



TITAN INSIGHTS

on how the public responds to and deals with disinformation



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Executive Summary

Disinformation poses a critical threat to democratic societies, particularly as digital platforms increasingly mediate public discourse. The TITAN project conducted a series of citizen co-creation workshops across multiple European contexts to better understand how individuals recognize, interpret, and respond to disinformation. This Insights Report outlines key findings from these workshops and provides targeted recommendations for policymakers, digital platforms, educators, and civil society organizations. The results underscore the need for systemic interventions to empower citizens with the tools and support needed to critically assess the information they encounter online.

Context

The proliferation of disinformation undermines trust in institutions, media, and public discourse. While much attention has focused on top-down approaches to detection and moderation, there remains a significant gap in understanding how citizens themselves perceive and respond to disinformation. The TITAN co-creation workshops aimed to bridge this gap by involving participants directly in conversations about their news habits, challenges, and expectations of trustworthy digital tools.

Methodology

The workshops were held in diverse European regions and included participants of varied age, background, and media habits. Using facilitated dialogue, role play, and scenario-based discussions, participants:

- Reflected on their sources of information
- Discussed experiences with false or misleading content
- Identified cues or signals they associate with disinformation
- Evaluated prototype tools and support mechanisms

Key Findings

1. Common Indicators of Disinformation

Participants repeatedly cited the following as strong signals:

- Sensational headlines that provoke strong emotional reactions (e.g., fear)
- Lack of credible sources or claims
- Overuse of emotional or polarizing language
- Visual cues, such as low-quality images or excessive use of bold and caps

2. Verification Strategies

Most participants were not familiar with formal fact-checking tools but employed the following heuristics:

- Cross-checking the story with known media outlets
- Looking for author credibility and traceable sources
- Consulting peers or personal networks

3. Barriers to Verification

Key obstacles included:

- Time and cognitive effort required to verify claims
- Distrust in mainstream online media or platforms
- Lack of awareness of verification tools and methods

4. Desired Features in Support Tools

Participants expressed interest in:

- Transparent trust indicators (e.g., source ratings, traceability flags)
- Built-in fact-checking prompts within social platforms
- Tutorials or guidance on recognizing manipulative content



Recommendations

1. Strengthen Media Literacy at Scale

- Integrate digital and media literacy into school curricula, beginning in primary education
- Support community-based training programs targeting older and low-literacy populations
- Fund awareness campaigns with real-life disinformation examples and coping strategies

2. Encourage Platform Transparency and Accountability

- Mandate disclosure of source information and editorial standards for news-sharing platforms
- Require algorithmic transparency on how content is promoted or flagged
- Encourage the co-development of citizen-led flagging systems

3. Promote Public Access to Verification Tools

- Invest in public, open-access fact-checking resources and APIs
- Support browser extensions and in-platform plug-ins that nudge users to verify content
- Develop institutional partnerships between newsrooms, tech companies, and civic groups

4. Foster Participatory Governance Models

- Involve citizens in the design of policy and digital solutions (e.g., user councils, co-design labs)
- Facilitate structured public consultations before regulatory shifts
- Support platforms that trial participatory content moderation approaches

Conclusion

Disinformation is not merely a technical problem but a socio-cultural challenge that requires empowering citizens as critical agents in the information ecosystem. The TITAN workshops reveal a strong public interest in contributing to more trustworthy online environments, if equipped with the right tools, education, and institutional support. By grounding policy in real citizen insights, we can build more resilient, informed, and democratic digital societies.

Contact

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