

Memorandum on the Nordic Council of Minister's Expert Meeting on Fake News, Copenhagen, September 29, 2017

Compiled by organizers

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1. Background

At the 29th of September 2017, an expert meeting was held in Copenhagen about *fake news* (program in appendix A).

The aim with the meeting was to

- present current knowledge and experiences and
- identify areas where it is possible for the Nordic politicians to act in order to restrain consequences of fake news.

The participants in the expert meeting came from different parts of all the Nordic societies: scholars from different disciplines, journalists and other representatives from the media industry, representatives from media commissions etc. (full list in appendix B).

Notes from each session from the expert meeting is presented for those who want to deepen their knowledge (notes in appendix C).

2. Executive summary

The phenomenon *fake news* is on top of the agenda worldwide as it is a serious threat to press freedom and freedom of expressions, because it not only spread disinformation but also tries to question the credibility of the media. For dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and politicians with great interest in making propaganda, this is not a new topic at all, but has been dramatically empowered by the tools provided by online media with an increasing effect on public debate and opinion. The whole society is affected.

Against this background, the expert meeting on fake news delivers reflections of the phenomenon to the Nordic Council of Ministers, on definition or redefinition, its impact on the debate, the political environment, the demands to the media and on teaching new generations in distinguishing between facts and fake.

Regarding the definition of fake news, there is a general agreement among the experts, that we all should be clear and use more appropriate concepts than fake news, namely *propaganda* and *disinformation* when the discussion is about enhancing political ideologies, weaponization of information or simply “bullshit” coming from a very nasty business provided by i.e. so-called fake factories.

Though, we must also recognize that the framing *fake news* cannot be deleted as it is used and shared by everyone in a general sense. The message from the experts must therefore mainly be understood as a reminder to be much more precise when discussing the phenomenon.

Within talking about the definitions, reflections on hate speech, threats, psychological influence in individuals were included and showed that on one hand there is a grey zone between the different phenomenon, but on the other hand also a warning not to mix these different labels too much. It is about different things, but all of it affect societies in a similar way.

Online media in general and social media in particular are transmission channels with much less – if any – self-regulation than legacy media, and are therefore very obvious and

efficient instruments for those who wants to disseminate the disinformation or fakes. Thus, social media must be held accountable.

Citizens in general and the youth in particular are entitled to be able to navigate in a changing media landscape without being manipulated. Therefore, it is of high importance to empower readers, listeners and viewers in their skills to navigate in the media landscape, detecting lies and understand when stories are based on e.g. urban legends. This skill, formerly reserved by journalist, must be dispersed in the population.

For new generations, the digital natives, the starting point for news use and discovering the complexity of society is social media. To understand how legacy media work, how to evaluate media and use them for self-expression is therefore a common task for the educational and the media sectors.

There are no one-size-fits-all-solutions. Websites to detect lies, cooperation among media to have sufficient resources for fact checking and sharing information are used more or less successful. In a more direct way the phenomenon could be dealt with through media, and information literacy can be underpinned by high quality journalism. It is important to know how to distinguish legacy media from media in general, and what to trust in particular.

There must be a trust in society, that a pluralistic and professional media landscape do not have the purpose to betray, but should be built upon quality. The self-regulatory system must be enabled to tackle this, as talking about any sort of legislation immediately turned on red lights among the participants.

The distinguished experts, by their comments, made recommendations for a firm support for free and pluralistic media, for making the room for self-regulatory bodies, for making sure that the media industry is given opportunities to take part in media and information literacy training in order to empower citizens.

To counter propaganda, disinformation and fake for business, some governments would be eager to develop new legislation or new tools. Unanimously, the group of experts rejects such an approach, and gives a very clear advice to support free and pluralistic media, investigative journalism and self-regulation as the best tools to show credibility.

3. Defining and describing the problem

3.1 The concept of fake news

The expert meeting generally preferred using the terms *disinformation* or *propaganda* instead of *fake news*. The concept *news* imply that the story is based on true occurrences, and can therefore not be fake. Scholars have however not found a commonly accepted definition of *fake news*.

It was a general point at the expert meeting that using the concept *fake news* makes the phenomenon a problem for the news industry, whereas the terms *disinformation* or *propaganda* makes it a societal problem.

Words used by the experts to define or describe *fake news*:

Disinformation

Propaganda

Misinformation

Lies

Bullshit

3.2 Origins of disinformation and propaganda

Creators of disinformation and propaganda that simulate journalism and appear as news articles produced by journalists can be divided into three categories:

State actors

Troll factories are part of Russian state controlled disinformation campaigns or information warfare meant to:

- 1) destabilize Western societies, create mistrust to democracy and to the media.
- 2) internally promote Russian leadership and values. In this view, the main purpose of Russian propaganda for Putin is to stay in power. “False news” is equivalent to “false order of the day”.
- 3) personal campaigns against “enemies”, like critical journalists, involve disinformation but also hate speech, threats, sexual harassment, stalking etc.

