

Tackling disinformation with media literacy: analysis of trends in the European Union

Combatir la desinformación con alfabetización mediática: análisis de las tendencias en la Unión Europea

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RESUMEN

Introducción: La desinformación se ha convertido en un problema clave para las sociedades democráticas contemporáneas. Para contrarrestar esta amenaza, las autoridades públicas de numerosos países han puesto en marcha diversas iniciativas legales, tecnológicas y educativas. Este artículo aporta una revisión bibliográfica y de textos legales, que evidencia la importancia creciente otorgada por la Unión Europea a la alfabetización mediática. **Metodología:** Mediante revisión documental, se examinan informes y textos legales europeos y de países de la UE, con el fin de evaluar el grado de relevancia que se asigna a la alfabetización mediática para luchar contra la desinformación. **Resultados:** El análisis comprueba una presencia recurrente de la alfabetización mediática como una de las medidas necesarias para combatir la desinformación en el territorio europeo. **Discusión y conclusiones:** Más allá de simples soluciones tecnológicas y legales para combatir la desinformación, se comprueba que la Unión Europea apuesta por co-responsabilizar a la ciudadanía, mediante políticas de promoción de la alfabetización mediática. Se consolida, en definitiva, un modelo de lucha contra la desinformación basado en un conjunto de soluciones multinivel.

PALABRAS CLAVE: desinformación, alfabetización mediática, democracia, públicos vulnerables, tendencias, Europa, España.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Disinformation has become a key problem for contemporary democratic societies. To tackle this threat, public authorities in many countries have launched various legal, technological and educational initiatives. This article provides a literature and legislative review, which shows the growing importance given by the European Union to media literacy. **Methodology:** European and EU country reports and legal texts are examined, in order to assess the degree of relevance assigned to media literacy to tackle misinformation. **Results:** The analysis confirms a widespread presence of media literacy as one of the necessary measures to combat disinformation in the European territory. **Discussion and Conclusions:** Beyond mere technological and legal solutions to tackle disinformation, this article finds that the European Union is committed to making citizens co-responsible, through policies to promote media literacy. In short, a model for acting against disinformation based on a set of multilevel solutions is consolidated.

KEYWORDS: disinformation, media literacy, democracy, vulnerable target groups, trends, Europe, Spain.

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Translation by **Paula González** (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

1. Introduction

Misinformation, defined by the European Commission (2019) as “verifiably false or misleading information created, presented, and disseminated for financial gain or intentional deception of the public”, has become a key problem for contemporary democratic societies. In a context of growing exposure to news impacts, people have seen the messages they receive during the day multiply, but many of these messages turn out to be false, either because they are the product of the unintentional spread of erroneous content or as a result of premeditated dissemination of intentionally misleading messages.

The dissemination of a certain volume of erroneous content is inherent in public communication. It is not possible to guarantee the veracity of all the messages that reach the public, since confusion, misunderstandings, and unintentional misinterpretations frequently occur in communication processes, resulting in incorrect information. This is what has been known in the Anglo-Saxon world for decades as ‘misinformation’ (Burnam, 1975). Some of these unintentionally false messages reach citizens through the media. To avoid this, journalistic organizations have professional structures and internal protocols aimed at minimizing the number of these errors. Despite these precautions, even the most reputable media slip inadvertent errors from time to time— wrong data, confused identities, incorrect attributions, inaccurate circumstances... –, which are more than simple errors. Depending on their seriousness, the journalistic media tend to correct these misunderstandings by confirming errors. However, not only the media but any organization or communicator – including, of course, politicians and public authorities – can make mistakes or unintentional confusion.

Another variant of misinformation corresponds to what in English is called ‘malinformation’ (Wardle and Derakhshan, 2017). It corresponds to the information that, although it is true in its content, it is not correct to publish for ethical reasons, for the damages that its dissemination may cause, or for other justified reasons.

