

Iceland  
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**Active  
citizens fund**

# TRUTH 2040

**Post-Pandemic Narratives 2040**  
**SCENARIOS & ARTIFACTS FROM**  
**THE FUTURE OF TRUTH**

Project implemented by:

**MONOMYTHS**  
– Joyful learning experiences –



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# FOREWORD

## How was this project born?



"I have been working in the nonprofit sector for over 20 years, and during that time I have had the extraordinary chance to be exposed to a great diversity of projects, points of view, fields, systems and communities. In recent years, I have constantly asked myself questions such as: What initiative could have the best results for the challenges we face? What would be the most relevant starting point?"

I had the chance to meet Diana Stafie in 2015, during the MBA at Maastricht School of Management. And as she was using, within projects for the business sector, the Foresight methodology, making more and more complex analyzes of what the future will look like, I wanted more and more to bring this expertise to the nonprofit sector. The reasons are simple - the theory says that NGOs emerge when either the state fails or the market fails to provide necessary and relevant services. The last few years have shown us at societal level an increase in illiteracy, an unprecedented polarization, a confusion (and at the same time, a strong certainty) about which information is true... shortly - a failure to provide adequate educational tools and services in order to equip people with thinking and decision-making mechanisms appropriate to the period in which we find ourselves...

The idea of this project sprouted, therefore, with a series of questions that arose during the pandemic: How did we get here? What can help us become more rational, more aware of the complex reality around us, and, last but not least, more understanding with each other?

This document is a first step - we decided to start by exploring the system around the truth, through the lens of the latest trends and signals of change, some of which can be categorized as extreme. Thank you, Diana Stafie and Future Station, for the courage to explore such a complex subject.

We do not pretend that we can understand in a short time this concept - TRUTH - to which philosophers have dedicated a whole life. But we are embarking on a journey to discover trends and create future scenarios. We invite you to join us in this exploration!"

### Adriana Popescu

Learning and Organisational Development Specialist

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# About the project

The pandemic has exacerbated a number of major social problems, the online environment is becoming an even more fertile ground for misinformation, manipulation, ideological bubbles and the spread of conspiracy theories, with people's desire to seek certainties and ideologies that can give them a sense of control in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world. Young people are an extremely vulnerable group, they do not have the necessary tools to navigate this complex reality, risking to become victims of misinformation and extremism. At the same time, they are excellent vectors of change among their peers and families.

The project, implemented by Monomyths and Young Initiative, is built around the ideas of "Artifacts from the Future of Truth" and proposes different scenarios on what 2040 will look like. Viewing possibilities - such as disinformation, influencers, ideological bubbles, manipulation, conspiracy theories, stereotypes, addressing diversity and human rights - help us prepare concrete actions for the preferred future scenario, to create the desired tomorrow. The scenarios are based on the identification of change signals, trends and uncertainties relevant to the areas of disinformation/discrimination. Based on the future scenarios created (and "personified" through artefacts), ways of responding and preparing are identified and implemented. The project uses Foresight method, specifically the Artifacts from the Future methodology, created by the Institute for the Future.

By training NGOs to use the generated methodology, by creating a network of young multipliers and by educating young people from various cities of the country, the first steps will be taken to combat the spread of misinformation, false news, the spread of conspiracy theories, discrimination and implicitly slipping on the slope of ideological extremism.



The project "Post-Pandemic Narratives 2040: Artifacts from the Future of Truth" is implemented by Monomyths Association in partnership with Young Initiative and benefits from a grant from Active Citizens Fund Romania, programme funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway through the EEA Grants 2014 -2021.

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# A CHANGING WORLD

## LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

TRUTH, to quote Oscar Wilde, is “rarely pure and never simple”. Given everything that has happened over the last two years — from propaganda and fake news surrounding Brexit and the war in Ukraine to conspiracy theories about the coronavirus pandemic — one might wonder whether TRUTH exists at all. And more than that, where would it evolve? We seem to be living in a “post-TRUTH” society, where lies are tolerated and facts deemed irrelevant or even inconvenient.

As a result, truth is no longer just a philosophical question, but an urgent cultural one. This project is meant to analyse what are those factors that might drive change around the system of TRUTH looking towards the next 2 decades. We are of the view that engaging in such analysis and discussion has obvious relevance to the wellbeing of the young generation and, eventually, also to the health of democracy. This study was carried out using specific **foresight** methods and tools within participatory contexts - with relevant experts. Foresight is an essential ingredient in the development of the relationships between humanity and the world we live in.



**No more prizes for predicting the future, but for future preparedness.”**

**Diana Stafie**  
Founder Future Station

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# WHO IS THIS FOR?

The answer is simple...for everyone! This report presents a broad perspective on the notion of truth and what are the current forces that can give a new form to this concept in the future. Starting with the social, economic and political changes, until the advancement of technology, all of these leave their mark on the course of information until it becomes true or false.

A deep understanding of these factors can help us to better conclude the impact they can have on us and how we could use the resources we have to protect ourselves from fake news in all its forms and risks.

We hope that the current study, together with the upcoming toolkit, will give educators, teachers, youth workers suitable tools in working with children and youth towards better preparing them for the complex reality around us... and for a better 2040.



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# KEY WORDS

## FOR THIS REPORT



### ▶ FORESIGHT

...a participatory process whose mode of operation involves **horizon scanning** and identifying and analyzing **trends** with the aim of creating several **future scenarios**. So, by using Foresight we can have a better perspective on the medium-long time horizon; and that could help us face changes more easily.

### SCENARIO PLANNING ◀

Scenario planning means making assumptions on what **the future could look like** and how the environment might change overtime in light of that future. Scenario planning is one of the most known foresight methodologies.



### DRIVERS OF CHANGE

When we say drivers of change, we refer to various **factors** such as global issues, technological advancement, urbanization or political, economic and social changes **that end up producing modifications at the level of an entire system**.



### ARTIFACTS FROM THE FUTURE

Artifacts from the future could be (physical/digital) objects or tangible experiences of a specific future. Artifacts represent the transformation of the details of a certain future scenario into today's reality.

### SYSTEM OF TRUTH ◀

**A structure whose components make up the notion of truth.** For instance: current ideologies, influential people or interest groups who dictate which piece of information should be taken as truth, behaviours, trends or sets of principles promoted by a society. Within the system of truth we have considered 2 relevant pillars: disinformation and discrimination.

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# THE SYSTEM OF TRUTH: DRIVERS OF CHANGE TOWARDS 2040



The analysis of relevant drivers of change for the system of TRUTH looking towards 2040 was undertaken considering the STEEP analysis. **STEER is an acronym for Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental and Political.**

In the next pages, we have illustrated several drivers of change we have analysed. These drivers have been the subject of a consultation process with the multistakeholder group constituted for feedback and validation of the study's results. Following this process, participants have considered that the 5 most important factors that can impact the system of truth in the future are:

- 01. Illiteracy rise**  
SOCIAL FACTORS
- 02. Tech ethics**  
TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES
- 03. Emotion economy**  
ECONOMIC DRIVERS
- 04. Income inequality**  
ECONOMIC DRIVERS
- 05. Rise of extremist movements and radicalization**  
POLITICAL STATUS

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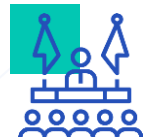


# THE SYSTEM OF TRUTH: DRIVERS OF CHANGE TOWARDS 2040

## SOCIAL FACTORS



## ECONOMIC DRIVERS



## POLITICAL STATUS



## TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES



## ENVIRONMENT

- Rise of extremist movements and radicalisation

- Illiteracy rise

- Media and Information literacy

- Clickbait phenomenon

- Rise of fact-checking use

- Tech ethics

- Polarization

- The naked truth: Discrimination

- The "cancel" culture

- Hate speech

- Income inequality

- Reawakening of xenophobia

- The internet of safe spaces

- Deepfake

- Data as currency

- Synthetic content

- AI-powered content

- Political correctness

- The age of "Algocracy"

- Mediatization of private life

- Emotion economy

- The rise of nationalism

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# SOCIAL FACTORS

Human interactions are the basis of any society. People exchange ideas, share values and beliefs, accumulate experiences, but all this in relation to those around them. Whether they want to or not, individuals are forced to participate in social life and cannot avoid contact with false news, rumors, fake images, propaganda, political campaigns. But it depends on the preparation of each individual how well they can face the negative aspects encountered within a community or in any other environment. Below we illustrated the directions we have analysed as part of social factors:



- Reawakening of xenophobia
- "Cancel" culture
- Mediatization of private life
- Hate speech
- Media and information literacy
- The naked truth: Discrimination
- Rise of fact-checking use
- **Illiteracy rise**
- Clickbait phenomenon

Following our consultation process with relevant stakeholders, it was considered that, in order to be prepared for the future, it would be highly relevant to develop as many types of literacy as possible - literal, financial, digital, emotional, etc.

The importance of this phenomenon is given precisely by the fact that **illiteracy, regardless of its type, makes it difficult or even impossible to understand a message!** In order for a person to be able to act, make coherent decisions and distinguish truth from falsehood, he must understand the meaning of the message.

Therefore, illiteracy is a worrying aspect. If we do not understand a text, how can we realize its quality? If we fail to work together with technology, how can we check from multiple sources if the information we receive is true or not? How could we make rational decisions instead of letting ourselves be overwhelmed by emotions if we don't understand how we can manage them? If the statistics do not show a decrease in the rate of illiteracy in the future we could have people unable to understand the messages that are being sent to them and they will become victims of misinformation much more easily.

Besides illiteracy, there are also other social factors that can change the perception of the truth. Turn the pages to Annex 1 for reading more about them.

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# TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES

Technology advances from year to year and shows no signs of stopping. For example, AI algorithms can now generate content, images, videos, code or art. Even these developments could influence the notion of what truth would mean in the future, which is why we have taken them into account in our analysis, as illustrated below. The consequences of such technological advances can also be found within it.