The key goal for Russian trolls is to deceive western media to pick up, and disseminate, their stories.

Ideological groups

Highly organized, often trans-national groups and trolls spreading disinformation or propaganda related to extremist as well as non-extremist viewpoints, ideologies or groups, often religious, political or xenophobic. Troll factories exist even in the Nordic countries.

Economic interests

Business interests is basically non-ideological youngsters in need of a job, with the sole purpose of creating a profit from peoples’ clicks. They don’t “care if they are wrong or right”. The experts dubbed these “bullshit stories”.

In addition to this, the experts made points on:

- politicians who do the same: use misinformation (lies) to frame a public discussion in an increasingly competitive and heated environment
- institutions like NATO, EU – how are they promoting their policies?

3.3 Distribution of disinformation and propaganda

Facebook/Google

The primary arena for disinformation or propaganda, or even bullshit, is social media like Facebook. In this sense, we should regard Google and Facebook as media outlets and not merely technological platforms.

Cyber-attacks

In some cases, disinformation has been inserted in a news feed via cyber-attacks or

hacking – meaning that false stories take control and appear in regular newsfeeds without being detected.

3.4 Disinformation and propaganda from a user's perspective

For all posts on Facebook you can add “emojis”: Anger, like, love, surprise, happiness, sadness etc. This responds well to the point made by the expert meeting, that emotions (more than facts) mobilize people. Disinformation is often wrapped in emotional narratives with a tiny drop of truth added. Emotions expressed through hate speech make people stay out of the public debate. Both disinformation and hate speech were regarded as democratic problems.

Attention grabbers

Fake news are attention grabbers. Negative sentiments such as fear, anger, indignation, intimidation, and sometimes fascination, tend to mobilize people.

Not 100 percent false

It was emphasized that disinformation/propaganda seldom is 100 percent false. In order to appear trustworthy and reliable, elements of truth and facts are added to create an aura of substance.

The power of beliefs and emotions

Some viral stories are based on urban legends. People tend to stick to what the experts refer to as “conceptual metaphors” (overall narratives or beliefs that shape our interpretation of the world) – so the decision for the audience is not really whether a story is true or false, but whether it supports his or her view of things. Social media is essentially about feelings and emotions, and not platforms for exchanging arguments. For everyone, it is hard to evaluate what is true or false, for both youth and adults.

Silenced by hate

Negative comments, threats, hate speech – or the fear of sounding silly – create an unwillingness for people to participate in the public debate.

3.5 Disinformation, propaganda at a societal level

Influence campaigning is growing. The temperature in the debate is increasing. The line between making your point clear respectively manipulating through disinformation or propaganda becomes thinner and more blurred.

Detecting lies and telling truth from disinformation is difficult. That's especially true for youngsters as they do not have a (trained) critical view on news, and their social media flow are beyond the reach of fact or lie checkers.

Unaware of news

Youngsters are well aware of hoaxes, bullying, and trustworthiness vs. false when it comes to for instance bloggers and youtubers who make money on their online activities. But they have not always shifted that view to looking at news. Teachers and parents are sometimes unaware of this.

Outside the reach of fact checkers

Youngsters use Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp etc. But fact checking initiatives do not reach out to these media forms preferred by kids and youngsters. Social media used by youngsters are intensely picture-driven (camera or screenshots, not text) – but fact checkers are often text based.

Troll factories do not care about laws

Ex.: they film inside court rooms and upload to the internet.

Finland: Fear of trolls

Finland sees themselves as “veterans of the Russian information warfare”. Troll activities (see 3.2) make Finns scared of participating in the public debate. In addition, when there is too much trolling and disinformation out there, people begin to either not know what is true or false, or start to believe in the disinformation. Freedom of speech in Finland is threatened by troll factories, more than in the other Nordic countries.

Facebook/Google

Facebook/Google regard themselves as technological companies, as platform providers – not as providers of content. At the same time, they promote or distribute paid content, both true and false. The experts made the point that Facebook and Google do not take sufficient responsibility for tackling lies and fake news stories. Facebook and Google as main channels for disinformation and propaganda should be held accountable.

Democratic apathy

Propaganda spreads easily as it gives simple answers to complicated questions and plugs right into the users’ fear, anger, emotions and interpretation of the world. Disinformation and propaganda drip by drip hollows pluralism and thus democracy. Said in relation to Russia: An environment where nothing can be trusted creates a sense of apathy or “learned helplessness”.

4. Initiatives and solutions presented

The overall question asked at the expert meeting was “how do we counter or live with fake news?”. The short answer is that we do both. On point made by the meeting was that we have to live with disinformation in an open society.

