

BU.BI: BEYOND LACK OF UNDERSTANDING, BEYOND DISINFORMATION

STAFF MANUAL

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Introduction: Your Role on the Path to Digital Empowerment

Welcome to BU.BI – Beyond lack of Understanding, Beyond disInformation project handbook for staff. The handbook before you is not just a set of instructions; it is your compass, your toolkit, and your source of inspiration for working with adults in the complex digital world.

We are all aware of the challenge: technology is evolving at lightning speed, and with it grow the uncertainty, fear, and vulnerability among those who are not at home in the digital environment. Our task is not to teach them every single click and every single function. Our task is much more significant: we must empower them to replace the fear of the unknown with curiosity, uncertainty with a healthy dose of skepticism, and a sense of helplessness with a sense of control.

This handbook is designed to equip you with the philosophy, methods, and practical tools you will need to achieve this goal. Within it, you will find:

- Pedagogical principles that explain why our approach is centered on empathy and building self-confidence.
- An overview of the educational modules, which will help you understand how the individual topics connect into a comprehensive learning journey.
- Detailed instructions for facilitating focus groups and workshops.
- A technical and pedagogical guide for using our most innovative tool – the Eduverse.

Your role in this process is crucial. You are not merely transmitters of information, but guides, motivators, and creators of a safe space where every participant can feel heard and accepted. Together, we will prove that digital literacy is not a privilege for the tech-savvy, but a fundamental right and an achievable skill for everyone.

Chapter 1: The Philosophy and Pedagogical Approach of the BU.BI Project

Before we dive into the practical implementation, it is crucial that we all understand and internalize the fundamental principles upon which the BU.BI project is built. This philosophy is not just theory; it is a guide for every interaction with our participants.

1.1 Our Starting Point: Why the BU.BI Project?

The BU.BI project did not emerge in a vacuum. It is a direct response to the pressing issues identified through in-depth focus groups with adults across Europe. These conversations revealed that behind the surface-level statement, "I don't know how to use a computer," lie deeper barriers:

- **Emotional Barriers:** The predominant feeling was **fear**—fear of making mistakes, fear of embarrassment, fear of online scams, and fear of losing money or data.
- **Cognitive Overload:** Participants described a feeling of fatigue and helplessness when faced with an endless stream of information, rapid changes on websites, and complex procedures.
- **A Lack of Critical Thinking:** Many admitted that they struggle to distinguish between facts, opinions, and advertisements, which makes them extremely vulnerable to disinformation and emotional manipulation.

Our goal, therefore, was not merely to "teach them how to click," but to create a holistic program that addresses the **person behind the screen**—their fears, their uncertainties, and their needs. This is the essence of the project that has been recognized and supported by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

1.2 The Key Principles of Our Work: More Than Just Teaching

To work successfully with our target group, we have committed to four key pedagogical principles:

1. Empathy First: Creating a Safe Space

Our first and most important principle is to understand the emotional state of the participants. Your role is to create a safe haven where no one is afraid to ask a "stupid question." Every question is welcome, and every fear is legitimate. We must acknowledge their uncertainty and normalize it. Only when a participant feels safe are they ready to learn.

2. From Passive to Active Learning: The Power of Experience

Adults learn most effectively by doing. Instead of passive listening during lectures, our approach is based on interactive exercises, simulations, and solving real-world challenges. Participants will not just learn *about* how to spot fake news; they will *actually try to spot it* in a controlled environment.

3. Experiential Learning in a Safe Environment: The Essence of the Eduverse

This principle brings us to our most innovative tool. The **Eduverse** is a virtual 3D space designed as a digital playground where making mistakes is not only allowed but encouraged. In a simulation, a participant can "fall for" a scam without losing money or

share a "fake" news story without causing real-world harm. This experience is significantly more powerful than any theoretical warning.

4. **Empowerment, Not Just Instruction: The Ultimate Goal**

Our ultimate goal is not for participants to memorize a list of rules. Our goal is for them to develop an **internal compass**—a lasting skill of critical thinking, the confidence to explore independently, and resilience against future digital challenges. We want to empower them to become independent, critical, and sovereign digital citizens.

1.3 From Theory to Practice: The Structure of the Educational Modules

Based on these principles, we have designed five modules that guide participants along a well-thought-out learning path:

- **Module 0** lays the foundation of self-confidence and overcomes fear.
- **Modules 1, 2, and 3** develop key functional literacies (numeracy, literacy, and problem-solving).
- **Module 4** brings all the knowledge together and focuses on the most demanding task: recognizing different forms of information disorders.

In the following chapters, we will explore each of these modules in more detail and provide you with concrete tools for their implementation. Get ready for a journey where you will have the opportunity to truly change people's lives.

Chapter 2: The BU.BI Educational Journey: A Guide to the Training Modules

2.1 Our Holistic Approach: From Fear to Functional Literacy

The educational framework of the BU.BI project is not a random collection of topics; it is a carefully designed journey that guides adult learners from a state of digital anxiety to a position of confidence and critical thinking. We understand that we cannot teach complex skills like spotting disinformation to someone who is afraid to even touch a computer. Therefore, our curriculum is structured as a progressive path, starting with emotional support and gradually building toward advanced critical competencies.

