. However, issuing a verdict was viewed less positively (AVG.=3.67). In fact, the deconstruction of the narrative was seen as more relevant. Furthermore, in the opinion of the people interviewed, the definition of "what is partially true" is questionable.

The role of mobile platforms

Despite recognizing that the mobile phone is the tool most used by citizens to access information, it is not yet used especially for fact verification. That some were seemingly surprised at the question reflects this chasm. When asked if they verified facts only through mobile phone tools, two interviewees argued that it was not particularly relevant. In fact, they stated that they mainly used the computer as it is the tool that they most frequently use in their work. However, one of them stated that at his media company they regularly use phones to carry out all types of journalism, including that relating to visual products. This does not involve the use of specific tools designed for mobile phones. Everyone recognizes that in the near future, mobile phones could be used more for fact-checking. In short, verification is still primarily done via laptops.

- Virality is not the only criterion used for fact-checking. **The context and the protagonists are important.**
- **It is important to make public the sources consulted** in the refutations that are published.
- **Even today, mobile phones are rarely used in verification-related tasks.**

4.2.3 Audience involvement

Portuguese fact-checkers consider the participation of the public in verification to be relevant (AVG.=3.83), although the response is not unanimous and represents a collage of different points of view. As such, overall, moderate importance is given to public participation, with two editors describing it as such. Only one editor stressed the need to listen to people and specifically argued for this kind of participation.

According to the editors, many of the requests made by the public are perceived as selfish and related to policies promoted by activists. Some messages are simply impulsive expressions. "They're not interested," they say. Another contends that "some people also participate just to defame, but that's also part of it".

The sole outlet that has its own email address for citizens to send their requests, claims to only make use of approximately 10% of the requests received. The other media outlets receive suggestions through their normal contact addresses and the addresses of the journalists.

Fact-checkers don't think that association with transparency, cooperation and quality initiatives is particularly important for citizens (AVG.=3.33). One of the interviewees argues that they don't believe that the public can always assess if a process is transparent or not, because ultimately they don't know what the processes are. Others give this response a 4 because they trust that readers perceive that these are works that have to comply with transparency processes.

Media literacy achieved a good rating from the participants (AVG.=4.67), with two of them attributing the maximum score to this item. Of note are a project that promotes several educational initiatives on what journalism is, and a school magazine contest. Another medium participates in conferences on verification in alliance with organizations. However, a third of the participants are not active in this area of media literacy.

The implementation of marketing and user acquisition strategies achieved the highest score (AVG.=5.00). One of the interviewees states that "only those who live in a dream world can think that they are not important." Scaling up is essential to later establish editorial alliances. He even states that "the more funding a project earns, the more independent it is." The other interviewees admit that there are gray areas that can affect the independence of newspapers, but that this can only be avoided with transparency. As such, it is important that media outlets make clear what they are doing. Therefore, there is consensus, and the prevalent belief is that it is crucial that these processes are very clear to eliminate any doubts or suspicions.

- **There exist few channels for audience participation.**
- **Media literacy is considered fundamental.**
- As long as there is transparency, **marketing strategies do not undermine independence**.

4.2.4 Technology

The interviews carried out provide evidence of how important technology is in the field of information verification (AVG.=4.67). It is highly useful to detect erroneous information and to verify it as it circulates, in the fight against the clock.

Taking into account the importance of the technological impact, the fact-checkers see the use of mobile journalism (AVG.=3.67) as a relevant tool. This may come as surprising given that it is seldom utilized in verification tasks. The same is true of artificial intelligence (AVG.=4.50), and automation, though the latter receives a somewhat lower rating (AVG.=4.00).

Fact-checkers use open access tools from Google, such as Google Images or TinEye. One of the media outlets interviewed uses a tool provided by Facebook, through which a large number of pages can be selected and examined to see whether they contain any potential disinformation. In contrast, no media outlets have taken it upon themselves to create their own verification technology, though some do have it in mind for the future.

The benefits that technology brings to verification are made clear. Interviewees point to its usefulness in detecting disinformation, speeding up the verification process and even accessing raw data. The issue of how quick we react to disinformation seems to be key.

Interviewees agree on these main points regarding technology: that it can speed up detection, prevent the spread of fake news, and help spread refutations. In any case, they also highlight the role of human analysis and the coordination of editorial tasks.