4.1 Individual level initiatives/ solutions

Media and Information Literacy (MIL)

Above all the experts point at education as the main answer at an individual level: We should create awareness regarding disinformation and propaganda among citizens. Children and adults must be empowered, and learn how the media system works. This can be conducted in several ways:

- Increase Media and Information Literacy teaching in school – learn to become critical.
- Implement this as early as possible, as kids are social media users at a very young age. Involve kids in defining and describing fake news.

- Journalists should go out in the classrooms and “talk about stuff” – to create a contact the children will not forget. Kids must understand that there are lies and truth.
- In order to be able to identify urban legends, kids should get to know them when they meet them in shapes of news stories in the social media flow (see 3.4 The power of beliefs and emotions)
- Identify the background factors and ways in which young people themselves become disinformation creators, or distributors of hate speech.

Research

There is a need for further research on how we as citizens are being manipulated by disinformation. There is also a need for further research on how disinformation and propaganda affect our open societies.

4.2 Media industry initiatives/ solutions

There is a very clear problem on awareness in the industry regarding disinformation and propaganda. Initiatives like Faktisk.no, Viralgranskaren.se or Faktabaari.fi are the industry’s answer on counter lies and bullshit. However, the media industry considers disinformation and propaganda not mainly as an industry problem, but as a much broader and very serious democratic problem.

Debunking and fact checking

Media expose and debunk individual cases – identify lies and disinformation. Debunking can be performed in the single organization. News rooms can join forces and cooperate on fact checking and debunking as fact checking is very resource-demanding.

Quality journalism

The news industry should improve journalism standards and quality. This includes educating journalists in fact checking, cooperation, and investigative journalism. Journalism must be more distinct from other kinds of information. Legacy media must represent trustworthiness.

Legacy media branding

Quality journalism and journalism transparency can be seen as brand values. The experts point at trust-marking of news as one possible strategy against disinformation. News organizations can use clear graphic elements to debunk false news – like red, yellow, green traffic lights. Journalists should be transparent in their own work in order to “teach” the audience how news work is conducted.

Check it out before you get it out

Journalists need to get their facts right. Slow down the tempo in reporting the news – and be careful that the news are correct and true. Journalists should take a deep breath and do their job as journalists: First edit – then publish, and not opposite.

4.3 Political initiatives/ solutions

Below is listed the concrete suggestions for political action made by the experts during the meeting. The suggestions are presented as five themes, in the order the experts prioritized them.

Media and Information Literacy

Promote media and information literacy at schools including training of parents. As mentioned above (see 4.1), journalists could play a role in this.

Create new knowledge

Support or otherwise encourage research e.g. in networks where disinformation flourish or in manipulation of audiences by means of disinformation.

Facebook/Google

Digital media platforms need to be held accountable and tackle fake news. Through self-regulation, Facebook and Google need to take responsibility for spreading disinformation.

Hate and threats

Work against hate speech, because it is closely connected to propaganda in the sense that journalists are at risk of silence. Legal action must be easier to carry out when somebody's right to freedom of expression is threatened.

Russia

Apart from (or alternative to) what is already being done by e.g. EU in order to push back on Russian disinformation campaigns (seen as a confronting strategy), politicians can consider supporting serious independent media channels in Russia.

5. Issues for the political discussion

Under this headline we leave the experts' knowledge and opinions, and conclude our own impression from the expert meeting and try to cut out the issues that can be discussed on the Nordic political level.

The long tradition of freedom of expression in the Nordic countries must, in our opinion, be guaranteed. Therefore, some of the problems discussed at the expert meeting are not possible to solve at a political level in general, nor at a Nordic level in particular. Some of the issues at hand are also beside the area of propaganda and disinformation (like hate speech and Russia's strategies). Against this background, the below presented issues possible to discuss are therefore more on empowerment than on legislation. The issues can also jointly be of relevance for the Nordic countries.

Based on the overall picture given in this memorandum, we suggest three different areas for discussion at a Nordic policy level for the Ministers of Culture.

a) Cooperation regarding media and information literacy (MIL) among children, youth and adult

Media and information literacy is an umbrella concept developed by the UNESCO. Being media and information literate includes a lot of competences, like being able to understand the functions on media, evaluate their content, and use media for self-expression. It is all about empowerment. Traditionally, MIL has been a concept used for children and youth in relation to education. Adults have recently been included in the discussions on MIL. Training in media and information literacy has advantages like developing media skills and a critical approach towards information disseminated in different forms of media. There are, however, also disadvantages with empowering MIL skills, like people being too critical and challenge the values, norms and structures of societies, as well as being dejected on how hard it is to evaluate media and therefore feel marginalized and avoid even trying to understand and evaluate information in different channels.