The main problem with misinformation, however, comes from deliberate falsehoods. This is the content that, again in the Anglo-Saxon world, is properly called ‘disinformation’. That is voluntary lies. It is this qualified modality of falsehood that is currently the most worrying since the communicative ecosystem facilitates the rapid and widespread of all kinds of misleading messages. This problem has been revealed to be especially dangerous and harmful in the framework of the Covid-19 pandemic, in which the circulation of large amounts of false messages through different communication channels has been detected (Brennen et al., 2020; Salaverría et al., 2020).

In this context, Western democracies have taken steps to combat disinformation. In January 2018, the European Commission created the High-Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation, which produced a report (European Commission, 2018), whose main recommendations were: 1) promote transparency; 2) promote the media literacy of the population; 3) develop tools to strengthen the capacity to respond to disinformation by network users and, especially, journalists; 4) safeguard the diversity and sustainability of the European media ecosystem; and 5) promote continued research on disinformation in the EU. This initiative was followed in the summer of 2020 by the creation of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), by the European Commission. The main activities of this observatory are: 1) to identify and locate the organizations dedicated to information verification in Europe; 2) to identify, promote and coordinate research projects concerning disinformation at the European level; 3) to implement a public portal to counter misinformation and promote media literacy; 4) design a secure infrastructure for the study of disinformation by the academic community; and 5) support community and national authorities in monitoring large internet platforms to limit the spread and impact of disinformation (EDMO, 2021).

If these are the measures in the European framework, many countries of the Union have also activated analogous strategies at the national level. In Spain, for example, from Order PCM/1030/2020, of October 30 (BOE, 2020), an action procedure against disinformation was decreed, directed by the National Security Council. The norm establishes the mechanisms of struggle and international cooperation against the dissemination of false or misleading information disclosed for profit or to deliberately deceive the population that may cause public harm. Likewise, it created the Permanent Commission against Disinformation, one of whose working groups deals specifically with strategies to promote media literacy among the population.

With their nuances, other European countries have adopted similar measures. For example, the United Kingdom, before completing its withdrawal from the Union, produced a report in 2019, known as the Cairncross Review (Cairncross, 2019), in which it points out five main lines of action to combat disinformation: 1) situate internet platforms under regulatory supervision; 2) introduce codes of conduct to rebalance the relationship between media publishers and digital platforms; 3) create a new, independent institute to underpin local, regional, and public interest news for the future; 4) introduce tax breaks to encourage payment for news content in digital media; and, finally, 5) develop a media literacy strategy.

As can be seen, recent initiatives to combat disinformation promoted by the highest European and national public institutions coincide in including media literacy as one of its main bastions. Besides stimulating informative verification and advanced research on disinformation phenomena, public institutions agree that to combat disinformation and preserve democracy, it is key to train European citizens in the skillful and responsible use of information.

This vision of media literacy as a resource to counteract the harm caused by disinformation is, however, relatively new. Until the end of the 20th century, the idea prevailed that it was the media that should educate citizens, besides informing and entertaining them (Fontcuberta, 1993). Today, on the other hand, a new interpretation is making its way, according to which it is the citizens themselves that must be trained in the proper use of the media, to be able to identify rigorous information and distinguish it from falsehoods. In short, faced with the challenge of misinformation, the idea that media literacy is key is growing.

Based on an analysis of the main directives and legislative initiatives of the European Union and some national governments, as well as in academic works that in the past have already examined initiatives to promote media literacy in Europe (Virkus, 2003; Cervi et al., 2010; Pérez Tornero et al., 2010), this article presents a review of the academic literature and the main European legal texts of the last decade, which are consolidating the commitment to media literacy. Compared to the previous model, where the emphasis was mainly on ensuring the quality of the information disseminated by the media, this documentary review shows that a new approach has grown in the fight against disinformation, which is committed to making citizens co-responsible.

