



IO3 - Guide-toolkit on peer-to-peer myth busting action

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 **YOUTH
MYTHBUSTERS**
THE PROJECT



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. DO NOT FORGET! SOME BASIC STEPS THAT COULD BE VERY HELPFUL IN FIGHTING FAKE NEWS	2
3. WORKING AS A TEAM...ALWAYS BETTER	2
4. MYTH BUSTERS: TEAMS OF PEERS TO EXPOSE FAKE NEWS .	2
5. PEER LEADER FOR A PEER TEAM	2
6. REFERENCES.....	2
TERMS & CONDITIONS FOR THE SELECTION OF THE BEST MYTH BUSTING ACTION AT TRANSNATIONAL LEVEL	2

1. INTRODUCTION

Fake news, disinformation, misinformation and malinformation are serious threats in today's digital world. Information disorder is feeding by the fast pace that information travels in today's media ecosystem and the abundance of online sources to which we are all subjected leads people, especially the youngest, to hastily analyze the data reported by the news and to rely on information channels that are often not 100% trustable.

It is assumed that one of the main channels for spreading fake news are online communities that are also ranked as the daily news source of choice among a plurality of Gen Z.

Social media, forum, blog, as well as photos and video platforms, where the origins of information can easily be obfuscated, have a big potential to become echo-chambers of like-minded ideas making it easy for anyone to quickly spread false reports.

The concept of echo-chamber is a metaphor of an environment where sounds reverberate in an empty enclosure, and in news media refers to a virtual space in which all the news on a given topic converge and contradictory discussion is not contemplated. In this virtual environment, the ideas of the participants become more and more sharpened and strengthened by their continuous repetition.

To imagine it visually we could think of a room with a magic ball bouncing from one wall to another continuously. The ball represents the type of information, always the same, which is transmitted to all those

present in the room.

So, with an inundation of information, a penchant for picture-based platforms that can obfuscate nuance, and an emotional media landscape rife with conflicting and dubious accounts young people can and do fall into pitfalls with serious implications on their social, economic, and political outlook.

It is, therefore, urgent and necessary to make it clear that each person, with just one click, can become a multiplier of uncertain and unverifiable facts that contribute to a qualitative change in the structure and culture of social discourse and impact on how other persons form their opinions.

This guide-toolkit will be used by the Young Leaders to design and implement Youth Myth Busting Actions aiming to promote civic and political engagement of peers, including young vulnerable people and NEETs and to identify fake news, propaganda.

This document presents how to organize effective peer teams and Myth Busting Actions not only in the framework of Youth MythBusters project, but also for future myth busting activities.

In particular, it aims to:

- improve knowledge and awareness about the spread of fake news through access to a peer team;
- explore possible and more effective pathways for reducing fake news by organizing peer teams of myths busters;
- promote more responsible information and fight against fake news.

This guide-toolkit is designed to help users to reflect and plan on how to better implement concrete actions to prevent and tackle the spread of fake news, in order to create a resilience community to such threat.

2. DO NOT FORGET! SOME BASIC STEPS THAT COULD BE VERY HELPFUL IN FIGHTING FAKE NEWS

We know that it is hard to be vigilant all the time, but there are a few red flags that we cannot ignore. Five rules can be applied in everyday life to transform each of us in an attentive and conscious consumer of information.

Rule #1 "Firsthand Sources, FIRST!" The source of the news is the first element that must set off the alarm bell. Evaluate each news source and, if you don't trust it 100%, use its reports to trace back to a primary source. For example, if you are reading about a specific crime (one of the topics most affected by information disorder) and something does not convince you, remember that you can try to trace the original documents, just with a quick browser research. As a general rule, relying only on sources that make clear quotes (direct interviews where people's names are mentioned) and avoid sources that play on sensationalism. If you are still not satisfied, click out of the news to review the site, its mission, and its contact information. At the end of this process, you will have a complete idea of who posted it and can rank it as a reliable source or not.

Rule #2 "Think before you share!" Don't be impulsive, if you read a news/post that you find interesting, nice or funny and, moreover, it comes from a source that you consider 100% reliable, take a few minutes before sharing it. If you want to share something read the entire piece, the headlines can be clickbait, and think about what and how you want to share. And only if this whole process gives you positive results...go and share, always keeping in mind that what you share with your friends can end up being shared with others.