- Would it be possible to emphasize and develop the already existing cooperation between the Nordic media authorities on this issue in a political way?
- If yes, how could this cooperation be developed?
- If no, are there other possible ways of sharing knowledge and best practices examples?

MIL is taught at teacher educations and schools for children and youth. However, no single person is born with media and information skills, thus are grown-ups another group in need of training.

- Would it be possible to develop/support a common system for the Nordic countries on training in MIL for adults?
- If yes, what could such a system look like?
- If no, are there other possible ways to cooperate between the Nordic countries and learn from each other?

Thus, the Nordic Council of Ministers could consider strengthening the Nordic media divisions to meet debates and challenges coming up from a national and a regional perspective as well as a global perspective. This could only be an option if the divisions are in close contact with journalists and the media industry itself and share messages in respect of self-regulatory systems.

The Nordic media divisions could facilitate round-tables or other informal meetings between media organisations, universities and media university colleges for both journalists and teachers to develop ideas, mechanisms and material for media and information literacy about the profession. A very concrete consideration would be publishing a debate book on fake targeted towards children/youngsters (similar to the book “Den svåra yttrandefriheten – Nordiska röster” published by Nordic Council of Ministers, produced by Nordis Journalist Centre)

b) Facilitate cooperation for the Nordic media industry

In general, most initiatives towards propaganda and disinformation originates from the media industry. The non-profit site Faktisk.no is one example on how the Norwegian media industry cooperated before the election in 2017 Norway, in order to curb the spread of disinformation online. The advantages for such a cooperation are, among other, large-scale fact-checking, cooperation per se, resource-sharing etc. The result of the efforts was that fact-checked stories were shared/likes more often than not fact-checked stories online. The main disadvantage with this kind of cooperation is that it can be criticized for being too powerful and almighty, and for telling people what is right and what is wrong in a propagandistic way. It is also very time-consuming.

- Would it, on a Nordic political level, be possible to facilitate the establishment of a common database or similar organizational initiative for the Nordic media industry in order to combine resources?
- If yes, how can such an initiative be financed and organized?
- If no, is it possible to facilitate an exchange between media industry stakeholders in the Nordic countries in order to learn best practices from each other?
- Are there other political possibilities to facilitate the work conducted by the media industry in the Nordic region or otherwise share knowledge and experience?

Thus, the Nordic Council of Ministers could consider facilitating Nordic cooperation on mechanisms for fact checking. It could be carried out through a workshop where existing systems within and from outside the Nordics are demonstrated to discuss if it is possible to develop a cooperation which only should be managed by the media industry itself.

Participants should be those engaged in such fact checking institutions, and it should cover all aspects as text, photo, video, audio and other combinations. It must also be emphasized that the development of such a cooperation would only be an element for the media as it can never be a replace for core journalistic principles in the daily business. To ensure the principle of keeping at arms' length such a workshop should take place at NORDICOM or/and Nordic Journalist Centre.

c) A Nordic voice in the European Union and on the international arena

The Nordic countries top every list on press freedom indexes. The Nordic countries share many other features as well, like general economic development, cultural and political history. Taken together, the region can be a rather strong and united voice in the European Union as well as on other international scenes. The European Commission presented in the end of September 2017 guidelines and principles for online platforms in order "to increase the proactive prevention, detection and removal of illegal content inciting hatred, violence and terrorism online." Hate speech and harassment is close connected to misinformation and propaganda as well as connected to a general increased coarse conversation climate in society.

- How is it possible for the Nordic countries to jointly take an active role in developing and emphasizing the importance of such guidelines and principles?

- If it is possible, what core values could be of relevance for the Nordic countries to elaborate?
- If it is not, which means of creating and sharing knowledge and participating in the general debate should then be used?

Thus, the Nordic Council of Ministers could consider taking initiatives to be vocal on the advantages given by the front-runner position regarding press freedom.

By emphasizing the well-functioning self-regulatory systems even by different set-up's, the Nordics could actively call on the EU and other European and international institutions to encourage member states to facilitate self-regulatory mechanisms in the media industry itself rather than possible legislation.

Furthermore, the Nordics could call on the EU to encourage and facilitate the tech giants as Google, Facebook etc to participate in the development of such self-regulatory mechanisms and by that to be held as an accountable part in the media industry.

It could also have an impact, when the Nordic member states of UNESCO are asked for input to the International Programme for the Development of the Communication (IODC) about the internet indicators.

Appendix A: Programme

Opening

Introduction by Nordic Council of Ministers Head of Communication, Mary Gestrin

Morning sessions: What is fake news?

How is “fake news” defined - and where do they originate from?