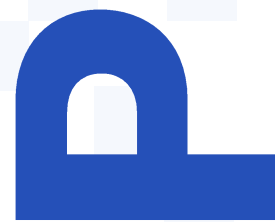


In the future, will we still be able to distinguish between what is real and what is not? In 2021 we saw several TikTok videos of "Tom Cruise" eating a lollipop and making a penny vanish, videos which eventually proved to be fake. The "deeptomcruise" account's author used "deepfake" technology to create a computer-generated image of the well-known actor performing magic tricks and engaging in a solo dance-off.

Further to our discussions with relevant stakeholders, they see tech ethics as a major area of influence on the future of truth. They are concerned about the technology's potential for use against people, including the fabrication of counterfeit pornography for blackmail, the weaponization of disinformation campaigns for political or other purposes and a variety of complex manipulations for new types of abuse and fraud.

## If tech is here to stay, so should the ethics!

In order for things to not get out of control in the future, we will need clear principles on how tech should advance or be used. This for the purpose of creating a safe environment for people where any type of harm will not be allowed. If you want to understand more about tech and how can impact the truth, take a look at the Annex 2.



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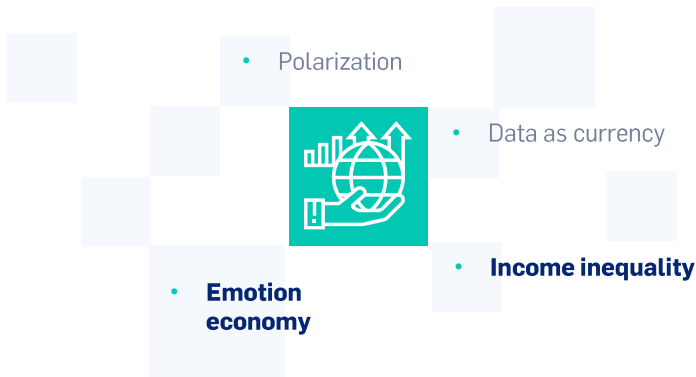


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# ECONOMIC DRIVERS

Economy is a complex chapter, however in this analysis we have chosen to focus on those economic drivers of change that could have a significant impact on the system of truth in 2040. Such drivers are illustrated below.



Further to our stakeholder consultation process, 2 of them were deemed priority: income inequality and emotion economy. The first would refer to people's unequal chances to have access to resources as the standard of living does not allow them. The more informed a person is, the greater are the chances that he will make better choices regarding the information to take into account. As for emotion economy, it is deemed as a next phase of the attention economy.

Emotions can sometimes be misleading and can lead people away from the idea of verifying information by encouraging them to rely on instinct. It works on the principle "I don't need to know more details, what I feel is enough" or "if the truth hurts, I prefer to not longer think about it and pay attention to something else that brings me joy". These are a few ways in which the truth can suffer after the meeting with our emotions.

That being said, emotions can be tricky and can often lead us instead of us leading them. The companies that have created a business model based on consumer emotions and data also realized this. With every click on the Internet, we leave behind us all kinds of information about us. Infos that are being used to outline our psychological profile and receive personalized content with the aim that the screens capture our attention as much as possible and make us give emotional answers. But in the future, it will be important to have a clear limit regarding the use and protection of data, plus personal privacy.

Other economic drivers relevant for the system of truth in the future can be found in Annex 3.



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# ENVIRONMENT



How can the environment influence the truth? Maybe not directly, but through an interdependent relationship with other factors such as income inequality, migration and xenophobia, it ends up playing an important role in defining the truth.

When **we talk about the environment, we also refer to elements such as access to resources and culture.**

The first contributes to the development of knowledge and skills that can be used for a better understanding of the phenomena that surround us, while the second sums up values and beliefs according to which we are more or less open to change or other cultures.

Some of the ideas emerged during the discussions with relevant stakeholders are the following:

- Nature is (economic & social) power: environment has become a currency for power and in the future, the ones who have a green, healthy, sustainable and balanced environment around them will have more power
- Assuring a Just Transition to a Green Economy – a process in which all the actors have to work together: the private companies, the state institutions and definitely also the civil society ([more infos on Boston Consulting Group, Nov 2022](#))
- On a more personal level, another important aspect can be related to man losing touch with nature and becoming more and more active in virtual environments and devices, this leading to medium term mental health problems, isolation, then extremism and all the other political and social factors previously mentioned.



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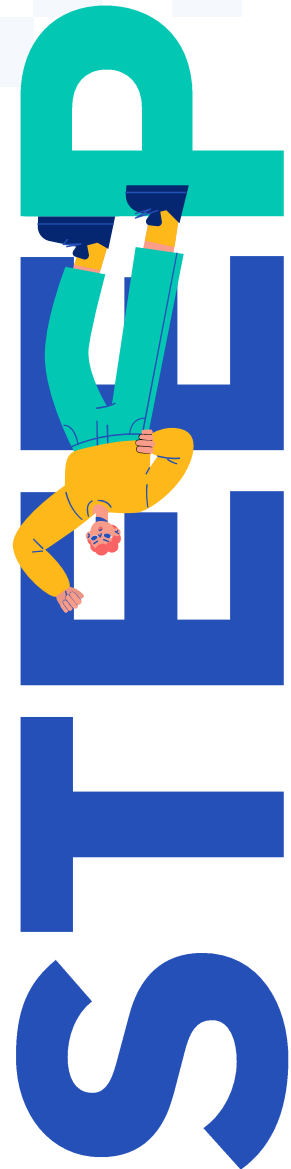
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# POLITICAL STATUS

Politics is and will remain a subject of discussion full of controversies because the stakes are very high if we refer to the power that the winner holds. Likewise, political events or laws that appear over time often divide people into several camps, each having their own opinion that they consider to be the correct one. Precisely **because the events related to this sphere arouse all kinds of contradictory emotions, politics is also the field in which the truth undergoes the most changes.** Now the question that remains is, what can we do to distinguish the truth from propaganda and disinformation? When we explored the future of truth, we have identified several drivers that could impact its development:



As an answer to political actions, extremist movements and radicalization appear, for changing largely or even completely the way in which certain political subjects are treated. But it must be taken into account that these groupings make the process of identifying the truth even more difficult due to the large flow of information and their desire to be as visible as possible. These aspects were considered of high relevance by the stakeholders consulted within this project.

Also, we want to mention that an important role in these movements is played by the elites, that is the people who have the power to change things, whether we are talking about actual actions or people's opinions. The more the speech of the elites is understandable to the people, the more they will feel that they resonate better with the ideas presented by these leaders. At the same time, the individuals are the ones who give power to the elites by supporting them. So, in order to understand the mentality of some people, of a culture, their ideas and aspirations, it is important to analyze the elites of those places: who are they, what do they have to say and what is their power of influence.

The rise of nationalism, political correctness and the age of "Algocracy" are also other drivers of change related to political status that can make it harder to identify the truth. How? Let's see what Annex 4 says.

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# WE ASKED

## OVER 100 EXPERTS...

In November 2022 we applied an online questionnaire to find out the opinion of several experts (professionals who are directly involved in working with youth) regarding certain aspects related to the future of truth.

The questionnaire can be consulted [here](#).

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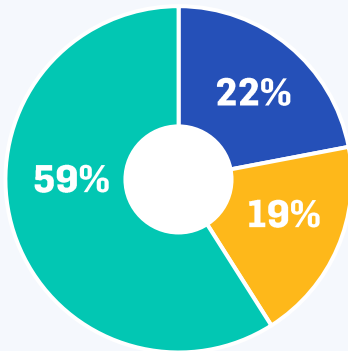
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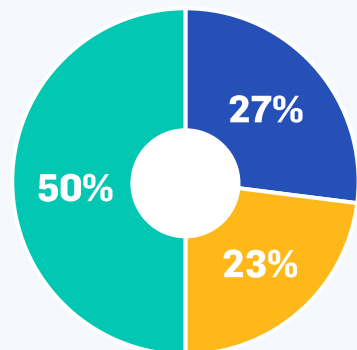
# SURVEY INSIGHTS



In 2040, in Romania, how widespread do you think will be fake news, conspiracy theories and disinformation in general (in social media and not only)?

- More widespread than today
- Just like today
- Less widespread than today

In 2040, in Romania, how much do you think that youth will be able to distinguish true information from false information?



- More than today
- Just like today
- Less than today

More graphs can be seen in Annex 5

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# SURVEY INSIGHTS

What would be the most surprising, "out of the box", vision that you can imagine when you think about how the future of TRUTH could look like on the horizon of 2040?

"Maybe there will be algorithms/software or simply a formula to establish/calculate the truth, also based on artificial intelligence."

"Through education, we accept all truths, because diversity offers the chance to see truth in all its complexity."

"Maybe we will have... an AI integrated in a device (phone/watch) that will warn us about the FALSE potential."

"The TRUTH of 2040 could be that everything we know is wrong. That the universe is actually a computer simulation and we live in a virtual reality. This would be a surprising vision of the future TRUTH."

"It would be very surprising to see, through the actions we are currently taking, a world that has faith in science and a critical sense developed enough to discern between truth and fake. Why not, permanent population education campaigns through local action groups?"

"At the general level: well-established and automated fact-checking systems and organizations.

On a personal level: well-implemented habits of at least checking information that seems exaggerated."

"The truth will become an object of study, as a vintage specialty field, because in 2040 the forms of post-truth and relative truth will be in power."

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"There will be no more fake news."

"Truth will be underestimated to a greater extent than at present. It will be increasingly associated with personal perspective, actualizing multiple possibilities of "truth"."

"Let the question of what is true and what is not be asked no more... Let everything be checked and validated... Let there be no doubt of trust in what is true."

"People will "function" much more through the lens of virtual reality (social media, VR, etc.) and will only believe what they find out from these sources and not from other people around them."

"I think that 'information overload' is also a form of making information difficult. It's not disinformation, but it leads to a lack of information. In theory, people can get to the truth, only there is a huge amount of information they have to sift through. Maybe there will be a software that will analyze and synthesize the information, classify it according to quality, relevance."