Rule #3 "Pay attention to reposts!" Reposts belong to a particular category of "sharing mechanism" and work as gossips in a little town, that every time is told there's a chance that important details get changed or lost. Once you decide to look more deeply at a story online, you should also check its origin in time to avoid the risk of "context collapse": no matter how far away or long ago a story happened, it can always sound like it is happening right now, in your neighborhood.

Rule #4 "Be active! Help debunk fake news!" Do you know that Facebook and Twitter make possible for their users to report an ambiguous post to the general system, which will then decide whether to delete it or not? Have you ever tried? If not, do it! With a simple click on "Report publication" you can be helpful for your whole online community. They are very smart and simple instruments, even though unfortunately still little known.

Rule #5 “Try to break free of your online bubbles” Be aware that in the world of social media, everything you like turns into articles, notes, posts, followers, etc... that we might be interested in. Belonging to groups or online communities is a good thing, but be careful it cannot be your only source of information. For example, if you follow a politician, social media may show only news, articles, forums, and groups that share and strengthen your opinion. Instead, it is always necessary to have the possibility to get out from your bubble by acquiring information from someone who doesn't think exactly like you. So, if you feel you are like in a bubble trying to rethink your news diet. Compare multiple sources and expand your information network to include diverse perspectives from quality sources.



3. WORKING AS A TEAM...ALWAYS BETTER

Working as a team has definitely an effective response to the widespread disinformation disorder.

Collaborating with others means to:

- Demonstrate ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams.
- Exercise flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal.
- Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the individual contributions made by each team member.

Teamwork is much more than the simple sum of the individual performances of its members. Individual contributions are enriched by interactions between team players and group dynamics. Advanced teamwork is one of the most efficient ways we know of accomplishing complex tasks and missions (Belbin, 2010).

At the foundation of effective teamwork lays openness and respect for diversity. It is essential to perceive the diversity of the members of the team as a gift that adds value to the process of collaboration and to the outcomes of working together. At first, it can be hard to manage these differences between people, it can cause misunderstandings or conflicts, but when facilitated in a proper way it is beneficial for the team; it gives different perspectives on the situation and has a positive influence on the results of the teamwork.

Teamwork is an effective method to stem the spread of fake news, given it benefits such as:

- **Fostering Creativity and Learning:** brainstorming ideas as a group prevents stale viewpoints that often come out of working alone. Combining unique perspectives from each team member into a common point of view creates more effective actions and solutions.
- **Blending Complementary Strengths:** working together make members grow their own talents but also the ones of their teammates. While a member's strength may be creative thinking, other might shine in organization and planning. It is important that everyone feel free to share their abilities but also their weakness in order each contribution can be valuable and complementary.
- **Building trust:** relying on other people builds trust, and teamwork establishes strong relationships among the members of the team. Despite occasional disagreements, an effective team enjoys working together and sharing a strong bond.
- **Teaching Conflict Resolution Skills:** conflicts inevitably happen when you put together a group of individuals. Members may have different habits and different point of views but finding a common strategy is the key to success.

So, solving problems, finishing off difficult tasks and increasing creativity, motivating unity among the group, and the members' commitment towards the common mission are just some of the key benefits of working as a team.



4. MYTH BUSTERS: TEAMS OF PEERS TO EXPOSE FAKE NEWS

Different types of teams exist and each one respond to different needs. When the goal is to create a young and collaborative working environment, the ideal solution is the establishment of a team of peers.

Indeed, this working methodology has some important benefits for members such as improving evaluation skills, increasing their thinking skills, and developing awareness of the quality of their work.

Following the specific commitment to exposing as much fake news as possible, the Youth Myth Buster teams will be composed of people who have similar experiences, backgrounds, and without any hierarchical connection between them, who work together, share skills to achieve a common mission.

And while there is no single "right way " to form and engage a peer team, some key elements are inevitable to create a successful peer team, such as member role flexibility, efficient two-way relationships, and commitment of members to create a profitable "workplace".