Moderator for sessions 1-2: Erkan Özden

Erkan Özden introduces himself and his work among high school students to give them a deeper understanding of fake news

Keynote: Jessikka Aro

Pro-Kremlin Fake News Influence on Public Debate - and Human Behaviour

Session #1

Common ground: Defining fake news

Fake news defined. What is fake news? How do we talk about fake news? This first session focuses on establishing a common platform for understanding the concept of fake news, but also related concepts like alternative facts, propaganda, misinformation that flourish in the journalistic and political debates.

Panel participants:

- Vincent Hendricks
- Bente Kalsnes
- Kristoffer Holt

Session #2

Common ground: Describing the phenomenon

Anatomy of fake news. This session focuses production, consumption and distribution of fake news. Who generates fake news (and why)? Where do fake news come from - fake news or troll factories? Governmental propaganda or misinformation? Or just plain yellow journalism version 2017? And how do fake news spread and travel across media, web, and social media?

Panel participants:

- Jon Kyst
- Heikki Jokinen
- Mathias Stähle
- Reeta Pöyhtäri

Afternoon sessions: Countering fake news

Media initiatives, consequences for the social life - and for democracy

Moderator for sessions 3-5: Kjersti Løken Stavrum

Kjersti Løken Stavrum introduces herself

Keynote: Jack Werner
Lies and the Media: Method and Responsibility

Session #3

Status: The media's approaches towards fake news

This session wraps up current initiatives in the media to counter fake news. How does media meet the challenges from fake news, propaganda and misinformation? To which extend is fake news a threat to media credibility? Can media and citizens cooperate?

Panel participants:

- Vaidas Saldziunas
- Kristoffer Egeberg
- Liljan Weihe

Session #4

Status: Fake news and societal development

This fourth session zooms out even further and looks at societal aspects of fake news. To which extend does fake news - and the issues and themes that have been discussed in the previous sessions - affect society in a broader sense? What are the media and information literacy aspects? How does fake news affect citizens' confidence in the political system?

Panel participants:

- Galina Timchenko
- Charlotte Wagnsson
- Juliane von Reppert-Bismarck
- Sindre Bangstad

Session #5

Perspective: How do we counter (or live with) fake news?

In continuation of the previous four sessions, how can politics make a difference? What would be relevant initiatives to counter fake news - or to learn to live with them? What are the recommendations to media, to politics?

Panel participants:

- Elfa Ýr Gylfadóttir
- Pierre Collignon
- Jessikka Aro
- Jack Werner
- Elvira Hebel

Closing by Per Lundgren

Appendix B: List of participants

- Denmark: Ercan Özden, journalist at the Danish Broadcasting Cooperation, DR
Pierre Collignon, fellowship on Fake News at University of Southern Denmark
Vincent Hendricks, professor at Copenhagen University, author of "Fake News – Når virkeligheden taber"
Elvira Hebel, high school student at Ørestads Gymnasium
- Faroe Islands: Liljan Weihe, news editor at KVF, the Faroese Broadcasting Cooperation
- Finland: Heikki Jokinen, vice president of the Finnish Union of Journalists, Freelance
Jessikka Aro, investigative Reporter at Yle Kioski
Reeta Pöyhkäri, research fellow at University of Tampere, Faculty of Communication Sciences
- Greenland: Jørgen Schultz-Nielsen, digital editor at Sermitsiaq.AG, Nuuk.
- Iceland: Elfa Ýr Gylfadóttir, director of the Icelandic Media Commission
Fridrik Thor Gudmundsson, researcher at the University of Reykjavik
Lars Gunnar Lundsten, Media Philosopher, dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Akureyri
- Norway: Kjersti Løken Stavrum, CEO at Tinius Trust
Bente Kalsnes, associate professor at University of Oslo
Sindre Bangstad, social anthropologist, and researcher at the Faculty for Religion, Culture and Public Life, Oslo
Kristoffer Egeberg, editor-in-chief of "Faktisk.no"
- Sweden: Kristoffer Holt, associate professor at Dept. of Media and Journalism, Linnaeus, Kalmar
Jack Werner, freelance journalist, lecturer and Writer
Mathias Ståhle, reporter at Eskilstuna-Kuriren, writing about the "Swedish Troll-Factory"
Charlotte Wagnsson, professor in Political Science at Swedish National Defence University, Stockholm
Per Strömbäck, author, Industry Representative, editor of Netopia.eu
- From abroad: Vaidas Saldziunas, Defence and Foreign Affairs journalist, DELFI, Lithuania
Juliane von Reppert-Bismarck founder of Lie Detectors, Belgium
Galina Timchenko, journalist at Meduza, Latvia
Jon Kyst, diplomat, Strategic Communications and Russia, at European External Action Service
- Media authorities: Ulf Dalquist, research and policy officer, Media Division, Sweden
Lykke Nordblom, special advisor, Agency for Culture and Palaces, Media Division, Denmark
Mari Velsand, Media Division, Norway
Eva Liestøl, Media Division, Norway
Tone Gunhild Haugan, Media Division, Norway
- NMR/NR: Michael Matz, senior advisor
Jorodd Asphjell, chair of the committee for culture, Nordic Council
Mary Gestrin, head of communication, Nordic Council of Ministers
Ingvil Conradi Andersen, Ministry of Culture, Norway, senior advisor
Per Lundgren, senior advisor, culture and media
Mikael Höysti, head of department for Culture and Resources

