





## Crisis Media Literacy

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### Abstract

The 2025 special issue of *OBS\** Observatorio Journal, dedicated to crisis media literacy, addresses the challenges posed by disinformation, information overload, and manipulation in contexts such as pandemics, wars, and natural disasters. In a world shaped by prosumer culture and the massive circulation of content on social media, the ability to critically engage with information has become essential. The editorial outlines current issues faced by newsrooms and society in general, including fragmented attention, unreliable messages, and the fragility of media business models. It also highlights European efforts to combat disinformation, while stressing the need for better integration between scientific research, community knowledge, and legislation. This issue gathers eight academic papers presented at the 1st International Conference on Crisis Media Literacy, held at the University of Aveiro in November 2024. The editorial concludes that media literacy in times of crisis requires interdisciplinary approaches that connect research, practice, and public policy, fostering critical thinking and informed decision-making in an increasingly complex informational ecosystem.

Keywords: Crisis media literacy, disinformation, media communication.

### Editorial

Over the past years, we have been experiencing increasingly difficult times in terms of information seeking, searching, consumption, and analysis. Indeed, understanding information behaviors, communication, and commonly used manipulation techniques has become essential to prevent and mitigate scenarios of disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation.

In a prosumer culture - where practices such as content creation, remixing, and sharing across multiple platforms are common - this often results in an overload and excess of information. In crisis communication scenarios that require individuals to make decisions and act quickly (e.g., during wars, pandemics, natural disasters or blackouts), this overload and the circulation of erroneous information can lead to panic,

conspiracy theories, hate speech, and mistrust in institutions, all of which have serious implications for democracy.

This overabundance of information also affects newsrooms, where time becomes fragmented, ex-post filtering is prioritized over ex-ante, there are conflicting messages from different stakeholders, and sustainable business models are increasingly challenged.

The *Code of Practice on Disinformation* (European Commission, 2022), the *Digital Services Act* (European Commission, 2025), the *European Digital Media Observatory* (European Commission, 2019), and fact-checking initiatives represent some of the efforts being made to develop strategies to address these challenges. However, there remains a lack of integration between scientific research, community knowledge, and legislation regarding information-seeking behaviors, media strategies, hacking, and AI-generated content.

This OBS\* special issue aims to bring research in media literacy, and communication processes in crisis situations that have been presented in the **1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Crisis Media Literacy** conducted at the University of Aveiro, from 21 and 22 November 2024 organized by the University of Aveiro, Aveiro Media Competence Center, Universitat de Vic, Universitat Central de Catalunya, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, and Associação Portuguesa de Imprensa.

It consists of eight scientific contributions:

The paper "***Scrolling Through the Feed - How do young people in Portugal consume news on social media?***" explores the role of social media in news consumption among youngsters aged between 15-20 years old in Portugal, examining their use of digital platforms, interests, access to news and preferences.

In "***AI-Haouz Earthquake Misinformation Crisis in Morocco: A Content Analysis of Tweets on X***", messages exchanged in the platform X about the AI-Haouz Earthquake are analyzed, whilst detecting rumors, fake news, and conspiracy theories.

In "***Between Hashtags and Hegemonies: The Use of the Term 'Terrorism' on Platform X on January 8***", the authors highlight competing narratives shaped by democratic and authoritarian perspectives, emphasizing the role of algorithms and networked communication in influencing public discourse.

"***Digital Innovation to Support Local Radios in Low-Density Territories***" presents the NEWAVES project, aiming to support local radio stations in low-density population areas across several European countries.

In "***Developing a Sustainable Content Strategy to Support Information Literacy***", a case study investigates the impact of sustainable content strategies on user engagement and information literacy, focusing on Comunilog Consulting's Facebook page.

“**Media innovation in low-density territories: Strategies for the sustainability and recovery of local radio stations**” continues this discussion about media sustainability, identifying a set of strategies that can contribute to the sustainability of local radio stations.

Moving to the context of developing media to foster media literacy, the paper “**Enhancing Media Literacy Through Two Ludic Tools**” enables us to understand social media dynamics and fake news through the development of a tabletop role-playing and a card game.

Finally, “**Is This Real Learning or Just Game Fantasy?: Balancing Fiction and Education in Teaching Viral Infections through Digital Games**” analyses the educational potential of digital games in teaching complex scientific topics, using the game *Mutation Madness* as a case study.

In conclusion, the different contributions offer different perspectives of the challenges and opportunities in crisis media literacy. From the complexities of algorithm-driven narratives to the role of local media and the educational potential of digital platforms, this special issue highlights how media literacy must evolve to address new forms of information circulation and manipulation. It calls for a more integrated and interdisciplinary approach that connects research, practice, and policy to foster resilience, critical thinking, and informed decision-making in complex communication environments.

### **Bibliographical references**

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