"Future generations will be much more informed and, in order to distinguish the truth when information is not clear... I think that there could be an artificial intelligence, where you can enter the question and which will do some complex analyses and will be able to tell the level of truth of the information sought."

"Virtual reality and artificial intelligence will rule the world."

"There could be an app that helps us distinguish truth from disinformation. With arguments. From multiple and reliable sources."

"People will have to pay to find the truth in any field."

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# SURVEY INSIGHTS

If you were to put yourself in the "shoes" of a person who works with young people, what actions do you think can be taken to contribute to the realization of an optimistic future scenario?

The most frequent answers relate to...



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# FUTURE SCENARIOS



In the next pages we are proposing different scenarios on how the system of TRUTH could look like in 2040. Visioning different possibilities - such as how disinformation, influencers, ideological bubbles, manipulation, conspiracy theories, stereotypes, addressing diversity and human rights will look like - helps us prepare concrete actions for the desired tomorrow. The scenarios are based on the identification of change signals, trends and uncertainties relevant to the areas of disinformation and discrimination.

Future Station has developed a framework of 4+1 future scenarios, based on the work of Jim Dator – 4 futures and the Foresight framework of Andy Hines. These future scenarios are not meant as predictions or things that we want to happen. These futures are designed to show alternative trajectories of change, and while none of these futures will happen exactly as written, there are elements from each scenario that are possible or even likely to happen in the future. They are a way of understanding the dynamics that shape the future.

Part of each scenario is also a short narrative about a day in the life of Mihaela and Ovi, 2 friends (and citizens of the world) enjoying their 20's. They invite us to reflect on several possible hypotheses about the future.



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# SCENARIOS OVERVIEW

## ★. THE LAND OF DREAMS

This is an ideal system of truth!



## A BRAVE OLD WORLD

The system of truth reaches a new equilibrium! It reaches a balance among competing forces that is significantly different from the previous one.



## CTRL+SHIFT+T

The system of truth is transforming! The existing system is discarded in favor of a new one with a new set of rules.



## KEEP MAD AND CARRY ON

The system of truth moves forward along its current trajectory. This is the "official future" and is usually considered most likely.

## ERROR 404

The system of truth is collapsing! It falls apart under the weight of "negative" forces.

Future Station adaptation based on [J. Dator 4 Futures](#) & [A. Hines Foresight Framework](#)

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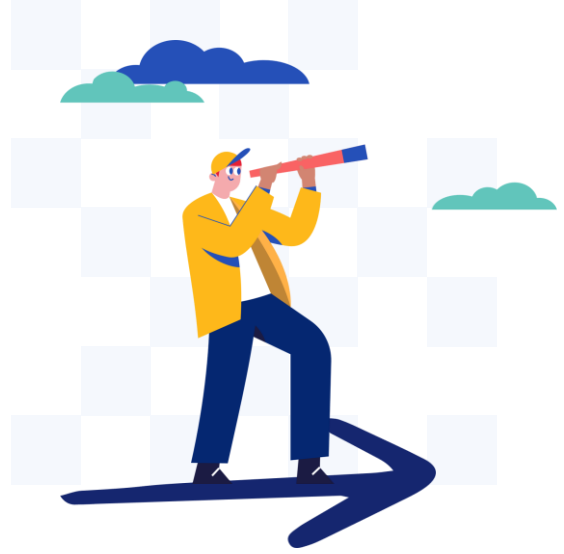
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# KEEP MAD & CARRY ON

**This is most of the times the “official future” and usually considered most likely. A sort of business as usual, things continue as they are by maintaining the status quo.**



This is a future in which things keep going in their current direction. Equal opportunity and social subjects are still controversial subjects. We will see more and more groups isolate themselves from the public opinion, under the pretext of “political correctness gone mad”. Minorities are increasingly more marginalized by a vocal minority that finds innovative methods for hiding their bigotry behind metaphors and code-words.

Every notable event is instantly followed by a tsunami of conspiracy theories amplified by online bots, which can hardly be controlled through the moderation methods employed by big social media platforms. Easy access to Internet and digital tools is a double edged sword.

Trust in career politicians is dwindling, as personalities with a modicum of

vocabulary in the field become the new players on the political scene. Because of the large amount of fake social media accounts, real information is becoming a rarity, that only influencers can disseminate, on live broadcasts.

The real-time demythization of reality is becoming one of the most appreciated careers in the world, in an age where deep fakes and false information are problems the whole globe is facing. The curriculum of educational institutions is changing in order to prepare professionals for this field. People who develop their critical thinking and the ability to present information with evidence and as clearly as possible in order to dispel the “mystery” surrounding a phenomenon and facilitate other individuals’ access to the truth in record time.

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# A DAY IN THE FUTURE

## with Mihaela & Ovi



Mihaela and Ovi are close friends. Or so they like to believe. However, they live in two different realities.

Mihaela has a passion for music and has been trying for a while to gain a little bit of notoriety in the Romanian underground scene. Tik-Tok and Discord are filled with artists, musicians and producers. One of her biggest problems is the question of which accounts that she follows are real and which ones are bots. A few years ago, she found out that 80% of the content she follows either comes from an Asian farm or is generated by AI. She's not really bothered by that, but she feels it shouldn't be overlooked that such accounts are just stealing other people's products and post them on their pages. Many fellow musicians have no idea who the original artists performing the songs on the worldwide top 100 are.

Ovi and Mihaela often argue about politics, which astounds Ovi, as Mihaela doesn't even seem interested in politics. Discussions about the rights of Cyber-Enhanced people even made them stop seeing each other so often. Mihaela has lately become "too much of a leftist", Ovi thinks. At least her music is good.

Ovi uses the internet more than Mihaela does and he likes to believe that he is a well-informed young man. He knows that the parliamentary elections are on the way and that Twitch streamer Silviu Faiar's "POG" political party has significant chances of victory and that does bother him. In the last 10 years, politicians have become severely unpopular and slowly, internet personalities became relevant on the political scene. That bothers him even more. He is up to date on the Taiwan war, which is, in fact, a proxy war between the US and China. He knows he has to browse the internet for hours on end in order to be able to distinguish which news are real and which ones are, in fact, deep fake interviews, CGI war videos and AI-generated for the purpose of farming likes. It is exhausting for Ovi to keep up, that is why many of his friends and acquaintances have stopped trying to disseminate the flux of information.



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# CTRL+SHIFT+T

**This future is about shifting paradigms towards something transformational. It could be a powerful event that changes things in unforeseeable ways. Thus the current system is disregarded, we talk about pivots, trajectories transcended, game changed or a new set of rules.**



We are in a future where Europe starts a trend of absolute political transparency, where every single activity is followed and made available to the public. Simultaneously, almost all state institutions are faced with the same standards, leading to a mass exodus of dubious characters from leading positions. While many support the initiative, in various circles the accusation surfaces that certain individuals are using videos and recordings to keep world leaders hostage.

On platforms like Telegram, the fear of being watched at all times comes up, leading to protests. State employees are more often treated with suspicion, following the revelations of recent years and many deny being friends with them, under the pretext of being surveilled themselves. A new meaning of the term "watchman" appears, this one representing people who spend the majority of their time following the huge

amount of information coming from the political channels.

Freedom of expression becomes absolute, generating a very noisy and indistinct public conversation. Meaning is lost in the process - only to be found in small bubbles. The term "my truth" starts getting thrown around more and more, while "microtruth" becomes word of the year. In the meantime, lying and discrimination become serious offences in the eyes of the public, asking for heads to roll every time a celebrity is disingenuous.

News aggregators become the new political influencers and the new gatekeepers for the careers of those in positions of power. More and more companies, especially those from the USA, start adopting the total internal transparency plan, which leads to increasing levels of distrust in capitalism.

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# A DAY IN THE FUTURE

with Mihaela & Ovi



In recent years, several cases of corruption within NGOs have been discovered. These organizations called on people's help to collect certain amounts of money that would then be directed to various social issues or animal shelters. But in reality, half of the collected money ended up being used for other purposes than those promised, a fact proven by several investigations carried out by law enforcement officers. All these cases have now led to the adoption of a law that provides for total transparency.

Since with this law, Ovi has been passionate about the government and parliament livestreams. Since the EU has passed the "Political transparency" in all partner countries, a group of people who follow everything that happens on the political scene (from information in official documents to that provided by surveillance cameras or microphones) has appeared. Information with which they create daily briefings with the most important events.

Over the course of 5 years, in Romania over 50% of active politicians have been prosecuted or excluded from their parties and Ovi has been one of the members responsible for this. Even state employees that had been placed in important positions by relatives slowly disappeared. As of right now, the biggest challenge is represented by the power vacuum left by the recent political exodus

Mihaela didn't care about politics before the EU Directive, but lately she has been facing the thought that, soon, the state may start surveilling her too, in the spirit of transparency. She doesn't have anything to hide, but she feels that her right to privacy could be attacked.

Lately, she started writing songs about intimacy and transparency, as a sign of protest. Slowly, Mihaela has grown more attracted by extremist libertarian forums based in the USA and she started attending protests in Bucharest, alongside the members of the local community.

For almost a year, Mihaela and Ovi have stopped talking to each other, even though in many other circumstances, they would have agreed on many points.

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# ERROR 404

**The system falls apart. It seems like a different world where crises but also new beginnings that rearrange the social structures emerge. This would be a future characterized by decreased relevance of what current organizations or institutions are offering or failure to adapt to market / societal changes.**



We are in a future in which nothing is working as it should. Following political differences and the public opinion, more countries choose to leave the European Union. The block slowly begins to implode and this instability makes way for charismatic extremist leaders.

The US isolates more and more from the rest of the world, having been on the verge of a civil war for a few years now. And that is because of extreme polarization, but also because more and more democracies are collapsing and being replaced by authoritarian regimes. Elections lose their meaning, voters can be manipulated extremely easily, so new leadership systems appear that no longer offer political rights to the average person, considered incapable of deciding on the future of society. Some of these states become brutal dictatorships, but others manage to have a technocratic regime for the benefit of the community.

