



CONSCIOUS YOUTH BEHAVIOURS.
IN EMERGING REALITIES



Non-formal education practices: Hoaxes & Scam

R2 CYBER TOOLKIT



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#4	Truth Quest: Navigating the Sea of Online Information
Threat(s)	Online hoaxes and scams
	Youth cyber-threats, particularly online hoaxes and scams, represent significant concerns within the digital landscape. Online hoaxes are false information spread via the internet, designed to deceive or mislead users, often causing confusion, misinformation, and occasionally panic. Scams involve fraudulent or deceptive acts, typically for financial gain, exploiting the trust of unsuspecting victims. These cyber-threats can have profound impacts on youth, including financial loss, psychological distress, and diminished trust in digital communications. European studies highlight these concerns, emphasizing the importance of awareness, education, and preventative measures to safe-guard young internet users against such threats.
Typology	Role-playing scenarios
Duration	155 minute (can be adjusted based on depth of activities)
Modality	In-presence [classroom setting]
Aim	This practice aims to equip participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to critically evaluate online information, recognize and counteract misinformation, and understand the importance of media literacy in discerning credible information. It focuses on enhancing critical thinking and self-esteem to navigate online environments safely and responsibly, specifically addressing the threats of online hoaxes and scams. These threats encompass false or misleading information presented as factual news, rumors, or sensationalized stories designed to deceive or manipulate.
Learning Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop critical thinking skills to recognize and counteract misinformation and fabricated stories. • Discuss the balance between content regulation and freedom of expression. • Enhance understanding of media literacy in discerning credible information.
Trainee profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants aged 13-18 years, with basic digital navigation skills. No specific prerequisites, but a curiosity about digital media and online interactions is beneficial.
n° participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15-20 (ideal for facilitating group discussions and activities)
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet-connected devices (laptops/tablets) • Projector and screen for presentations • Fact-checking guides and resources

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenario cards depicting various online hoaxes • Flip charts, markers, and sticky notes
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare scenario cards with examples of online hoaxes. [See Annex. Scenarios] • Set up a presentation on media literacy and critical thinking. • Gather fact-checking resources and create handouts.
Implementation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction (15 min): Briefly discuss the impact of online hoaxes and the importance of critical thinking online. 2. Media Literacy Presentation (30 min): Present key concepts of media literacy, emphasizing the evaluation of sources and information. 3. Scenario Analysis (20 min): Break into small groups. Each group receives scenario cards and works together to identify signs of hoaxes and discuss verification strategies. 4. Group Presentations (30 min): Groups present their findings and strategies for countering misinformation. 5. Fact-Checking Workshop (30 min): Interactive session on using fact-checking resources. Practice with real-world examples. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-Playing and Discussion (30 min): Role-play exercises simulating encounters with online hoaxes, followed by a discussion on balancing freedom of expression with responsible content sharing.
Tips and hints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage participants to think critically about each scenario, focusing on source evaluation, cross-checking information, and the importance of scepticism with extraordinary claims. • Facilitate discussions on the broader implications of sharing unverified information and the role of media literacy in fostering a well-informed public. • Use these scenarios to highlight practical fact-checking tools and resources available online.
Safety measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure internet safety during online activities. • Create a respectful and non-judgmental space for discussions.
External reference and sources	<p>External reference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Empowering young people to tell fake from fact ▪ Playing to learn
Partner/	PRISM Impresa Sociale s.r.l.

Author	
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Annex. Scenario cards with examples of online hoaxes.

Printout Scenario Cards for "Truth Quest: Navigating the Sea of Online Information"

Scenario Card 1: Miracle Health Cure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description: A social media post claims a new, natural supplement cures cancer within days and has been suppressed by pharmaceutical companies. It includes testimonials and a link to purchase the supplement. • Task: Identify signs that this could be a hoax. Discuss how to verify the information.
Scenario Card 2: Celebrity Scandal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description: An article circulates online claiming a popular celebrity has been arrested for a serious crime. The source is a website mimicking a reputable news outlet but with a slightly different URL. • Task: Spot the red flags indicating this story might be fake. Outline steps to verify the celebrity's news.
Scenario Card 3: Political Rumor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description: A tweet from an account resembling a well-known political analyst states a controversial policy change. The tweet lacks sources and contradicts official statements. • Task: Discuss why this tweet might be misleading. How would you confirm the accuracy of the policy news?
Scenario Card 4: Free Airline Tickets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description: An e-mail claims a major airline is giving away free tickets to the first 100 respondents to celebrate their anniversary. It asks for personal information to claim the tickets. • Task: Identify the characteristics of a potential phishing attempt. What are safe practices for responding to such offers?
Scenario Card 5: Historic Discovery Hoax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description: A blog post features a story about the discovery of an ancient civilization on Mars, complete with detailed photos and quotes from scientists. The post links to a site asking for donations to fund further research. • Task: Analyze the credibility of this discovery. What steps would you take to fact-check this story?
Scenario Card 6: Viral Video of Natural Disaster	



- **Description:** A dramatic video shows a major city struck by a devastating earthquake, causing widespread panic. Closer inspection reveals inconsistencies in the landmarks and architecture.
- **Task:** Determine clues that suggest the video might not be genuine. How can you verify the occurrence of the event?

Scenario Card 7: Investment Scheme

- **Description:** An online forum post promotes a cryptocurrency investment scheme, guaranteeing high returns with no risk. It features charts and graphs from unknown sources.
- **Task:** Identify warning signs of a potential scam. Discuss how to research investment opportunities safely.