2. Results

2.1. Media literacy models

The growing attention to media literacy has gone hand in hand, in fact, with a growing concern for the phenomena and effects of disinformation. According to Rubin (2019), three trends explain the emergence of “disinformation” and “misinformation”: the obvious public proliferation of falsehoods and hoaxes; the current practices of production, dissemination, and propagation of digital news that also have an important role in creating very toxic online environments; and, finally, the change in news consumption practices by citizens, who are more exposed to suffering the effects of disinformation. These phenomena take place in a general context of declining trust in the media, in politics, and, in general, in public institutions (Mason et al., 2018:6), which aggravates the problem. As a remedy –at least partially– for this context of growing dysfunctions in the public sphere, in the last decade more and more voices have pointed out the urgent need for media literacy of citizens (Clayton et al., 2020; Jones-Jang et al., 2019; Mele et al., 2017; Mihailidis and Viotty, 2017).

This consensus in betting on media literacy has been held back, however, by a discrepancy in its conceptualization and even in its own name. One of the most widespread definitions of media literacy, formulated in the early 1990s, defines the concept as “the ability of a citizen to access, analyze, and produce information for specific results” (Aufderheide, 1993: 6). A decade later, the US National Association for Media Literacy Education defined it as “the active attitude and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create” (National Association for Media Literacy Education, 2007). Parallel to media literacy, some refer more specifically to information literacy or “news literacy” (Mihailidis, 2012), in which skills, specifically linked to the critical use of journalistic media, as a pillar of any democratic system, are highlighted (Malik et al., 2013). Some recent research highlights that, while digital or media literacy does not protect the user from disinformation, information literacy – that is, focused on the characteristics and principles of journalistic information – is, on the other hand, much more effective (Jones-Jang et al., 2019). Other recent theoretical proposals have also pointed out the need to broaden the concept to a “transmedia literacy”, which conceives the information user as “an active subject who, besides developing increasingly sophisticated interpretive skills to understand the new format narratives, increasingly creates new content, recombines it, and shares it on digital networks” (Scolari, 2016, p. 9).

Added to this conceptual diversity is a much greater discrepancy in terms of nomenclature. The promotion of effective media literacy programs finds, in fact, a stumbling block in the multiplication of terms, often separated by simple nuances. Concepts such as “media literacy” (Pérez Tornero, 2008), “information literacy” (UNESCO, 2011), “edu-communication” (Aguaded, 2005), and “digital literacy” (Area Moreira et al., 2012), although they have their own features that distinguish them, ultimately refer to a common concept: the need to encourage an educated and critical citizenry, which not only consumes information but increasingly shares it on networks. This terminological heterogeneity in the Hispanic world is not as pronounced in other languages, particularly in English, where there is consensus around the expression “media literacy” (Livingstone and Van der Graaf, 2008; Hobbs and Mihailidis, 2019). However, as Potter (2010) points out, although there is a terminological agreement in English-speaking countries, the concept is enormously polysemic; it has different meanings for academic researchers, educators, citizen activists, and the general public. It is conceivable that the lack of terminological and, consequently, a conceptual agreement is one of the factors that slow down the adoption of decisive public policies and concrete actions on media literacy in the Spanish-speaking world. This factor is added to others, perhaps more important, such as the lack of sensitivity or awareness on the part of the authorities to promote media literacy initiatives, budget limitations, and the need to have qualified personnel to conduct these initiatives. As the reader may have noticed, in this article we opted for the term “media literacy”.

Whatever name is used, public authorities have taken good note of the evidence positively linking greater audience education with better and more positive behaviors or habits concerning information and media consumption. Some studies indicate that those who have a greater knowledge and understanding of the journalistic production system tend to be more skeptical and more realistic in their expectations of the media (Jeong et al., 2012). On a more positive note, other research suggests that users who know how the media are financed are more hesitant to use online advertising blocking systems, which would prevent the monetization of their visit (Sánchez-Blanco et al., 2020). With a particular focus on the environment where rumors spread, the work of Afassinou (2014) shows that rumors spread much faster among users with a lower educational level. Despite everything, a study carried out by Ferrés, García-Matilla, and Aguaded (2011) revealed “serious deficiencies” (p. 82) in the Spanish population regarding the acquisition of this competence and pointed to the urgency to develop multilevel actions to attack the problem.