4.2.5 Trends to improve democratic and social qualities

Verifying sponsored content

The responses indicate a lack of consensus on this matter. Yes, it is considered necessary, but many doubts and reservations are also expressed. Various opinions are put forward. One of the interviewees believes that the verification of sponsored content is possible, but that doing so does not make sense. Since it must be properly identified and we know that it is sponsored, the content belongs to a different sphere of information. Indeed, there are many doubts surrounding this issue. One of the interviewees argues that sponsored content should be treated as misleading and checked if it is false. Another of the interviewees highlights their doubts. "I can't give a precise answer," they said. "This parameter presents some difficulties for journalism itself, from the point of view of production and from a verification perspective. Verifying content that is not eminently journalistic makes us somewhat uncomfortable."

Plataforms for the distribution of verified content

Open corporate websites and social networks are the main vehicles for the distribution of verified content. One of them claims to channel everything through their website, a TV show, radio, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, X and LinkedIn. Another uses the usual publication networks of the central medium: the website, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram and X. Another publishes on the web and on the morning portion of a radio program. Later, this content is distributed through social networks and through channels, mainly Facebook, X, Instagram and a newsletter.

Mechanisms to verify the public's consumption of verified information

Among the fact-checkers, no other measurement systems are detected outside of their own metrics, internal indicators and reader reactions. One of the interviewees mentions that the reach of the TV program is apparent on Mondays: "Today, unlike at the start, the public know what we do," says an editor.

Expectations regarding the involvement of platforms in the fight against disinformation

The interviews demonstrate that collaborations with society and universities, among other institutions, are key to the fight against disinformation. The editors mention cooperation and partnerships and point out the key role to be played by universities and research centers as collaborators in these tasks.

Ethical considerations

When asking fact-checkers and the media about the importance of ethics and deontology in information verification, the answer is unanimous. The maximum score is attained (AVG.=5.00). Ethics and deontology are considered essential by all those interviewed. Existing codes, such as the IFCN, are considered fundamental pillars in regards to these values.

Self-regulation mechanisms

In addition to the international ICFN codes followed by three media outlets, there is evidence of other self-regulation mechanisms. One media outlet is committed to the rejection of partisanship. Its journalists sign a code of conduct when they join the organization. It contains 8 points, of which 3 or 4 affirm a commitment to not take up positions in forums on behalf of the media. This does not mean that they cannot hold their own political opinions, but rather that they must keep these outside of the environment in which they work. Great value is also given to fundamental rights and public freedoms. They do not accept any action that may give rise to discrimination based on birth, ethnic origin, gender, disability, age, or any other factor. Workers should refrain from working on topics in which they have a personal interest, and should not have any economic or political investment in a political party. They cannot accept or offer any special treatment, and must comply with all the precepts of the method applied by the medium in question. A basic rule is to respect people's privacy, even those who spread disinformation. As such, information regarding those that send such stories is also to be kept hidden. Indeed, many of these people aren´t aware of their part in spreading fake news. One of the newspapers mentions how their distributor also participates in regards to fact-checking.

The three persons in charge cherish the set of principles proposed by the IFCN body, viewing them as essential work guidelines and guarantors of transparency in verification processes.

- Those responsible have **doubts over whether to intervene in the verification of sponsored content.**
- **The platforms used to disseminate refutations are the same as the media.**
- **Self-regulation mechanisms and international codes are considered fundamental in this activity.**

4.2.6 The main challenges that verification will face over the coming years

Respondents highlight three major challenges: the speed of response, the number of denials, and the scope of the work. The extent to which "the truth is catching up to the lies, in terms of speed," in the words of one of the interviewees, is yet to be revealed. At this point, it is important to be able to intervene from the beginning of the spread of disinformation. Another challenge will be responding to the amount of disinformation that exists: "Being able to go to everyone," according to one editor. That is, being able to satisfy the overall need for verification. The need for refutations to be disseminated effectively, so that all this effort has the desired effect, is also mentioned. For one interviewee, reach is crucial. If accurate corrections don't reach the people, it is impossible to dismantle the lies

and set the facts straight. Another interviewee draws attention to the fact that debunking stories does not in fact provide undeserved visibility to issues that, for whatever reason, are better left ignored.

- The importance of **mobile journalism** in verification is acknowledged, **but is still underutilized.**
- **Elementary verification tools are being used**, mainly Google Images and TinEye.
- **The main challenge in the future will be to respond quickly to all requests in a way that is expeditious and efficient given the quantity of the workload.**

5. Trends

Between 2018 and 2019, fact-checking platforms were created in Spain and Portugal, from native media, dedicated specifically to this purpose. They have been formed in two ways: as non-profit foundations or associations, or as companies in the media and audiovisual production sector, generally based on an initiative of professionals with previous experience in fact-checking journalism. Arguments that 'traditional' journalism was failing, and that the media were incapable of reacting to modern phenomena such as misinformation, helped bring about these platforms.