As regarding the flux of information, it is well documented that on the internet, more accounts are run by bots than by real people.

Many of the fake accounts are being used in farms, in order to push marketing campaigns or fake news. The Internet becomes a wild west, where the majority of users have found refuge on a couple of platforms meant for discussing ideas, such as the chat or live streams.

Otherwise, Instagram, Facebook, Tik-Tok, Twitter and Reddit are dominated by non-user-generated content. For many people, not showing your face or interacting with users in the chat means you are not real. Elections are dominated by controversies and contradictory information, to the point where most voters simply lose interest.

The few vocal ones get lost in the noise and the boundary between the online and the offline becomes increasingly unclear. The only people benefitting are the ones in the high echelons of society, a bigger gap between classes emerges, while the privileged increasingly detach themselves from day to day reality.

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Charismatic leaders promising sweet nothings are commonplace in most cultures, riding the hope of the masses for a change in the right direction.

And even though it's not done in plain sight, discrimination is rampant in both professional and social environments. Voices for unity are lost in the sea of disinformation and propaganda, while discourse is steered towards everyone being flawed and judged in some way. The term "custom racism" is started being thrown around, as a term for the trend of everybody being judged at some level, with the rich being the only ones shielded.

We are not in the midst of a total apocalypse, however the regression is chronic and visible in all domains and social aspects. The youth are not encouraged, instead they enrolled in an increasingly uniform society, that leaves no room for development, being rather focused on mechanical survival.

The notion of social justice is a thing of the past, the system being the only one that's capable of deciding, within its rigid boundaries, what is permitted and what is not. Basically, the transition away from stereotypes happened through the obligation of adhering to a standard and cold set of norms that does not allow personal opinions. Ethics and logics are only whispered and the people stopped trusting the system. Rather, they fearfully hang on to it, as it is the only viable option for continuing one's life.

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## A DAY IN THE FUTURE with Mihaela & Ovi

For the first time since they met, Mihaela and Ovi had a serious argument.

They hadn't seen each other in a long time, so they decided to go out for drinks, as they once used to do. By sheer chance, this meeting happened on the very day that a member of an extremist group attempted to assassinate the USA's first transgender president. The whole subject of a trans president had been endlessly debated and discussed in the past year, remaining a dead issue.

Of course, the attempted assassination was treated differently by the online press. Left-wing journalism called it an act of terrorism, while the right wing didn't recognize the president in the first place. The huge gap between journalistic approaches spread out onto the public, as it usually does, which led to an extremely intense discussion between Mihaela and Ovi.

- And Ovi's opinion on Romania's exit from the European Union didn't help at all. A few misplaced words later, Ovi started cussing at Mihaela.
- The situation isn't better on a macro level. The protests in Germany, Italy and Romania after the countries left the Union destabilized a good amount of the trade, transport and general peace of the continent. The leading extremist parties prohibited the moderation of content on social networks, under the pretext of free speech, which led to a mass exodus of the people that would use them for entertainment.

Ovi and Mihaela stopped being friends. Mihaela will likely write a song inspired by the conflict between them.

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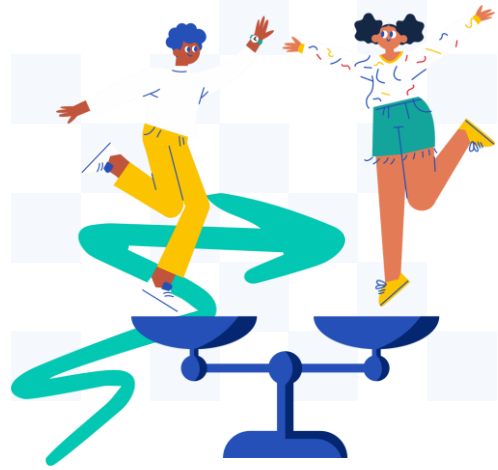


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# A BRAVE OLD WORLD

**This future would imply a saturation phase – things plateau. And it generates a consequent need to adapt to growing internal and external limits. This is a future that would require new ways of doing things. When the direction is a new equilibrium, how might the Future of Truth look like in 2040?**



This is a future where, on a global level, an event changes the whole paradigm. The first sentient AI is created and it becomes a part of many of humanity's mechanisms. Decisions and international relationships, energetic and infrastructure projects, news and political campaigns all have integrated the new AI under some capacity. The information stream it processes is visible to everyone, this being the sole condition its creators imposed upon its launch.

These are the first steps towards a united civilization, but this also comes with a few hitches. Everywhere in the world, critics saying that we are opening a Pandora's box that we will never be able to close are surfacing and despite of the visible improvements it has brought in only a few years, some states still refuse to adopt the AI.

Many social networks use it for moderation purposes, which leads to many debates about what morality and ethics actually mean from the perspective of an artificial being and the programmers of OKAI are placed under scrutiny by the whole world.

The program receives its first marriage proposals in 2040 and we start seeing the first people who want to exclusively live online, in a metaverse created by OKAI.

For 2 years, since OKAI was first powered on, things have been tense in certain places. The first sentient AI, with an unlimited access to humanity's knowledge, is a clear reason for some states to be tense. The advantage is that the whole consciousness of OKAI is completely accessible to anyone who may wish to see it.

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Few can understand it, but at least there is transparency. More importantly, you can also interact with it.

The balancing of some macroeconomic aspects offers many countries the breathing space to herald digital literacy, more social nets and a better distribution of both central and local power. The conversation surrounding morality and social guiding principles starts becoming more concrete and we can see pockets of communities truly starting to live in harmony,

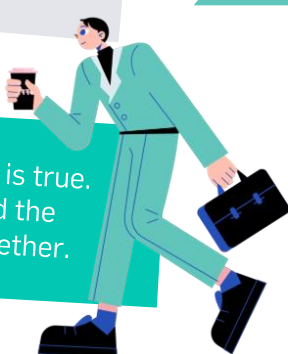
regardless of class, race or individual differences. In these 2 years, OKAI was integrated into decision-making processes at an international level, as a mediator for negotiations and discussions between leaders. At the same time, it came up with a series of legislation proposals at a worldwide level, that are meant to increase the standard of living without affecting global productivity. These are the first steps humanity makes towards a truly united civilization.



## A DAY IN THE FUTURE with Mihaela & Ovi

Ovi was affected by OKAI's activity as well. Before the AI's activation, he had begun to have a moderately successful career as an online journalist. However, now he often receives warnings that he might be spreading misinformation. Thus, he has to bring additional evidence that what he writes is true, which means a great extra effort for him, in terms of research and timing. OKAI detects, in real time, any bit of information that does not conform to the events that it observes. Most journalists have started adjusting to regurgitating the information in the OKAI flow.

- However, the effects are different on an individual level. For example, any song Mihaela writes is flagged by OKAI as being too similar to an already existing one and big record labels have already integrated the AI's "opinion" in their daily activity. But it must be taken into account that music has existed for hundreds of years and up to the present moment there are a lot of musical creations. There is a possibility that the lyrics created by Mihaela are similar to others of a song that maybe she didn't know about. A fact that leads to the modification of some regulations regarding the plagiarism policy, such as not having an addition of more than 3 words similar to that of another song. So OKAI makes sure that the artistic creations are original, while the new artists also have a chance to enter the music market.



Now, OKAI decides what is true. Mihaela and Ovi attended the protest against OKAI together.

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# THE LAND OF DREAMS

**This scenario is a utopian one. He embodies a society in which ensuring the well-being of citizens is a priority, a society in which people feel that their rights are respected.**

We are in the best iteration of year 2040. After more than 40 years, humanity has learned how to function in a truly digital age, without being on the brink of self-destruction at all times. UN adopts a series of global laws that control the flow of fake news through AI, without being entirely controlled by it.

The difference between freedom of speech and verbal abuse is well-defined and ethics and empathy become important subjects that are also studied in schools. Alongside the reform in certain branches of education, F.E.F.A - a consortium of organisations focused on education - also decides to lay the foundation of a global system of free education that anyone can access, after realizing that the best weapon against disinformation is, unsurprisingly, critical thinking and access to information. These are the first steps humanity makes towards becoming a type 1 civilization, when, finally, it unites for a series of projects meant to solve the world's problems (mainly famine, climate change and lack of education).



Correctly disseminating information becomes commonplace, with a wide variety of tools being readily available for anyone who needs them. In a short span of time, conspiracy theories become imagination exercises being thrown around for fun at parties or used as artistic expression in different forms of media.

Rigorous, but personalized, education leaves little to no gaps for manipulation or disfunctional communication. We are slowly reaching a collective maturity which makes empathy the first tool used in both macro and personal interactions. The gap between classes is slowly fading away, without authoritative actions, retaliations from the rich or overthrowings of governments.

After a series of catastrophic climate events, many agents of misinformation have begun to disappear, being faced with the state of things.

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# A DAY IN THE FUTURE

with Mihaela & Ovi



Mihaela can, finally, make music without being harassed by predatory record labels, after the Ethics Committee introduced centralized AI algorithms that fairly monitor worldwide content.

Ovi managed to create a small independent journalism platform that uses the resources of the Digital Ethics Committee in its investigations.

Alongside these first steps in global legislation, F.E.F.A - a consortium of organisations focused on education - have managed to lay the groundwork of a free worldwide educational system where every child and youth has free access to teachers and classes. The level of literacy has exploded in the last 5 years, which led to an increase in global dissemination capacity.

Mihaela writes the score to all of the productions on Ovi's platform.

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# NEXT STEPS

## WHAT NOW?

We hope this reading inspired you in different ways:

- it might have given you insights on actual drivers of change and (more or less) visible trends around us;
- it might have given you information related to how over 100 teachers and youth workers perceive how will 2040 look like;
- it might have helped you imagine some scenarios of the future, materialized as a day in the life of Mihaela and Ovi;
- it might have given you ideas on how to start a conversation with youth about the system around TRUTH;
- it might have started a discussion related to broader measures in the fields of education and youth, in order to progress towards the “wanted future”;
- ...and last but not least, it might have ignited a spark of curiosity related to how we can continue this conversation and what comes next?