There are three broad approaches to engage people in a peer team:

1. **One-to-one peer team:** this involves two people who work together and help each other to accomplish their mission. This may be in a very informal context, for example, two friends coming together to talk about a shared issue (a news website that they are used to read or Facebook, Instagram accounts that they follow, etc..). In case of a more formally organized one-to-one peer team, one person may have had some training, for example in mentoring skills.
2. **Peer-to-peer group:** this involves three or more people grouping to support each other.
3. **Online peer-to-peer group:** online forms of peer teams are different from face-to-face approaches, especially because they are constrained by the lack of discussion, which is the core of the face-to-face process, but at the same time, the online group (that can discuss on zoom, skype...) allows members to take more time to reflect on some issue. Nowadays, where COVID19 does not allow us to meet physically, online teams can cooperate and exchange ideas through numerous online applications and to organize common campaigns against ongoing challenges and issues.

Furthermore, team-based approaches come with them several advantages as consistently yield higher-quality outcomes, and foster a sense of community around shared values.

5. PEER LEADER FOR A PEER TEAM

All teams need a leader. However, the leader does not necessarily have to be a command, but his/her task is to guide the group towards a common goal that responds to a shared interpretation.

Indeed, as stated in the Harvard Business Review “The Secrets of Great Teamwork” (<https://hbr.org/2016/06/the-secrets-of-great-teamwork>), the foundation of every great team is a direction that energizes, orients, and engages its members. Teams cannot be inspired if they don't know what they're working toward and don't have explicit goals. Those goals should be challenging (modest ones don't motivate) but not so difficult that the team becomes dispirited. So the engagement of all teams members toward common objectives' achievement is the main task of any good leader.

Of course, leading peer teams is something very different to lead a hierarchical group, but also for peer teams leaders, there are some skills/ attitudes that are necessary:

1. Positive Attitude: team will react to leader's attitude and the way he/she approaches tasks will influence those around him/her. Having a positive attitude will create a more conducive “work environment”;
2. Spread Confidence: make team feeling good about their work. As a peer, leader can relate members and make all members comfortable to speak up;
3. Be open-minded: trying to accept every point of view and make the best decision that will benefit your team;
4. Validate: people have different opinions and maybe they are not the best ideas but we can still appreciate everyone's thoughts.

Moreover, to guarantee the effectiveness in leading peers, it's necessary to create and maintain a ‘healthy team vibe’ by giving time to people to get to know each other, facilitating discussion about how the group wants to work and stimulating an environment able to encourage all members to contribute – even the quiet ones – by asking questions and sharing ideas.

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TERMS & CONDITIONS FOR THE SELECTION OF THE BEST MYTH BUSTING ACTION AT TRANSNATIONAL LEVEL

Based on the present guide, the Young Influencers will organize Myth Busting Actions teams, aiming to promote the civic and political engagement of their peers, including NEETs and other young vulnerable people.

The main activities of these Myth Busting Teams will be the identification of myth busting facts (fake news, propaganda, manipulation) which will be monitored by the Young Influencers as well as by the National & European Advisory Groups in cooperation with project partners.

The actions will involve online Myth Busting Actions i.e campaigns, social media campaigns, youtube channels, videos, etc. Through these actions the young people, participants will have the opportunity to increase their civic and political engagement and to enhance their media literacy and critical thinking skills.

The Young Influencers and the National & European Advisory Groups and project partners will select the best Myth Busting Action taking into account its relevance, its impact, its effectiveness and its outreach (in terms of likes).

Best Myth Busting Action selection will be done in two steps:

- 1. National level (March 2021):** Youth National Advisory Group, in cooperation with partners in each country, will decide the best Myth Busting Action, based on the following criteria:
 - correspondence to the Myth Busting Action topics (5 points)
 - communicative effectiveness (5 points)
 - originality of the subject (5 points)
 - quality of realization (5 points)

To be considered classifiable, products must score at least 10/20 points.

- 2. European level (April 2021):** The Best Myth Busting Action (1) selected in each project's country will be made visible on the project's website, in a dedicated section, and submitted to the online voting (popular).
Through the site, it will be possible for all users of the website to vote, with a simple LIKE, the favourite Myth Busting Action in Europe. Every single person can vote more products, but it is possible to give only one vote for each product. By clicking "Like" the vote is registered.

The sum of the votes obtained online will be the score assigned to each product. The number of votes will be visible under each product.

The product that will have obtained the majority of votes will be awarded.

Winner will be announced online on the project website and on the partners' social media profiles on project Facebook page on 31st May 2021.

