



DON'T BE
PLAYED.

Learn how to
#CheckitFirst

In today's digital age, it's hard to know which news to trust. Disinformation is spreading across the media in the Western Balkans at an alarming rate. Foreign and domestic powers with their own agendas are trying to influence public opinion through fake, manipulative stories. **But you have the power to stop false news in its tracks. In just a few simple steps, you can filter the real from the fake, and stop the spread of disinformation.**

Join #[CheckitFirst](#), ARTICLE 19's new campaign to promote ethical journalism in **Bosnia & Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia**. This short toolkit will equip you with everything you need to get started.

WHY NOW?

the Western Balkans region is prone to disinformation arising from global crises like COVID or the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This vulnerability is exploited by ruling parties and foreign powers like China and Russia who aim to manipulate public opinion. **When foreign actors manipulate information in a way that negatively affects political processes, it's called Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI).**

The media, which should be considered a bastion of democracy, is facing challenges as it grapples with clickbait and propaganda. Media organisations and journalists often struggle to uphold ethical standards, which can contribute to the spread of disinformation.

DISINFORMATION V. MISINFORMATION

DISINFORMATION is

- False information
- Deliberately designed to mislead people.

Disinformation can be used to manipulate public perception and influence political processes.

MISINFORMATION is

- False information
- Shared accidentally due to misunderstandings, mistakes and misinterpretations.



WHAT IS ETHICAL JOURNALISM?

Ethical journalism is the first line of defence against disinformation. When journalists follow the principles of their profession, the news they report will be balanced & accurate. **These principles are:**

- 1. TRUTH & ACCURACY**
- 2. INDEPENDENCE**
- 3. FAIRNESS & IMPARTIALITY**
- 4. DO NO HARM**
- 5. ACCOUNTABILITY**



For more, see
[ARTICLE19 #CheckitFirst FAQ](#)



FIVE STEPS TO WEEDING OUT FAKE NEWS

Empower yourself, empower the nation! **As a citizen, you hold the key to debunking disinformation.** Stay vigilant, don't be misled, and take proactive steps to combat false news.

Step 1: Check the source of the information



Find out more about the website or platform where the information is published. Established and reputable news organisations are more likely to provide accurate information. Also check the publication date. Old articles can often be presented as if they are current to mislead readers.

Step 2: Analyse the author



Research the author's credentials and previous work. Do they have a history of bias or spreading misinformation? Always question the source, the purpose of the information, and the evidence provided.

Step 3: Look for multiple reports



Verify if the news is reported by multiple credible sources. If so, it's more likely to be accurate. Don't be duped by sensationalist titles. Read beyond the headline to understand the full context.

Step 4: Verify citations and references



Reliable news articles often cite sources. A lack of credible sources can be a red flag. Check the authenticity of any images or quotes using tools like reverse image search or fact-checking websites.

Step 5: Urge the media to stick to ethical journalism principles



You can also hold journalists accountable by filing complaints with press self-regulatory bodies. If you notice violations of ethical journalism standards, make your voice heard.

One option is to reach out to the national journalists association or file a complaint with your self-regulatory mechanisms for the press:



You can also contact fact-checking platforms:

Bosnia and Herzegovina: [AFP Fact Check Europe](#), [Istinomjer](#)

Kosovo: [ADS](#) and [Kallxo](#)

Montenegro: [AFP Fact Check Europe](#), [Raskrinkavanje](#)

Serbia: [AFP Fact Check Europe](#), [Fake News Tragac](#), [Istinomer](#), [Raskrinkavanje](#)



HANDY VERIFICATION TOOLS



Fact-checking websites: use reputable fact-checking sites like [Istinomjer](#) or [Raskrinkavanje](#) (see above) to verify claims.



Reverse image search: tools like [Google Reverse Image Search](#) can help verify the authenticity of images.



Browser extensions: install extensions like NewsGuard or Fake News Detector to get alerts on the credibility of news sites.



Social media verification: use the verification features on platforms like X and Facebook to check the authenticity of posts and profiles.

HOW DO YOU ENGAGE CRITICALLY WITH THE NEWS?



Ask questions: always question the source, the purpose of the information, and the evidence provided.



Diversify your news sources: don't rely on a single source for news. Read from multiple reputable sources to get a well-rounded perspective.



Educate yourself: take courses or read books on media literacy to enhance your skills.



Engage in discussions: participate in discussions and forums to exchange viewpoints and challenge your understanding.

To effectively combat disinformation, it's crucial to understand its complexities. Disinformation can be nuanced, blending facts with falsehoods. **By educating yourself on these tactics, you can better identify and debunk false information. Use critical thinking and cross-check multiple sources to discern the truth.**



GO THE EXTRA DISTANCE, AND ASK YOUR FAVOURITE JOURNALISTS TO SIGN OUR PLEDGE



You have the power to hold the media accountable. Visit our [pledge page](#) to see which journalists in your country have endorsed it. Encourage those who haven't to sign up.

For more detailed information on media literacy and its importance, visit:

[ARTICLE19 MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY](#)





WHEN YOU HOLD THE MEDIA ACCOUNTABLE,
YOU HELP ENSURE INTEGRITY IN JOURNALISM.
REMEMBER...

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ARTICLE19



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