The European vision regarding media literacy has, as Pérez Tornero (2009) points out, three peculiarities compared to other models: 1) it emphasizes both the critical capacities of citizens before the media, and creative skills; 2) considers such skills and competencies essential to promote the vitality of the media, distancing the temptation to establish control systems over the media and giving way, on the contrary, to more open models, in which citizen participation is key in public communication; and 3) points to media literacy as a task that involves formal education, but also the journalistic industry, families, regulators, and other actors. In this way, according to the European Directive on Audiovisual Services (2007), it could be said that “from the point of view of European legislation, media literacy becomes – together with the right to freedom of expression and information – the third basic pillar of the communication rights of our time” (Pérez Tornero, 2009: 7). Given the importance given to the media skills of citizens, it is worth outlining the conceptual framework that, over the last decade, has inspired the main decisions and documents of the European Union on this matter.

2.2. Conceptual framework of media literacy in Europe

In 2013, the Information Society and Media General Directorate of the European Union published a document (European Commission, 2013), which pointed out eight emerging trends in the continent regarding media literacy: 1) media convergence; 2) the shift from protection to promotion, with new

shared responsibilities between senders and receivers; 3) a growing sensitivity of citizens towards commercial communication; 4) an increase in the presence of media literacy in the compulsory training curriculum; 5) the rise of school media, for which it saw necessary to develop production skills; 6) a sector of the media more aware of media literacy; 7) more active participation of all stakeholders, and 8) greater involvement of the authorities in the legislation. In this document, the European Commission underlines, once again, the growing importance of media literacy. The report pointed to trends that were in the germinal phase, so almost a decade later, it can be a good exercise to ask about the development they have achieved and their relationship with disinformation phenomena. As will be seen, the evolution of media literacy has coincided with a growing concern about disinformation phenomena.

2.2.1. Media convergence

The 2013 report of the European Commission pointed to “media convergence” as a phenomenon in expansion; a decade later, it can be considered a fully consolidated phenomenon (Infotendencias Group, 2012). Indeed, multi-platform consumption of content has become widespread and, in particular, young people have become accustomed to an environment where content moves between screens fluidly. Multimedia convergence has made it possible to generate user experiences that can be called transmedia (Scolari, 2013) and in which, in recent years, it is increasingly common to consume content simultaneously on several screens (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2015). Research is paying more attention to this way of consuming content and the special impact it can have on young people.

In their case, this convergence has pivoted particularly on mobile access to content, although news information does not necessarily stand out among those that most attract their attention. The rise of leisure, entertainment, and, particularly, socialization through social networks, configure more entertainment-oriented usage habits among this target audience. Both the media and society, in general, are concerned about this disaffection, which could have serious consequences on the health of democracies (Galan et al., 2019).

The relationship between the growing media convergence and misinformation translates, above all, into the phenomenon that certain false messages today reach citizens simultaneously through different platforms. If in the past, falsehoods reached the public in a dispersed and punctual manner, today they frequently reach the public through multiple simultaneous channels, thus increasing their plausibility and persuasive power. Recent studies have shown, in effect, that although disinformation content circulates mainly through messaging apps and social networks, it is also disseminated, although to a lesser extent, through conventional journalistic channels (Salaverría et al., 2020; Tsfaty et al. al., 2020). When someone receives a false message on their mobile and finds it in a journalistic publication, a confirmation effect is produced that contributes to reinforcing the falsehood. This combined effect, propitiated by media convergence, is a new factor that fosters disinformation.

2.2.2. A shared responsibility

Regarding the shift from policies more focused on protection to others more oriented towards promotion and involving shared responsibilities, the European Commission has sought to encourage the participation and autonomy of citizens.