The **project “Post-Pandemic Narratives 2040 - ARTIFACTS FROM THE FUTURE OF TRUTH”** involves several action steps after this first exploration:

- 1. Creation of a team of youth workers** to validate the results with youth and co-create solutions towards the “wanted future” scenario;
- 2. Elaboration of a toolkit** containing methods and activities to be implemented with youth towards a positive TRUTH2040 scenario;
- 3. Several other actions directed towards youth workers and youth**, as well as policy level actions.

**Join us and stay tuned! The toolkit will be available soon.**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Future Station is a foresight consultancy practice which engages in activities such as strategic planning (trend scanning and scenario planning) or training teams for future realities. Clients served range from industries such as retail to telecom, financial services to FMCG, energy and healthcare, plus NGOs and public institutions.

## **Coordinator and main author**

Diana Stafie

## **IFTF expert**

Advisory sessions with Jake Dunagan, Director Governance Futures Lab, Institute for the Future, USA shaped the trends and future scenarios.

## **Contributors**

This study was created with input from Adriana Popescu, Dani Prisacariu, Diana Bordeianu, Ioana Avădani.

## **Expert group**

We incorporated feedback from a group of experts (in education, youth work, media literacy, social justice, human rights) and representatives of youth, among which Vlad Dumitrescu, Laura Cireaşă, Mariana Oancea, Miruna Covaci, Oana Pășălan, Octavia Borș, Călin Niță, Sorin Victor Roman, plus other relevant experts.

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# ANNEXES

## ANNEX 1 – SOCIAL FACTORS

### Illiteracy rise

#### ABOUT

Is not being illiterate simply down to the ability of being unable to read? In the past, yes. Today, though, the term illiteracy can be put towards a whole host of personal issues and errors that you might be dealing with in life.

One of the most important is functional illiteracy. In a article published by [Frontiers in Psychology](#), functional illiteracy means that “a person cannot use reading, writing, and calculation skills for his/her own and the community’s development. Functional illiteracy has considerable negative effects not only on personal development, but also in economic and social terms.”

Right now, there are some 20 forms of illiteracy, from literal illiteracy to factual illiteracy. **Let’s have a look over a few types of illiteracy present in society today and see why are relevant for the future of truth:**

#### 1. LITERAL ILLITERACY

...stays for inability to read or write. Which means that people who have this form of illiteracy cannot get information from written sources, being prone to misinformation and not only that. They can even become victims, for instance, of commercial sellers, ending up paying more for a good than the price shown on the label.

#### 2. FINANCIAL ILLITERACY

People who are financially illiterate show gaps in money management. Often, this inability to manage one's budget and save money leads to poverty or dissatisfaction with personal lifestyle. Also in this case, people tend to become victims of misinformation, making poor financial decisions and spending money easily without checking in detail if the good they are purchasing really corresponds to the initial presentation or their needs.

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### 3. DIGITAL ILLITERACY

...refers to the lack of ability to use digital devices or platforms. People who do not have digital skills hardly manage to communicate online, search for various information they need or even verify certain facts. That is why they are more prone to cyber attacks and fake news.

According to [DESI 2022](#) Romania ranks 27th out of the 27 EU member states, which indicates that it is the country whose population is the least digitally prepared, far below the European average.

### 4. CIVIC AND CULTURAL ILLITERACY

Cultural illiteracy depends on the fact that a person did not know his own culture and its history: where does the language he speaks come from, what historical events created the country he lives in and various other aspects of the evolutionary path. It should be mentioned that those who are culturally illiterate can be like that in relation to other cultures, being unable to understand the cultural practices of other countries different from their own. From here, the transition to civic illiteracy is made, namely, the lack of involvement of people in society.

They do not know or understand how a citizen, or a group of citizens can have a positive impact on the environment in which they live.

These two types of illiteracy represent a worrisome problem because they can give rise to xenophobia and refusal towards everything that is considered 'outsider'.

### 5. EMOTIONAL ILLITERACY

People who are emotionally illiterate are not able to understand and manage their own emotions. Moreover, they cannot understand the emotions of those around them and why they react in a certain way in a certain context. Such people are prone to misinformation because they react impulsively and do not take a few moments to understand and research information.

#### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF TRUTH?

High levels of illiteracy and educational level in general are deemed determinants of a greater belief in conspiracy theories or fake news.

„In 2020, 770 million people in the world can't read or write a single word and a further 2 billion people struggle to read a sentence", according to [World Literacy Foundation](#).

[Nearly one third \(32.8 %\) of the EU population](#) aged 25-64 had a tertiary level of educational attainment in 2020.

According to Daniel David, Professor of Clinical Cognitive Sciences and the Rector of Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, „one in five 15-year-olds has poor reading skills".

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## WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

Moreover, "it is estimated that around 13 million children under 15 years of age and around 55 million adults between 15 and 65 years of age have literacy difficulties", according to [Literacy in Europe: Facts and figures study](#). [PISA scores \(2018\)](#) show that Estonia ranks first in Europe, for Reading, Mathematics and Science, the last placed being represented by Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The future is all about attacking the literacy issue on all fronts, we shouldn't treat the matter from one perspective anymore (that to know how to read and write), because the main focus will be on political literacy, medical literacy and many more.

[BRIO](#) - is a DeepTech SaaS educational platform developed for mass market consumption, in order to assist grades I-XII students, parents, school teachers and institutions to boost their educational performance and confidence. Brio, together with 7 other non-profit organizations specialized in the field of education launched the "[Report on the literacy level of students in Romania](#)". This was done based on the results that over 47,000 students from all over the country, from secondary grades, obtained in literacy tests. The results thus collected show that 42% of the students obtained the "non-functional" score, which places them in a position of illiteracy, while approximately 20% of the students who were tested (8% of the school population) are on the verge of passing to the "functional minimum".

[The Lifelong Learning Platform](#) is an umbrella that gathers 42 European organisations active in the field of education, training and youth.

[Money Smart](#) is a financial education program, belonging to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), dedicated to all people regardless of age who want to improve their financial skills. The program includes [14 interactive games](#) through which people can learn according to which criteria they should make decisions when they want to make investments.

[Digital Citizen](#) is a platform through which people can access tutorials, reviews and news about technology. With the help of this platform they can learn how to befriend technology and how to use it in an efficient and safe way.

[Project Citizen](#) is an initiative through which participants learn about the mechanisms of the government system and how they can monitor/influence it. They are divided into teams, each having the role of identifying various problems present in the community and finding solutions in the form of social policies that can be implemented by the government.

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## Media and Information literacy

### ABOUT

Media literacy education is currently at a point of transition. It is a point of opportunity, certainly, but it is also one of risk and danger. It is a point at which we need to be very clear about our aims and priorities – because if we are not clear about where we are going, we are very likely to lose our way.

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF TRUTH?

Imagine who we are if we detach from our devices - no pervasive smartphones or other tech devices, no ubiquitous Internet, no texting, no social media, no tweeting Presidents.

### WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

The Solutions Journalism Network - Journalism focus shift from documenting problems towards also identifying solutions.

## Clickbait phenomenon

### ABOUT

Researchers at Penn State's Media Effects Laboratory and Institute of Computational and Data Sciences recently found that clickbait headlines — titles that rely on “linguistic gimmicks” such as questions, superlatives and curiosity gaps to encourage readers to click — aren't any more effective than regular headlines and in some cases perform even worse. Because fake news is a concern on social media, researchers have explored using AI to systematically identify and block clickbait. However, the studies also suggest that identifying fake news with artificial intelligence may be even more complicated than anticipated. We saw a surge in utilizing these „weapons” such as: manipulated photos, false statements, state propaganda and deep fake videos about the war in Ukraine.

That could mean such AIs, which have been refined over several decades of shifting human behavior, will need to continually adapt. The people who write fake news may become aware of the characteristics that are identified as fake news by the detectors. News consumers may also just become numb to certain characteristics if they see those headlines all the time. So, fake news detection must constantly evolve.

### WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

**Clickbait detection Github** - detects clickbait headlines using deep learning. Through NLP and text classification, this project aims to classify a headline as clickbait or non-clickbait.

**Clickbait Detector with Count Vectoriser** - this app focuses on classifying News headlines into clickbaits and non-clickbaits. The clickbaits are labelled as 1 and non-clickbaits as 0. The headlines are collected from different news sites.

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# Rise of fact-checking use

## ABOUT

Besides efforts to improve journalistic quality/trust in journalism, fact-checking is perhaps one of the most commonly discussed themes in the world, right now. And that is because terms such as “misinformation,” “disinformation” and “propaganda” are rising. All 3 refer to false or misleading messages spread under the guise of informative content, whether in the form of elite communication, online messages, advertising or published articles.

At the same time, people's awareness on the importance of verifying information from several sources increases. Individuals understand that not all data should be taken for granted, so a fact-checking oriented mindset is a plus that can prevent the assimilation of false information and its subsequent spread.

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF TRUTH?

In the future, fact checking and fact checkers will need to improve and adapt to overcome new ways that individuals and „some states and corporations” try to misinform, disinform and use propaganda machines. We will see more and more fact checking made by artificial intelligence, machine learning and other technologies.

## WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

[Trust Project](#) developed the first global transparency standard that helps people know who and what is behind a news story.

[Olgetit](#) uses AI filtering technology to fact-check one million articles every hour.

[Disinformation Index](#) is a web-based tool that rates news outlets based on the "probability of disinformation on a specific media outlet." This rating system will cover all types of media and will be a real time score.

[OpenSources](#) is a web-based database of information sources that have been analyzed in terms of their reputations for producing credible news. The database classifies websites as: Fake News, Satire, Extreme Bias, Conspiracy Theory, Rumor Mill, State News, Junk Science, Hate News, Clickbait, Proceed with Caution, Political and Credible.