Organizers: Ingela Wadbring, director at Nordicom
Ole Rode Jensen, international developer at Nordic Journalism Centre
Mogens Blicher Bjerregård, freelance and president for EFJ

Notes by: Johannes Bjerling, Nordicom
Maarit Jaakkola, Nordicom
Mia Jonsson Lindell, Nordicom

Appendix C: Session notes

Expert meeting on fake news

29th of September 2017

Notes: Johannes Bjerling, Maarit Jaakkola, and Mia Jonsson Lindell

Keynote #1

Arguments and facts provided/background

- Troll factories exist and their role is to fill the internet with pro-Russian and pro-Kremlin propaganda.
- A massive campaign against JA started when she published her investigation. She was accused of helping American/western authorities and harassing Russian and Finnish citizens.
- Journalists conducting investigative projects become targets of harassment, disinformation and propaganda: phone calls, e-mail spamming, published articles spreading disinformation on the person, the campaigns are typically extended to the person's work community, mocking material can be reported across platforms but not removed and they continue to do harm to the person's professional online presence.
- Fake news is made both by citizens and organized organizations that produce "news" and "research" - but in reality it's propaganda towards the West.
- A key goal for the propagandists is to get their message through "real" media (newspapers etc)
- The method used by the troll factories is to dehumanize the enemy.
- One of their tactics is to try to distance the targeted person from their professional environment and make them appear suspicious in public debate.

Problems articulated and discussed

- Personal level: harassment, threats etc.
- Organizational level: Organized mail bombing towards YLE,
- Societal level: threat to freedom of speech and national security.
- The troll factories make the Finns scared of participate in the public debate.
- Finns don't know what is true or false anymore. Problem occur when there is too much trolling and fake news out there.
- Some Finns turned in to propagandist, they started to believe in the fake news.
- Facebook selling sponsored post to hateful organizations = disinformation is being spread.
- Trolls are anonymous, problem to hold responsible for their actions.
- Troll factories does not care about the law. Ex. they film inside court rooms and put the content on the internet (against finish law but they simply don't care).

Solutions: what should be done?

- Social media need to be held accountable and tackle fake news.

Nordic aspects

- Johan Bäckman (organizer of fake propaganda) has been acting in similar ways in Sweden and Norway + the Baltic states.
- Freedom of speech in Finland is threatened by troll factories.

Gender aspects

- Sexism

Kids & youth aspects

- -

Relevant online material:

- Jessikka Aro's stories on Russian troll factories in English:
<http://kioski.yle.fi/omat/jessikka-aros-prize-winning-stories-on-russian-propaganda>
- Jessikka Aron trollijahti, an example of a mock video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=igOa1EXKzTI>

Session #1 - Defining fake news

Arguments and facts provided/background

- The term 'fake news' is confusing: constantly defined and re-defined in public discussions, often taken for granted, mixed by different conceptions, made empty; even scholars have not found a common satisfied definition
 - The term 'news' should not be used to denote contents that are in fact not news
 - Politically laden: a 'weaponized' 'concept' (Trump: 'you are fake news')
 - Cannot always be defined by the opposition of legal-illegal, calls for policy responses
- Different terms used: fake news, disinformation, untrue information, false statements, distorted stories, junk news, bogus stories, trolling, propaganda, biased news, alternative news, unverified/undocumented facts, fiction, hate speech, lies, bullshit – some definitions include:
 - 'False statements simulating journalism and truthfulness'
 - 'Deceptive stories intended to deceit and mislead the audiences'
 - 'News articles that are intentionally and verifiably false'
- VH is interested in questions related to attention economy (examples mostly from America) and has published a book on fake news (with Mads Vestergaard).
- Attention by the audiences is monetized for advertisements, but attention is unevenly distributed and what goes viral is not necessarily true, negative sentiments such as fear, anger and indignation, yet sometimes fascination mobilize people
- Problem of conflicting interests: democratic benefits vs. media economy benefits (something may be good for America but not for CBS).
- Information load in combination with attention deficit: the market solution does not work efficiently with regards to in particular social media.
- VH points out that fake news seldom is 100 percent false. In order to appear as trustworthy and reliable, truth and facts are being deployed (creating an aura of substance).
- BK: fake news intends to fool the audience. Suggestion: use Disinformation.
- Different meanings of fake news: contents politicians do not like, mistakes done by journalists, journalistic content manipulated on Facebook, content that is partly true, partly false, false content, satire
- Facebook and Google are not taking their responsibility in tackling fake news.
- Epistemological fakeness: true or false and Ontological fakeness: form of presentation based on this, elaborates the categories of 'real fake news', 'fake fake news' 'fake real news' and 'real news'.