Media outlets have launched initiatives against disinformation. In Spain and Portugal, they have focused on verifying false content circulating online, as well as on literacy and training activities. Media want synergy with and between platforms, and with other channels, to combine digital verification activity with broadcasting in information spaces like television and radio. In fact-checking, objectivity and refined processes are prevalent. On the other hand, media experiences more limitations as they must cater to the interests of their audience.

Fact-checking initiatives are the first line of defence against disinformation, having a profound impact on journalistic and democratic quality. The origin of the verified content is diverse, though it mainly comes from statements by important figures (especially politicians), conversations on open social networks, chats and messaging channels. The two foremost factors to consider when deciding whether or not to verify a piece of content are its virality and the potential damage it could inflict on society. As a result of the verification process, there is usually a verdict. However, this is not obligatory. In fact, explanatory and contextual articles are often opted for instead.

Fact-checkers form networks and strategic alliances, joining forces to face major challenges together. Through adherence to the code of principles of the main network, the International Fact-Checking Network, fact-checkers from Spain and Portugal have participated in special global coverage initiatives such as #CoronaVirusFactsAlliance and #UkraineFacts, and in conferences such as the Global Fact Summit. Other cooperative action is evident in EDMO and the Iberian hub IBERIFIER. These developments also affect internationalization and the diversification of financing. New organizations such as Factchequeado or the European Fact-Checking Standards Network have been born from the cooperation between fact-checkers. The alliances bring fact-checkers and technology companies together to increase verification activity on platforms. This is most evident on social networks. The Digital Services Law (EU) has already called for more commitment from technology companies regarding this kind of activity.

Cross-media collaboration is driven by projects, networks and partnerships. Alliances between the media and social and academic institutions were started with the aim of coming together to fight disinformation, whether it was that related to key events such as elections or the COVID-19 pandemic, or during more stable periods, as a way to strengthen trust. These same cooperative initiatives promote their internationalization by participation in global networks and events, as well as the advancement and transfer of knowledge in projects with universities and social and professional organizations.

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Transparency and methodology are the foundations of the verification process. The step-by-step description of the verification and validation procedures ensures that the verdicts were verified and verifiable. The different strategies implemented by fact-checking initiatives are based on publicizing the content verification requirements and the steps to be executed during the process, including the sources and resources used, internal audit mechanisms and, in some cases, voting. Corrections, as applied in accordance with the rectification policy, confirm the importance of the traceability of a publication. Methodological meticulousness, a guarantor of veracity, is based on an almost scientific approach and the application of self-regulation mechanisms.

Media and information literacy is crucial to educate society regarding misinformation. Media and fact-checkers undergo training in competencies and skills so as to be able to operate in a world of increasing information disorders. In this sense, they understand that literacy keeps us one step ahead of the problem. The citizenry taking a more active role in these processes is favoured over a kind of verification that simply reacts to content that is already circulating.

Turning the audience into a community means new avenues for collaborative verification. In general, it is desirable for the audience to participate in the identification of content to be verified and in the detection phase (though to differing extents depending on the organizations). Primarily, audience contribution comes through their use of mechanisms to propose content to be verified. Here, the public has an open line of communication with the fact-checkers. In some cases, when the community itself is consulted by the fact-checkers, they make possible the building of a database of experts who participate in verification.

Technology is a useful tool for fact-checkers in the fight against disinformation. The technological resources used in the verification process (such as reverse image and video search, advanced search, translation services, geolocation, visual forensics and text detection in image) are, to a large extent, accessible to the general public. Open source intelligence (OSINT) and reverse image search are key resources. Some organizations develop their own solutions to automate their databases, improve classification or enrich records more automatically. Advances in communication systems, such as chatbots, have been identified as offering new ways to manage audience interaction.

Artificial intelligence is seen as both a vital tool and an imminent challenge for journalistic verification. Fact-checkers recognize that this technology could bring swifter, earlier detection of potentially adverse content, of its patterns and of the marks of virality. Furthermore, it helps optimize certain parts of the verification process, primarily the monitoring of social networks and claim matching, since the speed of response will be a key factor in the near future as disinformation continues to evolve and surge in both volume and speed of diffusion. At the same time, it is recognized that increasingly sophisticated AI-generated content poses a significant threat.

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6.   What is IBERIFIER?