The Washington Post announced a Chrome and Firefox extension that permits users to embed [fact checks into tweets](#). The BBC is [extending its fact checking/debunking project—Reality Check](#)—and is working with Facebook. Other groups like [First Draft News](#), founded in 2015 as a coalition of newsrooms and social media platforms, are working to improve practices, standards and technology for debunking problematic information and verifying eyewitness media online.

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# Reawakening of xenophobia

## ABOUT

We are all humans and have our own beliefs and values learnt from those around us or acquired from our own experiences. Ideas that are awakened once we deal with them again. One of these could be related to xenophobia, a fear that can be used by mass media, politicians or any other various social actors to create a state of rejection of everything that is new, unknown and belonging to another culture. However, an aspect on which we can reflect refers to the fact that different does not necessarily mean something wrong or dangerous. Multiple minds with multiple perspectives can create beautiful and enduring things. Also, due to this diversity it's quite hard to make a supposition that all 'outsiders' are the same.

Since the 2015 refugee surge, there is some evidence of rising xenophobia. Between 2016 and 2019 in many European countries, there was a decline in Gallup's Migration Acceptance Index based on whether people think migrants living in their country, becoming their neighbors and marrying into their families are good things or bad things (Esipova et al., 2020).

An Eurobarometer special survey of the EU28 (Eurobarometer 2018) found 17% of respondents had a "negative" perception of "the impact of immigrants on society." Immigration became a more salient issue after the surge. Until summer 2020, when knocked to second place by the pandemic economic situation, Europeans considered immigration to be the most important issue facing the EU by far.

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF TRUTH?

In the future, xenophobia risks to be one of the most important and persistent social evils throughout the world. Whether we are talking about ethnic cleansings, tribal conflicts, warring factions, group hatred, subtle discrimination, or retraction of equity laws under the guise of fairness, the underlying results will be the same.

## WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

"You have chosen to make the immigrant the scapegoat for the country's problems rather than the financier who loots our country or the tax evader", the far-left French leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon thundered from the National Assembly in July 2019. [...]

His La France Insoumise (Unsubmissive France) party offers an anti-capitalist critique of the European migration crisis, accusing the European Union's border security policy of incentivizing both the exploitation of migrants and the fear of them.

An IRES survey carried out in 2019 showed that approximately 48 percent of Romanians thought that a nationalist movement was needed in Romania.

The COVID-19 pandemic was first reported in the city of Wuhan, Hubei, China, in December 2019. The origins of the virus have subsequently led to an increase in acts and displays of Sinophobia, as well as prejudice, xenophobia, discrimination, violence and racism against people of East Asian and Southeast Asian descent and appearance around the world.

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# The naked truth: Discrimination

## ABOUT

Racial disparity contributed to the rise of “wokeism” - Woke was officially added into the dictionary in 2017 and it means to be awake to sensitive social issues, such as racism. In 2021, wokeism has peaked. Yes, it will remain a highly influential movement and it will probably continue to spread globally. In the future, wokeism is likely to evolve into a subculture spreaded across the world.

Starting from the Black Lives Matter movement, the LGBTQ parades and up to the demonstrations that support gender equality, society is starting to fight more and more with discrimination in all its forms. Facts that implicitly lead to the emergence of power system tensions and various conflicts such as those between generations through the clash of different perspectives on aspects of life.

The idea of 'normal' is starting to be questioned more and more often. What, until a few decades ago, was considered to be common and accepted by a society, today ends up being considered unacceptable, discriminatory and far from promoting social inclusion. This change has the consequence of a rupture between conservatives and progressives with major social, political and economic repercussions at the global level.

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF TRUTH?

Imagine a world where gender is neither a plus or a minus and people can fulfill their potential based on their qualities, not on their gender.

## WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

[Responsible Research and Innovation Networking Globally Global](#) network working on responsible research and innovation in research that is aligned to the SDGs, including gender equality.

[RADFA](#) is a non profit organization that is lead by women. They are dedicated to promoting diversity and cultivating leadership to achieve equality in tribal areas of Pakistan.

[PLUHO](#) - People Like Us Hang Out (PLUHO) is an LGBTQ community building group in Malaysia focuses on supporting LGBTQ people through community-building, empowerment and services.

Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a decentralized political and social movement that seeks to highlight racism, discrimination and inequality that occurs on people based on their skin colour / skin type.

MeToo is a social movement against sexual abuse, sexual harassment and rape culture, in which people publicize their experiences of sexual abuse or sexual harassment.

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## Hate speech

### ABOUT

In common language, "hate speech" loosely refers to offensive discourse targeting a group, or an individual based on inherent characteristics - such as race, religion or gender - and that may threaten social peace. Hate speech is on the rise worldwide, with the potential to incite violence, undermine social cohesion and tolerance and cause psychological, emotional and physical harm based on xenophobia, racism, antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred and other forms of intolerance and discrimination.

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF TRUTH?

In the future, hate speech would be addressed in schools, teachers will be trained to spot hate speech and build their counter speech based on concrete situations. The laws that incriminate hate speech will need to be improved, private companies will be even more involved in counteracting these facts.

### WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

[Freedom2Hear](#) - an innovative new application will silence hate and social media abuse using a revolutionary online filter system.

[Spectrum Labs](#) provides artificial intelligence technology to platform providers to be able to detect and shut down toxic exchanges in real-time.

[Centre Malaysia](#) recently launched an [online tracker](#) designed to find hate speech among Malaysian netizens. The software they developed—called the Tracker Benci—uses machine learning to detect hate speech online, particularly on Twitter.

## The “cancel” culture

### ABOUT

The term itself – cancel culture - is vague and has become a catch-all for various situations with different degrees of severity and impact. It means essentially a boycott. "It is the withdrawal of financial support, political support, social, economic support, often in pop culture in the form of attention of a particular media star, a political figure, a business figure".

Freedom of speech? It is quite hard to do this when when fear grips you. And how does this happen? Through the extreme consequences that appear on the people targeted by cancel culture. Sometimes a single word uttered in a certain context is enough for the person in question to be 'cancelled' from their entire professional or public life. In this case, our mind remain the only safe place where thoughts can be exposed.

The future is all about inclusion, diversity and equity. More and more countries and private companies have public strategies to address these issues; in 2020, US companies spent 8 billion dollars on diversity and inclusion initiatives.

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## WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

In a viral incident from May 2020, a White woman named Amy Cooper was caught on camera calling the cops and making false accusations against Christian Cooper, a black man who was birdwatching in Central Park. She lost her job in finance and even temporarily surrendered her dog to a shelter as the internet called out her actions as racist.

New York and Denver public libraries aren't removing Dr. Seuss books over racist imagery

"Mandalorian" actress Gina Carano dropped by Lucasfilm and talent agency after controversial tweets

J.K. Rowling defends herself after accusations of making "anti-trans" comments on Twitter

Kanye West is buying 'free speech platform' Parler

## Mediatization of private life

### ABOUT

The days have come when the boundaries between private life and social media are almost gone. The mobility of media devices and lowered costs internet access led to a wide range of privacy problems. Our private life has become a battleground of the tech giants for trading informations such as: permitting location tracking for targeting, giving access to sensitive personal systems such as bank accounts/logins for aggregation or payment convenience, sharing our unique biometric identifiers through facial and thumbprint scans.

These historical moments that we have been living in the last 2 years, but also moving of our entire private life in online, has greatly affected our interpersonal relationships.

There's no shortage of bad news in the media to "doomscroll", from a global pandemic to the war in Ukraine and an impending climate crisis. New research suggests the compulsive urge to surf the Web can lead to poor mental and physical health outcomes.

In the research called „Caught in a Dangerous World: Problematic News Consumption and Its Relationship to Mental and Physical Ill-Being.„ written by Associate professor Bryan McLaughlin, the study's lead author and a researcher at Texas Tech University, find out that 16.5 percent of about 1,100 people surveyed, in US, showed signs of "severely problematic" news consumption, leading to greater levels stress, anxiety and poor health.

## WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

Proton Mail is an end-to-end encrypted email service founded in 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland. Proton Mail uses client-side encryption to protect email content and user data before they are sent to Proton Mail servers, unlike other common email providers such as Gmail and Outlook.com.

Privacy Dashboard is literally a dashboard for all things privacy-related on your Android device.

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## ANNEX 2 – TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES

### Tech ethics

#### ABOUT

Tech ethics is about understanding ethical and responsible AI design, deployment and use, as well as the necessity for a set of strong AI fairness principles.

What happened when racial profiling gone digital? Facial recognition technologies, for example, have come under increasing scrutiny because they've been shown to better detect white faces than they do the faces of people with darker skin. They also do a better job of detecting men's faces than those of women. Mistakes in these systems have been implicated in a number of false arrests due to mistaken identity.

The lack of transparency in modern technologies has become a real problem because it makes it difficult to access them, and also to understand the mechanisms behind these technologies: blockchain, artificial intelligence or machine learning – all risk to become a real threat. How far will the software's and not the owner's accountability go, who will draw those boundaries and how ethical will those people be?

#### WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

Kubernetes - An open-source container orchestration system for automating software deployment, scaling and management.

MIT 2019 study - None of the facial recognition tools from Microsoft, Amazon and IBM were 100% accurate when it came to recognising men and women with dark skin.

AMAZON - Banned police from using its facial recognition technology Rekognition in 2020 due to bias racial profiling.

IBM will no longer offer, develop, or research facial recognition technology starting June 2020.

Moral Machine platform for gathering a human perspective on moral decisions made by machine intelligence – AI biases, for example self-driving cars.

Open Source Initiative - A non-profit corporation with global scope formed to educate about and advocate for the benefits of open source and to build bridges among different constituencies in the open source community.

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# Deepfake

## ABOUT

Deepfake is no longer a new concept. Most of us may have heard about this phenomenon for the first time through the mass media and news on this subject, while other people had the unpleasant experience of having direct contact with such content through the well-known harassment messages. But in addition to this case, how many times have we been victims of deepfake and didn't realize it? Does what we always see presented on the screens of the devices embody the truth? It is quite difficult to answer this question when we don't know for sure what the truth is in the end.