Problems articulated and discussed

- The free market of information is unregulated and is not an officiant market, this makes room for fake news.

- The online attention is unevenly distributed. 95% of the traffic online is social media.
- The way the term fake news is used is very problematic. How to avoid that the terms become propaganda itself?
- Whose responsibility is it to specify the diverse meanings of 'fake news', to untangle the political, intended biases and to use the term responsibly?

Solutions: what should be done?

- Increase media literacy among the population.
- A need to take a closer look into the networks in which fake news appear.
- Define the term fake news. Avoid a narrow definition. Use more specific terms or alternative terms that addresses the specific issue.
- Facebook and Google need to take responsibility for spreading of fake news.

Nordic aspects

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Gender aspects

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Kids & youth aspects

- Raise the media literacy among youth, in order to raise awareness about fake news.

Relevant materials:

- Vincent F. Hendricks & Mads Vestergaard: Fake news – når virkeligheden taber
- Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, Hal Roberts, Ethan Zuckerman: Breitbart-led right-wing media ecosystem altered broader media agenda. Columbia Journalism Review 3.3.2017, <https://www.cjr.org/analysis/breitbart-media-trump-harvard-study.php>

Session #2 – Describing the phenomenon

Arguments and facts provided/background

- Russia exerts influence in order to destabilize western societies and trust in media.
- There are both state actors (e.g. the Russian Sputnik), transnationally financed groups, and less organized groups of individuals; in other words, some groups are organized, some not, but the groups tend to get quickly organized, the activity spreads within local communities.
- Motives:
 - Economic dimension: a potential group of fake news producers are young people in need of jobs/earnings (the case of the Macedonian city of Veles in which young people were in search of income – 'who cares if they are wrong or right?')
 - Ideological dimension: fake news producers want to put forward their religious, political, racist points of views and ideologies
- Disinformation is an issue of national security
- Cooperation between different organized interests in order to raise the capacity and resources.
- The groups are not isolated, but highly organized.

Problems articulated and discussed

- People that are trying to investigate fake news are being intimidated (e.g. Jessikka Aro)
- Economic incentives both on an organizational and personal level (Click baits vs making a living).

Solutions: what should be done?

- International level:
 - EU: Support serious media channels in Russia (in order to clean the environment of disinformation).
 - Establish own informational channels that target the “risk groups”.
- Create awareness regarding fake news among the citizens
- Debunk individual cases - identify the lies/disinformation.

Nordic aspects

- Troll factories exist in the Nordic countries - need transnational cooperation.
- Nordic people have a high trust, which make them more vulnerable to fake news.

Gender aspects

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Kids & youth aspects

- A need to identify the background factors and ways in how young people become fake news creators.

Relevant materials:

- Information on the European Union in Russian: https://eeas.europa.eu/ru/euinformation-russian_ru

Keynote #2

Arguments and facts provided/background

- Fake news has a long background and many people believe fake stories.
- Business model of social media is essentially about feelings, emotions etc. It's not a platform for exchanging arguments.
- Work with rumours is a challenge even for journalists: mistakes and misinformation are taken up from the user-generated communication and spread further (the case of Zlatans road association payments in the weekly magazine Veckans Affärer).

Problems articulated and discussed

- We are not sure what we are doing when we communicate on social media/internet. We communicate orally on a textual platform.
- Confirmation bias - we are looking for evidence that confirm what we believe in.

Solutions: what should be done?

- Journalists needs to get their facts right. It might be that the need to take a bullet and not be first, but the most important thing must be the facts
- Know the urban legends. Urban legends get published constantly because journalists are not aware of them and jump on the stories without fact-checking.
- Read all the research about fact-checking - be inspired by the research. "
- Journalists should always fact check, be transparent, "attack" the issue, not the people. Elevate the truth (not the lie), use ambassadors to get to people you don't normally reach.

- Educate journalists in fact checking.
- Increase media literacy.

Nordic aspects

- Nordic journalists can attend to the solutions presented.

Gender aspects

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Kids & youth aspects

- Children and youth need to be aware of urban legends from an early age to be able to recognize them when they see them spread on social media.