Rationale: The seven scenarios were chosen to cover a wide range of online hoaxes and misinformation types that internet users, especially younger audiences, may encounter. Each scenario reflects a specific risk or set of risks associated with digital literacy, critical thinking, and the safe navigation of online spaces. Here's why each was chosen and the risks behind them:

1. Miracle Health Cure

Risk: Exploitation of health concerns and promotion of potentially dangerous or ineffective treatments. This scenario highlights the danger of trusting unverified medical advice and the importance of consulting healthcare professionals, combating the spread of medical misinformation.

2. Celebrity Scandal

Risk: Spreading of false information for clickbait or defamation. It demonstrates how easily fake news can mimic credible sources to manipulate public opinion or harm individuals' reputations, emphasizing the need for verifying news through reputable outlets.

3. Political Rumor

Risk: Manipulation of political views or causing unnecessary panic through unfounded rumors. This teaches the critical evaluation of political information, the significance of source credibility, and the impact of misinformation on democratic processes.

4. Free Airline Tickets

Risk: Phishing attempts disguised as attractive offers. This scenario is crucial for understanding how personal information can be compromised and the importance of skepticism towards too-good-to-be-true offers, highlighting strategies to protect personal data.

5. Historic Discovery Hoax

Risk: Spreading of fantastical but false scientific "discoveries" to exploit curiosity or for financial gain. It underscores the need for scientific literacy, questioning sensational claims, and verifying information through established scientific channels.

6. Viral Video of Natural Disaster

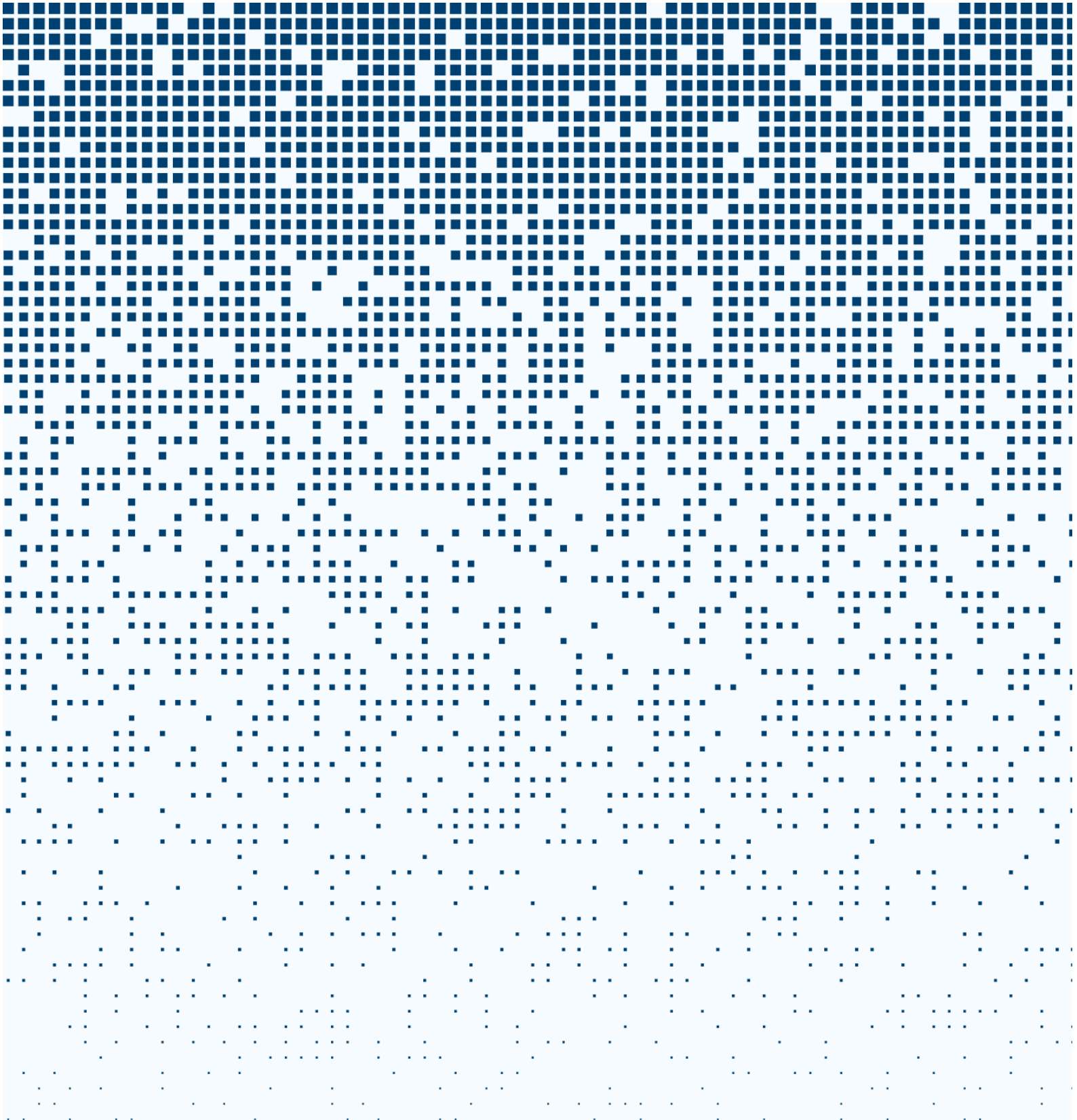
Risk: Sharing of manipulated or contextually misplaced content to incite fear, confusion, or misinformation. It illustrates the importance of visual literacy, recognizing the potential for video manipulation, and the need for cross-verification with trustworthy news sources.

7. Investment Scheme

Risk: Financial scams exploiting the allure of quick wealth. This scenario is selected to educate on the dangers of investment fraud, teaching the importance of sceptical inquiry into investment opportunities and understanding the hallmarks of legitimate financial advice.



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