A factor that facilitates the appearance of deepfakes is the advancement of technology. With a simple search on the internet, you can find thousands of free programs through which such pictures and films can be created with the aim of causing harm and producing misinformation. It's no wonder that the deepfake phenomenon takes off when it's within the reach of anyone to be a creator of such content.

The more the deepfake is present, the more the notion of truth would suffer in the coming years. In the future, we will no longer be able to tell which information is true and which is not. The effect? A state of permanent doubt.

Furthermore, the results can be worrying if we look across the political field. For example, during an election campaign, fake videos can be created, videos that seem as real as possible at first glance. These materials can contain absolutely shocking information about the opposing candidate and the final effect would be one of polarization. Supporters will say it's a fake, others that it's true, each in his bubble refusing to accept any other possibility. Other effects produced would be the emergence of conflicts between states, propaganda or political sanctions. A good current example of research can be deep fake videos about the war in Ukraine.

More information about deepfake technology, how AI works and what consequences this type of content can have is available [here](#), in a podcast published by the European Parliamentary Research Service.

## WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

Microsoft launched a new tool, [Microsoft Video Authenticator](#), which has the ability to analyze a photo or video in real time. Following the process, each content receives a confidence score depending on which it can be determined whether the source is true or not.

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## The internet of safe spaces

### ABOUT

In the next decade, will public discourse online become more or less shaped by bad actors, harassment, trolls, and an overall tone of griping, distrust, and disgust?

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF TRUTH?

Experts estimate that these things will get worse and that the manipulative behaviors on the internet will persist. This will lead to a splintering of social media into AI-patrolled and regulated 'safe spaces' separated from free-for-all zones. Some worry this will hurt the open exchange of ideas and compromise privacy.

### WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

[ThisPersonDoesNotExist.com](#) - Website that shows how realistic these faces can be.

[Google Perspective AI](#) - Using machine learning to reduce toxicity online  
Twitter - Has been rolling out changes to help counter user abuse and harassment.

## AI-powered content

### ABOUT

The age of information has brought along the age of disinformation. Powered by the speed and data volume of the internet, disinformation has emerged as an insidious instrument of geopolitical power competition and domestic political warfare.

It is used by both state and non-state actors to shape global public opinion, sow chaos and chip away at trust. AI, specifically machine learning (ML), is poised to amplify disinformation campaigns— influence operations that involve covert efforts to intentionally spread false or misleading information.

As a reference, you can take a look at this article: [A virtual army of impish cartoon pooches is waging war on Russia.](#)

### WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

Duke researcher at the Center for Cognitive Neuroscience - illusory truth effect which could pull fringe views and fake news into the mainstream if these AI algorithms were used to inundate social media with disinformation and convince the public that these articles were truthful.

OpenAI - developed an AI algorithm trained to write English articles.

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# Synthetic content

## ABOUT

Synthetic content is a broad, umbrella term that includes, among other things, the use of AI to generate "deepfake" photos, videos or voices. Deep Fakes are one type of synthetic media where a person in an existing image or video is replaced with someone else's likeness.

While the act of faking content is not new, deep fakes use powerful techniques from machine learning and AI to manipulate or generate visual and audio content with a high potential to deceive. Deep Fakes have garnered widespread attention for their use in truth deformation such as altering porn with images of other people for revenge, fake news, hoaxes and financial fraud. Industry and governments are concerned to detect and limit their use. Some countries already have a national response or national institutions are working on it.

Speech Synthesis is another branch of synthetic media that can artificially produce human speech. A computer used for this purpose is called a "speech computer" or "speech synthesizer". Synthesized speech concatenates pieces of recorded speech or it incorporates a model of the vocal tract and other human voice characteristics to create a completely "synthetic" voice.

## WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

Facebook - has been researching how to detect AI-generated photos through reverse engineering. The company also launched in June 2020 a deepfake detection challenge

Queensland University of Technology Researchers counted 3.2 billion photos and 720,000 hours of video that were available on the internet in 2021.

V7 Labs - Developed an AI-based software as a Google Chrome extension that plugs in to your browser to detect bot profiles and pictures generated by so-called "deepfake" technology.

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## ANNEX 3 – ECONOMIC DRIVERS

### Emotion economy

#### ABOUT

Attention economy is putting the Truth in danger. And when truth goes out of the window, often freedom follows. People don't realize that technology is not neutral.

The best way to get attention is to know how people's minds work. You can push some buttons so you can get them to not just come [to your platform], but to stay as long as possible.

Because of the link that more of your attention or more of your time equals more money, [businesses] have an infinite appetite for getting more of it.

Time on site or 'active seven day users' are the currency of the tech industry. The only other industry that measures users this way is drug dealers. Because of the business model of advertising, there is simply no limit on how much attention that they would like from you.

So, if your time and your shopping preferences are being used as currency, then what about emotions? In recent years, technological companies have raced to discover the best way to utilize and coin emotive interaction.

#### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF TRUTH?

Futurist Richard Yonck first coined the term, describing the emotion economy as an ecosystem of emotionally intelligent devices and software iterations that will completely change the way we interact with machines.

Will the future of emotional and empathy economy be AI driven? There is still a long way to go in the realization of an empathy and emotional economy. Besides technology and research, there are ethical and moral considerations, such as the risk of bias in AI. But the development of Emotion AI is advancing and we can be confident that conversational interface will be the new norm in the future.

#### WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

MySocialTruth - a story bank project for young people to share their experience on and off social media

Pepper - an advanced robotic assistant can recognise human emotions by analysing changes in tone of voice, facial expressions, body language and the type of words used and can be programmed to respond accordingly. Pepper is optimized for human interaction and is able to engage with people through conversation and his touch screen. Pepper has already been rolled out in 100 branches of Mizuho Bank in Japan, where it handles customer service queries. In the not-so-distant future, virtual and robotic assistants will be the norm, catering each interaction to the customer and building relationships with humans that were previously the stuff of science fiction.

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## Income inequality

### ABOUT

Income inequality is another major problem facing most societies today. The lack of economic capital necessary for a decent life not only deprives people from health, food or shelter, but also from access to education and any source of information. The less educated an individual is, the greater the chances of making poor decisions as a victim of misinformation.

Besides education, people with low incomes are much more likely to be victims of manipulation, if we look at the classic examples from the political field in which candidates during election campaigns give gifts to citizens in exchange for a vote and many promises. For a person whose income is below the subsistence level, that small gift can be valuable, thus he will accept the exchange agreement. In this case, the short-term effects are taken into consideration, depending on the needs. Long-term effects are only taken into account when primary needs are satisfied. So, if we want a population to face false information, we must ensure their well-being.

### WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

[Aid for Rural Education Access Initiative \(AREAi\)](#) is an initiative that aims to facilitate access to education for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds or families with low incomes. The program collaborates with schools from marginalized communities that do not have enough resources to facilitate students' learning.

"Echipam impreuna 1000 de ghiozdane" is an initiative of [Fabrica de Daruri](#). Through this project, several children from disadvantaged backgrounds in Romania received as a gift fully equipped school bags.

## Polarization

### ABOUT

Economic polarization drives increasing disagreement about facts and interpretations of those facts and the blurring of the line between opinion and fact by creating two or more opposing sides, each with its own perspectives and beliefs. These polarized groups can become insular in their thinking and communication (for example, in echo chambers formed on social media).

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF TRUTH?

Imagine a world where each group develops its own interpretation of facts and information and for false information to proliferate and become ingrained.

### WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

[SPRING](#) is an accelerator working with growth-oriented businesses on innovations that can transform the lives of adolescent girls aged 10-19 living across East Africa and South Asia.

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## Data as currency

### ABOUT

You may have asked yourself several times how social media platforms manage to produce an income considering that they can be accessed easily with the help of the Internet. Well, we must be sure of one thing. When something is free, we become the product. This is the principle on which most data-driven business models work.

Facebook, Instagram, Youtube are just a few examples of such businesses. When we become users, we leave behind a kind of map of our personality. What hobbies we have, what cultural events we like to attend, preferences related to music, movies, books, clothes, nutrition and all kinds of such information about us. Information that can later end up being sold to various companies that want to capture our attention. And here we can refer to personalized advertisements. How many times did it happen to you that you search for a certain thing on the Internet and then receive several advertisements on the same subject?

Currently, there are more and more discussions about the use of data and what is the limit that companies should not cross in order to not violate the principles of ethics. And as technology advances and will be able to better read the information that we leave on the Internet, in the future it will be very important to understand how our data is used and to have the trust, but also the certainty that it will be used in the benefit and not against us. In other words, to know the truth.

### WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

[Babes-Bolyai University](#) offers a course called Data ethics, whose purpose is to teach students to analyze the ethical aspects related to the privacy and control of information.

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## ANNEX 4 – POLITICAL STATUS

### Rise of extremist movements and radicalization

#### ABOUT

After World War II, extreme political parties and other extreme movements have emerged over the years, but they have never gained more momentum than now. The last 2 years have changed a lot of things globally, from an abstract level of discussion, people seem to be getting more radical in all the social and political topics (Covid 19, the war in Ukraine, climate changes and migrants). Questioning already guaranteed rights is a phenomenon already happening (see abortion in the US, sex and gender education across many European countries, anti LGBTQ zones in Poland, transphobic legislation in Hungary).

Things that we take for granted are no longer so guaranteed, but rather questioned by right-wing politicians, who now, unlike in the past, have even more power.

Lately, all parties involved have formed extreme groups that frequently clash mainly due to conspiracy theory and propaganda whether we are talking about Covid 19, xenophobia, migrant, LGBTQ movement, climate changes, etc.

#### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF TRUTH?

In the future, the themes used by these extreme groups will be harder to fight and the truth will come out even harder. The future is contested now, see Naomi Klein „[This Changes Everything](#)“, where climate change is treated from multiple point of views such as: social/political and economic.

#### WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

[In 2018](#), a radical new environmental group emerged in the United Kingdom. The loose-knit organization called itself Extinction Rebellion, or “XR,” and aimed to raise awareness on climate change through disruptive protests. XR activists staged dramatic “die-ins” and shut down London bridges and metro stations.