A good example of this change is the Safer Internet program, currently dependent on DG Connect, which for more than a decade has promoted and supported awareness and support centers for minors and other audiences in their online activity. In 2014, the strategy turned from a protective vision against the dangers and risks of this public on the Internet, to ensure a better network for minors, through the Better Internet for Kids initiative (BIK, 2014), seeking to create spaces and ensure positive experiences

for children and adolescents online. This movement has been endorsed with the approval, in March 2021, of General Comment No. 25 by the United Nations, which states that the Rights of the Child also extend to the digital environment (United Nations, 2021). It should be noted that Spain was not among the states that participated in the preparation of this document.

Directing policies towards a model of shared responsibility, instead of a paternalistic or exclusively protective vision, is, without a doubt, a step forward. However, it can also pose a greater risk in the face of disinformation because, in fact, it means that now it is the citizens themselves who play the role of selecting, prioritizing, and disseminating much of the information, assuming tasks that once corresponded only to information professionals.

2.2.3. Greater sensitivity towards commercial content

The growing sensitivity towards commercial interests, their methods, and their ability to influence has also grown remarkably. One of the movements that have had the greatest impact has been the entry into force of Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council, of April 27th, 2016, regarding the protection of data of natural persons in the digital environment. The implications of this decision on the marketing efforts of European and global companies have been significant by requiring the user's explicit consent, both for the processing of their personal data and their browsing patterns through the use of cookies and by exposing themselves to hefty fines for non-compliance.

On the other hand, the growing development of hybrid advertising is observed with concern, which mixes informative or entertainment content with commercial interests, in modalities such as "product placement" or "branded content", among others (Hudson and Hudson, 2006). Faced with this type of advertising, which is often difficult to detect, consumers are defenseless. They receive messages that they understand as innocently informative but, deep down, are sophisticatedly persuasive. The damage that this type of commercial content can cause in particularly vulnerable audiences, who believe they are receiving genuine recommendations of a product or service, when in fact they are paid messages, is evident. This breaks one of the ethical principles of communication, that of making it clear when a message has been paid for by a third party, and paves the way for indiscriminate dissemination of disinformation messages, which certain hidden actors can spread through economic incentives to the media and famous personalities of social networks.

In fact, after several cases of abuse, there have been several initiatives such as the one proposed in *España por Autocontrol* (2021), which since January 2021 invites influencers to clearly label content for commercial purposes. The European Commission also announced the creation of a task force to study the rise of this hybrid advertising and establish common measures beyond the sector's self-control efforts.

The possible impact of this content on minors is under study, although in their case, the advertising pressure they face is also worrying. Some studies show, for example, that when they access games from their mobile devices, the presence of advertising can occupy up to 90% of the time (Feijoo-Fernández et al., 2020). The enormous possibilities of targeting and micro-targeting offered by technology are a great attraction for commercial brands wishing to succeed in spreading their messages. However, the growing awareness and concern around these practices, which seem to foster ideological polarization (Prummer, 2020), recommend setting ethical limits that ensure protection.

2.2.4. Increased presence in compulsory education

Regarding the presence of media literacy in compulsory education, the European document pointed

out that the need to include content related to digital competence in educational curricula could promote media literacy, to the extent that it is related to convergence. Although progress has indeed been made, there is also a notable dispersion in the formulation of digital competence (Martínez-Bravo et al., 2020), which has left the possible programs to implement it somewhat undefined.

The work of Medina, Briones, and Hernández (2017) shows that, in the case of Spain, transversality has been chosen instead of the specificity recommended by the European Parliament. Despite several attempts, the law approved in 2020, known as the Celaá Law, does not consider it appropriate to create a specific subject in secondary education either. However, some regional developments do point to the need for this type of decision to effectively fight disinformation and this may likely change in the medium term. On the other hand, in the teaching given to students, there is a focus on the instrumental and the digital as opposed to the critical and the creative; It focuses more on the how than the why. This mainly technical training, but less focused on the development of criteria, together with the still scarce training of teachers, shows a wide field for improvement. For the problem that we address in this article, this approach represents a clear weakness, since the most relevant qualification to face the dangers of disinformation is not so much instrumental as it is critical.