Session #3 - The media's approaches to fake news

Arguments and facts provided/background

- Fact checking is carried out by newsrooms (Viralgranskaren by Metro in Sweden, Demaskuota by Delfi in Latvia), independent organizations collaborating with the professional media (Faktisk.no in Norway), communities (Faktabaari in Finland, not to forget the global communities such as factcheck.org, politifact.com), by individual citizens – and in diverse collaborations of these
- Fact checking takes up resources, it costs money.
- Faktisk: It works - fact-checked stories was shared and liked double as many times as the fake story.
- ‘Trumpish inventions’ – questioning the journalistic credibility of journalists – also occur in small media economies such as on the Faroe Islands and in local media.

Problems articulated and discussed

- Initiatives like Faktisk have been criticized for all media pulling together to tell the people what is right and what is wrong.
- Personal level: journalists are doing their job (investigating journalists being harassed)
- Organizational level: Cyber-attacks.

Solutions: what should be done?

- News rooms can combine resources and power to do fact checking. Initiatives like Faktisk. Use clear graphic elements to debunk false news e.g. red, yellow, green lights.
- Possibility for the public to let professional fact checkers i.e. journalists check stories before shared.
- Important to do fact checking outside the newsroom, don't just spread other people news, own your own stories.

Nordic aspects

- Make a Nordic database for fact checking, the same way that Faktisk have in Norway
- Media cooperation to make sure fake news does not spread.

Gender aspects

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Kids & youth aspects

- Use cooperative initiatives like Faktisk to educate children and youth in critical thinking.

Session #4 - Fake news and societal development

Arguments and facts provided/background

- Different strategies: Confronting, Blocking, Naturalizing, Ignoring (this one is not good).
- Propaganda spread effective because they give simple answers to complicated questions.

Problems articulated and discussed

- How should a democratic state respond to Russia without losing its democratic values?
- When a minister (representative chosen by the people) is spreading fake news - government is essentially funding propaganda.
- Russia: An environment where nothing is to be trusted creates a sense of apathy.

Solutions: what should be done?

- Russia: new media appears (for example fact checking sites). Make news for young people - could save free speech in Russia.
- Go into the classrooms to make a contact that children will remember. We need the kids to understand that there is lies and truth.
- Legal action must be easier to carry out when somebodies right to freedom of expression is being threatened.

Nordic aspects

- Problem for the Nordic countries, Putin does not care what other nations has to say. He only wants to stay in power.
- In the Nordic countries, there are initiatives similar to Lie Detectors, for example Nyhetsvärderaren' (<http://www.nyhetsvarderaren.se>) in Sweden and 'Faktana, kiitos!' In Finland

Gender aspects

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Kids & youth aspects

- Lie Detectors is an initiative that works with teenagers and pre-teens (aged 10-11 and 14-15): select and train working journalists and send them to schools to give short sessions about fake news with an objective to give rules and background about fake news.
- According to the Lie Detectors (JRB), the young are familiar with hoaxes, bullying etc. but they never shifted the view to news production; simultaneously, teachers and parents are unaware of the fake news problem, schools are under-resourced
- Fact checking does not reach out to Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat and other applications frequently used by the youth
- Objectives: to relativize the truth and engage young people to the struggle to find the shades of biases and 'truths', and to help the youth create a more balanced news/media diet
- Cooperate with MIL people schools etc. Teachers and parents are unaware of this problem.
- Societal impact of fake news: slow drip of disinformation that is going in to the children's minds. Instagram it's hard to make fact check – not text but pictures. How fact check that? This is where children are! Not on newsrooms.
- Teach journalism to small kids.

Session #5 - How do we counter (or live with) fake news?

Arguments and facts provided/Background

- This is an old phenomenon. New technology enables micro targeting in a fundamentally different way than before.

Problems articulated and discussed

- Problem to legislate AGAINST fake news. That could be seen as censorship.

Solutions: what should be done?

- How to counter fake news: traffic light
 - Expose
 - Debunk
 - Educate
 - Improve journalism
- If we do this, we have to find the right balance.
 - Suppress on SoMe – you will get a polished media sphere.
 - Centralize debunking – media censorship into democracy
 - Trustmarks for News
 - UN verified facts
 - State countering offices – counter propaganda
- Legislate
- Common login service for all media in order to make reliable/established media more accessible
- More research into media targeting and what it does to people (behavioural psychology) Research on what kind of trust people have in journalists.
- Police need more resources to tackle harassment that follows upon investigating fake news. Implement hate speech in the legislation.
- SoMe need to be held accountable
- Radical ideas should be welcomed: companies create a foundation to make a public broadcasting company.
- It may be contra productive to put all focus and attention on Russia.

Nordic aspects

- Nordic countries need to be involved in global networks.

Gender aspects

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Kids & youth aspects

- Increase the level of education on the topic – MIL education.
- Implement it as early as possible. Kids are on social media at a very young age.
- Give young people media attention to fight trolls.