

Disinformation and fact-checking in the COVID-19 era in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Objective

You will learn a lot about fact-checking in this course. Over the course of four weeks, you will learn about the history of this type of journalism, look at some real-life situations (mainly focused on COVID-19 and elections) at the time of the pandemic, receive the knowledge and tools needed to debunk fake news, and learn about the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) Code of Principles. You will also learn about the latest attempts at anti-disinformation regulation in the region and around the world.

Target audience

This course is for journalists, reporters, editors, photographers, designers, advertisers, communication students, and media researchers. Participants must be able to use Google Docs and Google Sheets, as well as different browsers.

Resources

During the MOOC, we might need to log in to different social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and possibly WhatsApp.

Objective

By the end of the course, you will:

- Understand the basic notions fact-checkers currently follow.
- Know how fact-checking started and how it has spread across the region and the world.
- Be able to detect or debunk viral hoaxes using simple tools.
- Understand and use the IFCN Code of Principles and why it is important.
- Analyze and discuss some of the real scenarios in the life of a fact-checker.
- Know what is being done in the region and around the world to stop disinformation.

Introduction module

In this module, we will cover:

- The difference between *fact-checking*, *debunking*, and *verification* Why we shouldn't use the term "fake news."
- When and how did fact-checking begin.

Module 1: Introduction to fact-checking

We will look at the history of data verification and discuss some of the basic concepts.

In this module, we will cover:

- What the IFCN is The difference between its signatories.
- Relevant fact-checkers in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- A brief conversation with two fact-checkers from Latin America about what they think are the biggest challenges they currently face.

Module 2: How do I start a fact-checking unit?

We will go deeper into the IFCN Code of Principles and good practices for its implementation.

In this module, we will cover:

- How to create our own methodology.
- How to be transparent about funding and sources.
- What a good correction policy looks like.
- Ways to avoid bias.
- Interview at least two Latin American fact-checkers.

Module 3: COVID-19 governance in the pandemic: real-life scenarios

We will teach some of the essential tools used by fact-checkers to detect or debunk viral hoaxes.

In this module, we will cover:

- How to avoid promoting fake content so it doesn't go viral
- The use of free tools such as Portal Check, CrowdTangle, TweetDeck, and other tools like Buzzsumo to ensure we are not helping disinformants.
- Five essential tools to assess the reliability of images and videos + other interesting fact-checking tools.
- Election case studies
- COVID-19 case studies

Module 4: Is regulation the best way to stop disinformation?

We will provide an overview of what different countries are doing to stop/slow the spread of disinformation: from laws in Asia (that might inspire policymakers in Latin America) to European investment in education.

In this module, we will cover:

- The IFCN guideline to fight disinformation
- The laws passed in India, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the impact they have had in the discussions currently taking place in Brazil, Argentina, etc.
- The Finnish and British examples. Why is it so hard for Latin American countries to invest in media literacy? What is the region doing in this regard?