2.2.5. Media at school

The development of content production capacities through school media initiatives is at the heart of the European approach to media literacy (Pérez Tornero, 2008). Undoubtedly, the use and generalization of digital technology facilitate this task by requiring lower infrastructure costs than other more traditional media options.

The presence of newspapers or radios in educational centers had a time of certain development in the 1980s and 1990s, which was expanded with the arrival of digital media, whose technical requirements are usually much lower (Santacruz Laguna and Camacho Marín, 2001). As mentioned above, the implementation of media in educational centers had to do with the development of creative capacities associated with the production of content. These activities help internalize the processes that lead to the selection of content, sources, and the final appearance of the information. In short, they represent magnificent training against disinformation.

However, here too, the focus has been more on instrumental or operational issues than on aspects linked to the development of critical criteria. In many cases, the debates have focused on determining whether the use of certain technologies in the classroom –especially mobile phones– was justified or if, on the contrary, it hinders learning processes. In Spain, some autonomous communities –Madrid, Galicia, and Castilla-La Mancha were pioneers– have ended up prohibiting the use of mobile phones in schools, for example. The enormous attraction that the digital world represents for young people is seen as a possible learning accelerator, although it must be remembered that it is not a cause-effect relationship in any case. There are resources in social networks that can have a high impact in specific educational situations (Izquierdo-Iranzo and Gallardo-Echenique, 2020), but once again the proper training of teachers, both in media literacy and technology itself, is a challenge (Kačínova and Sádaba, 2019).

2.2.6. Greater prominence of the professional sector

The sixth trend points to a key sector both in media literacy and in the fight against disinformation: journalists. Among these professionals, there are many initiatives launched in recent years to counter disinformation (Escudero et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Fernández, 2019).

One of the most relevant has been to make visible one of the processes inherent to journalistic practice: the verification of information. In the last decade, fact-checking organizations have been launched around the world. As in other countries, organizations focused on this activity have appeared in Spain –Maldita.es, Newtral, Verificat–, and fact-checking departments have also proliferated within some traditional media –Verifica RTVE, EFE Verifica– (López Pan and Rodríguez Rodríguez, 2020). These initiatives seek to generate trust in the content published by the media, making visible the journalistic practice of verifying data. Networking, both nationally and internationally, is a characteristic feature of these organizations, which recognize that the public dissemination of falsehoods knows no borders and requires coordinated strategies. It should be noted that some of these verification organizations develop training programs and media literacy content.

The journalistic media not dedicated to verification have also seen that it was key to reinforce their credibility. Since 2017, an outstanding initiative is The Trust Project (2021), which in 2021 brings together more than 200 media outlets around the world, including several Spanish ones –*El País*, *El Mundo*, *Heraldo de Aragón*, *20 Minutos*, *Cambio 16*, and *La Información*–. These publications work together to build and develop professional standards that guarantee the accuracy of the information. Along with this, in Spain there are particular initiatives of great interest, such as the Transparency Map implemented by the newspaper *Público* (Alonso, 2018), which allows the traceability of news, providing information on its sources, additional context documents, information on updates, etc.

In the more specific area of training, there are more and more literacy initiatives promoted by schools or journalists' associations, aimed at diverse audiences such as schoolchildren (CAC, 2018) and journalists (FAPE, 2021). The fight against disinformation has generated a clear interest on the part of the public, which directly challenges professionals.

2.2.7. Participation of all stakeholders

Regarding the active participation of all stakeholders, both at the European level, such as regulatory authorities, civil society, or industries, growing involvement in these matters from more diverse sectors has been perceived. A governance and multilevel approach (Saurwein and Spencer-Smith, 2020) seems reasonable and necessary in the face of a reality that has numerous implications of all kinds and that requires, as Rubin (2019) said, combined actions of civil society, companies, and governments. The crisis generated by the coronavirus has opened the debate on the role of the media, digital platforms, the public administration, and also citizens in spreading hoaxes.