IBERIFIER is a digital media observatory in Spain and Portugal, which is funded by the European Commission and linked to the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO). **IBERIFIER is neither a fact-checking site nor a media outlet. Rather, IBERIFIER's main mission is to study and analyze the Iberian digital media ecosystem and address the problem of misinformation in both Spain and Portugal.** To achieve this, it has developed the following functions:

1. Scientific research and analysis for the security and development of the digital media ecosystem of the Iberian market.
2. The verification of data in Spanish, Portuguese and Catalan.
3. Computer and data research aimed at developing systems for the early detection of disinformation.
4. Strategic analysis of the impacts of disinformation in areas ranging from politics and economics to social and security issues, science and technology.
5. The promotion of media literacy through activities aimed at citizens, especially young people and information professionals.

Therefore, IBERIFIER's work focuses on five main lines of investigation:

1. Research on the characteristics and trends of the Iberian digital media ecosystem.
2. The development of computer technologies for the early detection of disinformation.
3. The verification of disinformation in the Iberian region.
4. The preparation of strategic reports on disinformation threats, both for public knowledge and for Spanish and Portuguese authorities.
5. The promotion of media literacy initiatives, aimed at journalists and reporters, young people and society as a whole.

IBERIFIER is coordinated by the University of Navarra and is made up of eleven other universities, seven fact-checking organizations and news agencies, and six multidisciplinary research centers (26 partners in total):

a) Universities:
   1. ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (Lisbon, Portugal)
   2. Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (Madrid, Spain)
   3. Universidad CEU San Pablo (Madrid, Spain)
   4. Universidad de Granada (Granada, Spain)
   5. Universidad Miguel Hernández (Elche, Spain)
   6. Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (Madrid, Spain)
   7. Universidad Rey Juan Carlos (Madrid, spain)
   8. Universidad de Aveiro (Aveiro, Portugal)
   9. Universidad de Santiago de Compostela (Santiago de Compostela, Spain)
   10. Universidad Politécnica de València (Valencia, Spain)
   11. Universidad de València (Valencia, Spain)

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b) Fact-checking organizations and news agencies:
  1. EFE Verifica (Madrid, Spain)
  2. Maldita.es (Madrid, Spain)
  3. Newtral (Madrid, Spain) [collaborator]
  4. Polígrafo (Lisbon, Portugal)
  5. Prova dos Factos - Público (Lisbon, Portugal) [collaborator]
  6. Verificat (Barcelona, Spain)
  7. VerificaRTVE
  8. Lusa, Agência de Noticias de Portugal SA
c) Multidisciplinary research centers:
  1. Associação Literacia para os Media e Jornalismo (ALPMJ) (ALPMJ) (Lisbon, Portugal)
  2. Barcelona Supercomputing Center (Barcelona, Spain)
  3. Centro Protocolar de Formação Profissional para Jornalistas (CENJOR) (Lisbon, Portugal)
  4. Fundación Española para la Ciencia y la Tecnología (FECYT) (Madrid, Spain)
  5. OberCom - Observatório da Comunicação (Lisbon, Portugal)
  6. Real Instituto Elcano (Madrid, Spain)

Although the consortium focuses its activities in Spain and Portugal, its work reaches beyond these countries. In this way, IBERIFIER contributes to the achievement of EDMO objectives. The international dimension of the consortium means that IBERIFIER's impact is felt in the sociocultural and linguistic spheres of all of Latin America, as well as in Africa and Asia, where more than 600 people speak Spanish in 21 countries and Portuguese in another 9.

IBERIFIER's most recent work focuses on the use of artificial intelligence technologies for the early detection of disinformation. It also analyzes the impact of disinformation on the digital media ecosystem, both in terms of the continued promotion of media literacy and to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice of Disinformation on digital platforms.

Lastly, it should be noted that IBERIFIER uses dissemination, exploitation and participation strategies to guarantee the exchange, application and effective participation of the different stakeholders, with the aim of making research results accessible for citizens.

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IBERIFIER – Iberian Digital Media Research & Fact-Checking

IBERIFIER is a digital media observatory in Spain and Portugal funded by the European Commission, linked to the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO). It is made up of thirteen universities, five fact-checking organizations and news agencies, and five multidisciplinary research centers.

Its main mission is to analyze the Iberian digital media ecosystem and tackle the problem of misinformation. To do this, it focuses its research on five lines of work:

1. Research on the characteristics and trends of the Iberian digital media ecosystem.

2. Development of computational technologies for the early detection of misinformation.

3. Fact-checking of misinformation in the Iberian territory.

4. Strategic reports on threats of disinformation, both for public knowledge and for the authorities of Spain and Portugal.

5. Promotion of media literacy initiatives, aimed at journalists and reporters, young people and society as a whole.

For more information look for the project website iberifier.eu and the X account @iberifier.

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