The Best Myth Busting Action will be promoted through the partners' social media and it will be included in the European recommendation paper (IO4) as a best practice on how to counter fake news, on social media and press releases about the project and finally, in the final project's meeting.

What does the Myth Busting Actions involve?

Participants will have to create a multimedia product which identifies propaganda, manipulation and fake news online and to present the real story.

Participants can with their action/product:

- Describe a fake news and how to identify and counteract it;
- Describe a personal experience with fake news;
- Describe how to defend from fake news with concrete actions.

The multimedia product can include:

- an article or comic, possibly also made with Scratch or digital storytelling on the theme of the competition. Any proposal must be accompanied by research presented on a word document. The quality of the document will contribute to the overall evaluation of the product;
- advertising message of maximum 90 seconds. Any proposal must be accompanied by a presentation in power point (or open source equivalent). The quality of the presentation will contribute to the overall evaluation of the product;
- a photo/a poster. a presentation in power point (or open source equivalent). The quality of the presentation will contribute to the overall evaluation of the product;
- an article, presenting a real story against a source that was identified as fake news, propaganda or manipulation. Any proposal must be accompanied by sources which will serve to verify the credibility of the article.

All products must be an **original creation** from beginning to end.

Productions can be in English or any official language of the participant but adding English subtitles (This website is very easy to create free subtitles <https://amara.org/en/>).

Who can take part?

NEETs, young vulnerable people and young people in general aged 15-35

How teams are going to be created?

Teams can be created as:

- a) 1 Young Influencer to cooperate with 5 individuals, on a one-to-one basis.
- b) 1 Young Influencer to cooperate with 2 to 5 participants.
- c) 1 or more Young Influencer can create Myth Busting Teams with one or more young people. (The total number will remain the same).

When will the Myth Busting Action take place?

From December 2020 to April 2021.

Please ensure no copyright images, music or content are used.



RULES OF PARTICIPATION

1. By entering the Myth Busting Action, you agree and acknowledge that the YOUTH MYTHBUSTERS consortium is permitted to receive your registration data. All personal information will be used by YOUTH MYTHBUSTERS partners in accordance with its Privacy Policy.
2. Products have to be labeled with the applicant's name and his/her country, for example: Mario-Rossi_Italy.jpg
Any products sent without the correct label will not be considered eligible.
3. Photos must be saved in .jpg format at 300PPI - recommended size of 1300 x 867 px. They can be up to 3MB.
4. Video can have a max duration of 90 seconds (with English subtitles, if needed. This website is very easy to create free subtitles <https://amara.org/en/>). Any video format compatible with Youtube will be accepted.

5. Articles can be max 200 words.
6. Each team can submit only 1 product.
7. Participants are the sole owner and author of the product. YOUTH MYTHBUSTERS is not harvesting for Free pics. Participants keep 100% copyright of their work. YOUTH MYTHBUSTERS only motivation is to raise awareness of an important problem as debunk fake news. The winner will have to sign a copy left agreement, so the project can publicize the work.
8. Products must not contain any infringing, threatening, false, misleading, abusive, harassing, libelous, defamatory, vulgar, obscene, scandalous, inflammatory, pornographic or profane content and must not contain any material that could constitute or encourage conduct which would be considered a criminal offence, give rise to civil liability, or otherwise violate any law
9. Products must not infringe upon the copyrights, trademarks, contract rights, or any other intellectual property rights of any third person or entity, or violate any person's rights of privacy or publicity, and they cannot include:
 - Trademarks owned by third parties
 - Copyrighted materials owned by third parties (including movie dialogue or musical compositions)
 - Names, likenesses, voices or other characteristics identifying celebrities or other public figures, living or dead
10. The exclusion from the action can be determined in case of products not considered relevant to the object of the contest and / or in case irregularities found in the online voting, as a result of timely verification.

EVALUATION OF THE PRODUCTS

Best Myth Busting Action selection will be done in two steps:

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CONSENT

Participation in the contest presupposes the full knowledge and acceptance of these rules. Events may occur that render the Myth Busting Action itself due to reasons beyond the control of YOUTH MYTH BUSTERS; the organisers may at their absolute discretion amend or vary the terms & conditions of the action and the applicants agree that no liability shall attach to the organisers as a result thereof.