2.2.8. Implicación de las autoridades

Finally, a greater implication of the authorities in the regulation has been accompanied by several actions at the European and national levels. As Saurwein and Spencer-Smith (2020) point out, among European countries, France and Germany stand out as the only ones that have taken steps in national legislation to, for example, demand greater responsibility from technology platforms in the fight against disinformation; the rest are fundamentally based on the actions developed by the European Union. Ireland, Italy, and Lithuania have considered enacting legislation to that effect, but have not come to fruition.

As mentioned previously, in Spain, on November 5th, 2020, the Action Procedure against Disinformation (BOE, 2020) was activated to “act against disinformation” in the local media and adopt measures against any campaign of fake news coming from a foreign country. The announcement and launch of this so-called Truth Committee sparked a controversial outcry, due to the fear of some media that it would be used to “monitor and watch news content with the excuse of fighting against so-called fake

news” (El Mundo, November 6th, 2021). The Government of Spain clarified that “in no case will it monitor, censor, or limit the free and legitimate right of the media to offer their information” (Elmundo.es, November 5th, 2021), while explaining that the Order itself justifies its creation in the framework of the actions proposed by the European Parliament.

The case of Hungary, which has legislated against the spread of false news against the government’s efforts to protect the population, is considered, by some authors, rather a manifestation of certain authoritarianism (Saurwein and Spencer-Smith, 2020).

3. Conclusions

From the above reflections, it is concluded that faced with the worrying problem of misinformation, European public authorities have adopted a dual approach. On the one hand, they have opted for legal measures aimed at generating a firmer legal framework against deliberate disseminators of disinformation content. With this more defined and stricter legal framework, they have sought to establish a safer space, in which digital platforms assume their corresponding responsibility. On the other hand, they have promoted a model of growing co-responsibility of citizens, which are considered to be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to face the threat of misinformation. In this model, there is a commitment for active citizens, capable of judging for themselves the quality of the information they massively receive and share on social networks. It is understood that these competencies must be promoted through strategies to encourage not only digital literacy but also media literacy.

The community authorities have been consolidating a discourse that advocates confronting disinformation with policies that go beyond simple detection and mitigation strategies. Under this framework of thought, it is understood that any technological measure, legal or otherwise, has a limited capacity to have an effect if it is not supported by people, the main subjects of disinformation processes. The key is to have citizens that understand the importance of obtaining quality information from reliable sources, that are capable of identifying potentially false content, and, in short, that value the truth. For this, measures are encouraged to promote media literacy, not only for young people but for the entire population.

In the European Union, a model for combating disinformation based on a set of multilevel solutions is consolidated. In light of various documents published by the European authorities, it follows that these solutions should include, among others, 1) the attitude and formation of the political class itself; 2) legislative decisions that seek to regulate and order the market; 3) the role of technological platforms; 4) a clear commitment to the presence of media literacy in formal and informal education, and 5) the collaboration of the media sector in the active fight against bad professional practices that result in less trust.

As McDougall (2019) explains, media literacy should adopt a dynamic approach and increase reflective practices and experiences about the media, to develop critical and creative thinking in citizens. Although teachers can acquire the necessary knowledge to promote this competence, the involvement of communication professionals emerges as essential for the success of any initiative.

The documentary review provided by this article has, as is evident, a limitation: beyond offering a selection and reading of academic and legislative texts, it lacks its own empirical evidence that demonstrates the real efficiency of media literacy measures in the fight against misinformation. The objective and dimension of this work did not aspire to reach that point; it was just a matter of mapping the set of legal proposals, theoretical reflections, and professional initiatives of recent years around the

need to have media literacy in Europe, as an effective strategy in the face of the problem of disinformation. Although the theoretical relevance of media literacy has been demonstrated, the empirical exploration of the most effective media literacy techniques in the different target audiences remains a pending task for future studies.

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