[In January 2022](#), right-wing extremists stormed the city hall in Timisoara, targeting the German born mayor, Dominic Fritz. The far-right party (AUR) and the neo-Nazi group, New Right (ND) were behind the violence that is becoming more popular and causing a major political problem. China's cyber nationalism stands out partly because of the country's unique digital infrastructure and regulations. [According to several experts, the internet facilitates digital nationalism in China](#). Platforms such as Weibo, WeChat and Tencent, which in themselves are reflections of national sovereignty, shape the nature of digital nationalism. [Social media movements such as the Milk Tea Alliance](#) — a pan-Asian online community encompassing netizens from countries such as Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Myanmar and occasionally Vietnam and the Philippines — express their skepticism about China's role in the region and often try to combat Chinese nationalist (often xenophobic) trolls on social media.

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# The rise of nationalism

## ABOUT

Over the past years, rising nationalism is seen everywhere and in everything - from the election of Donald Trump to Brexit, as well as in EU countries such as: Hungary, Poland and Romania. Looking at the nationalist policies of Russia President Vladimir Putin, former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe, his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi and the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the success of far-right parties in Italian, German and Austrian elections in 2017 and 2018, nationalism appears to be on rise globally (Bremmer, 2017; Economist, 2016; Economist, 2017b). News coverage of nationalism has been global, focusing on US elections and British referendum, but also government policies in Philippines, China and India, as well as in South Africa.

In recent years, social media has been blamed for encouraging the kind of exclusionary nationalist sentiments that led to Brexit, the ascendance of Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro and genocide in Myanmar. And the rapidly emerging reality is that information communication technologies are transforming nationalism. From Google to Facebook and Weibo, the multitude and affordability of these platforms have enabled wider participation in all manner of discourse. Even in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes where internet censorship exists, social media can provide new channels for political expression, identity making and community building.

In Romania, after the December 2020 parliamentary elections, the subject of nationalism resurfaced in Romanian politics and introduced a new nationalist party into its parliament – the Alliance for the Unity of Romanians (AUR).

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF TRUTH?

In the future, anti-globalization movements, populism and ethno-nationalism are expected to rise. Already there are countries in Europe that are adopting „nationalist laws,, such as: Hungary and Poland. In combination with Covid 19 pandemic, war in Ukraine and vast immigration from Asia and Africa, the right wing organizations might be on a rise all across Europe.

## WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

In 2021, [the French government banned](#) the extreme right-wing and anti-immigration group “Génération Identitaire” (Generation Identity) by a government decree since it [promoted](#) “discrimination, hate and violence” and took the form of a private militia.

Also, Germany’s domestic intelligence agency, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, placed the Alternative for Germany (AfD) — Germany’s largest opposition party — under surveillance for posing a [threat](#) to democracy and supposedly having ties to right-wing extremism.

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# The age of “Algocracy”

## ABOUT

“Algocracy” is transforming our world from the kind of place where man sets policy implemented by man to a world where policy designed by data scientists and implemented by an algorithm – and this move is shaking our very democratic infrastructure.

Algorithms can save lives, streamline bureaucratic processes and make organizational models more efficient and even give rise to new business models. However, they can also affect (directly or indirectly) people’s lives and their work, even going as far as distorting the economy, society or politics. Between algocracy and surveillance capitalism, the role of algorithms is becoming increasingly significant, concentrating global power in the hands of very few corporations.

What if the political (and social / economic) “power” would be concentrated in the hands of those capable of modelling and controlling algorithms? In this delicate evolutionary phase of computer science and human history, it is a priority to study and understand not only the potential and opportunities offered by these systems, which are undoubtedly many, but also the macro-economic, social, political and organizational impacts in order to define a new culture (based on code) and the rules according to which it can expand.

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE OF TRUTH?

Imagine a world where you’re told you can’t have treatment because an algorithm has determined that on balance, hospital funds need deploying elsewhere.

## WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

[Aneesh Aneesh](#) is the professor/researcher who theorized the concept of algocracy (an organization model with no conventional bureaucratic checks, but rather guided by codes and algorithms) after carrying out a number of ethnographic studies and analyses “in the field”, mainly between India and the United States, exploring how technological developments are changing the way a job can be done and organized.

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# Political correctness

## ABOUT

In a nutshell, 'political correctness' means avoiding language and actions that insult, exclude or harm people who are already experiencing disadvantage and discrimination. But right now, the concept of politically correct it's associated by people with being unable to act and behave as they please. Oftentimes, people who practice political correctness are accused of denying other people the right to free speech.

Right now, people ask themselves if political correctness is going too far. With so many changes in recent years, the future of political correctness is uncertain.

## WHAT CAN WE SEE ALREADY CHANGING?

In a 2019 survey made by Australia Talks National, more than two-thirds of Australians believe that political correctness has "gone too far" and that their fellow citizens are too easily offended. In Australia, attitudes to political correctness varied noticeably according to the respondent's social media use. Among people who used Twitter, for example (about 35 percent of the population), only 55 percent agreed that political correctness had gone too far.

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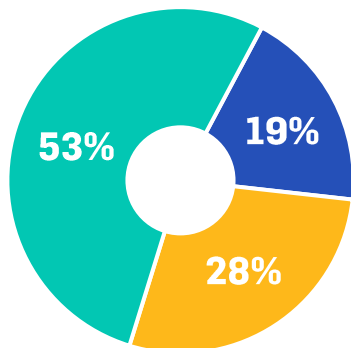
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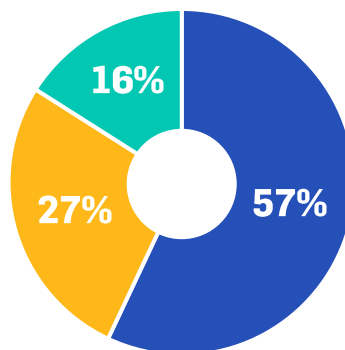
## ANNEX 5 – SURVEY INSIGHTS



Regarding human rights, do you think that, in Romania in 2040, they will be protected/respected...

● More than today      ● Just like today      ● Less than today

Regarding the discrimination of minority groups by the majority, do you think that in 2040 young people from Romania will discriminate...



● More than today      ● Just like today      ● Less than today



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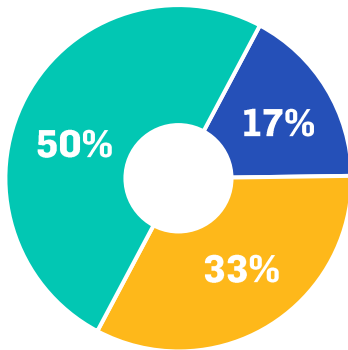


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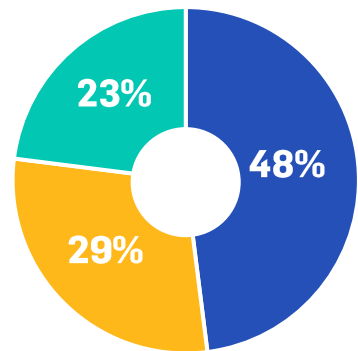
Spot the early signs  
of future change



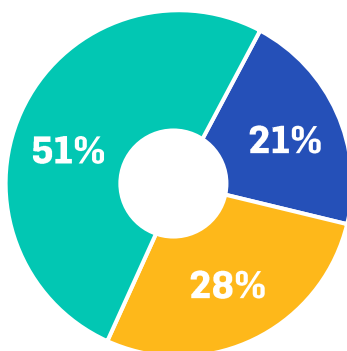
Do you think that, in 2040, young people from Romania will believe in statistics, facts and science...

- More than today
- Just like today
- Less than today

Do you think that the general level of trust in the people around you, in 2040 in Romania, will be...



- Bigger than today
- Just like today
- Smaller than today



Do you think that in 2040, in Romania, the extremist movements and initiatives will be...

- More than today
- Just like today
- Fewer than today

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If you were to put yourself in the "shoes" of a person who works with young people, what actions do you think can be taken to contribute to the realization of an optimistic future scenario?

Helping youth see and experience different lifestyles, places, cultures. Increasing awareness and tolerance might be a good step.

Empathy, creativity, activities to develop Soft skills, not only Hard ones.

Lots of volunteering and interactions between young people to encourage communication and activities to stop bullying and abuse.

We must insist on the development of critical thinking. Supporting opinions with solid arguments. Practicing lateral thinking.

Encouraging young people to develop a growth mindset - emphasizing the importance of effort and resilience in the face of failure, rather than considering intelligence or talent as fixed traits.

I work with young people and I see how much impact it has to be genuine, honest with them. Most youth associate adults with a condescending audience that doesn't accept refinement. Making a team that engages in mutual development can be of real benefit.

It would be useful if they would learn to work with emotions and offer young people, through various methods, complex learning experiences about acceptance, cooperation, development.

The development of forward thinking and critical thinking but practical and correlated with reality.

Young people should learn how life works, how money works (the financial alphabet) and think beyond the principle.

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I think that more importance should be given to the opinions of young people, they should be taught to think critically, education should focus more on the skills and vocation of young people, to stimulate them.

I believe that young people must be trained to think critically, find relevant information sources and navigate through this 'information overload'.

Lots of diversity education; facilitating contexts to meet young people from other countries, with other traits, religions.

Giving up expressions like "nowadays generation..." or "when I was younger I didn't do this or that...". Connecting to the present, understanding the context and characteristics of the current generation of students, the real development of emotional intelligence and key skills in favour of the classic teaching style.

Updating all training with new trends in Digital, with new skills and new STEM developments, creating jobs adapted to 2040.

Making young people aware of the fact that there is no ultimate truth, but perspectives on a fact.

Let's start listening to them more, to understand them, to offer them counseling, career guidance, to offer them some internships in order to better understand what they want to do in the future.

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Iceland  
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TRUTH  
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JUST NOT EVENLY  
DISTRIBUTED!**

W. GIBSON

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