This chapter provides an overview of all five educational modules. Think of them as interconnected stages of a single journey. **Module 0** lays the essential foundation, while **Modules 1 through 4** build upon it, each focusing on a specific functional literacy that our focus groups identified as a critical barrier to safe and effective digital engagement. Your role as an educator is to guide participants through this journey, ensuring they feel supported at every step.

2.2 Module 0: Building the Foundation – General Digital Literacy

The "Why": Our research was clear: the biggest obstacle for our target group is not a lack of technical skill but a lack of **confidence**. Fear of making irreversible mistakes, anxiety from information overload, and a feeling of being left behind are powerful emotional barriers. This module is designed to dismantle those barriers first.

Key Objectives & Content:

- **Building Confidence and a Safe Mindset:** This is the core of Module 0. We create a learning environment where the guiding principle is, "It's safe to make mistakes." Through gentle, hands-on exercises, we help participants overcome their fear of technology. We normalize their anxieties and establish a "no stupid questions" culture, transforming fear into curiosity.
- **Managing Information Overload:** We address the overwhelming feeling of being flooded with digital content. Participants learn simple but effective strategies to manage their time and attention online. This includes techniques like "slowing down to scan" for keywords, using browser bookmarks effectively, and practicing "digital breaks" to prevent cognitive fatigue. The goal is to shift their mindset from feeling controlled *by* information to being *in control* of it.
- **Understanding Privacy and Data Control:** In simple, non-technical language, we explain the basics of digital privacy. We demystify concepts like cookies and consent prompts, empowering participants with the knowledge that they have rights (under GDPR) and the power to make informed choices about their personal data. This builds a crucial sense of agency.

2.3 Module 1: Functional Numeracy – Making Sense of Numbers Online

The "Why": Numbers online—from bank statements to "70% off" sales—were a significant source of stress and mistrust for our participants. This module goes beyond basic math to build skills for critically interpreting numerical information in digital contexts.

Key Objectives & Content:

- **Safe Online Banking and Financial Literacy:** We provide practical guidance on how to identify secure websites for financial transactions (checking for HTTPS, the padlock symbol) and how to recognize common phishing scams.
- **Critical Online Shopping:** Participants learn to spot misleading advertisements, identify hidden costs (like shipping and taxes), and critically evaluate "too-good-to-be-true" offers.
- **Data and Algorithm Awareness:** This section teaches participants how to read simple charts and graphs often found in news articles. Crucially, it also introduces the concept of algorithms, explaining how their past online behavior shapes the financial ads and offers they see, encouraging a more critical approach to personalized content.

2.4 Module 2: Functional Literacy – Critical Reading in a Digital World

The "Why": Our focus groups revealed that many adults read only headlines, which are often sensationalized and emotionally charged. This module focuses on moving beyond surface-level reading to deep, critical evaluation of text-based content.

Key Objectives & Content:

- **Evaluating Source Credibility:** Participants learn a systematic approach to verifying information by checking the author, publication date, and source reputation. We promote the habit of cross-referencing information across multiple reliable sources.
- **Headline Literacy and Emotional Language:** This is a core component. We deconstruct "clickbait" headlines and teach participants to recognize emotionally manipulative language (words designed to provoke fear, anger, or urgency).
- **Multilingual and Accessibility Support:** We empower users by showing them how to use digital tools like browser translation features and how to adjust accessibility settings (e.g., text size, high-contrast mode) to make online content easier to read.

2.5 Module 3: Problem-Solving – Navigating Digital Environments

The "Why": The fear of "breaking something" often leads to a reliance on family members for simple digital tasks. This module is designed to restore a sense of autonomy by equipping participants with the skills to independently navigate complex online systems and troubleshoot minor issues.

Key Objectives & Content:

- **Navigating Complex Interfaces:** Using practical, real-world examples like e-government portals or online banking sites, participants practice using search functions, filters, and menus to find information and complete tasks.

- **Managing Online Services:** This covers everyday digital tasks, such as filling out online forms, unsubscribing from mailing lists, and managing subscriptions.
- **Emotional Resilience and Impulse Control:** We introduce and practice the "**Pause-Think-Check**" technique. This simple cognitive strategy encourages users to stop and reflect before impulsively sharing, clicking, or reacting to emotionally charged content.

2.6 Module 4: Content Reliability – Understanding Information Disorders

The "Why": This final module consolidates all the skills learned previously and applies them to the most advanced challenge: identifying and understanding the different types of false and harmful information that pollute the digital ecosystem.

Key Objectives & Content:

- **Differentiating Information Disorders:** Participants learn the crucial distinctions between:
 - **Misinformation:** False information shared without malicious intent.
 - **Disinformation:** False information created and shared deliberately to cause harm.
 - **Malinformation:** Genuine information shared with the intent to harm (e.g., leaks of private data).
- **Misinformation and Scam Recognition:** We equip participants with a toolkit for spotting the "red flags" of online scams, phishing emails, and fraudulent websites.
- **Content-Type Differentiation:** Participants practice distinguishing between factual news reporting, subjective opinion pieces, and paid advertising (including sponsored content), a skill that is fundamental to media literacy.

By guiding your participants through this comprehensive journey, you are not just teaching them how to use a computer. You are empowering them to become confident, critical, and resilient citizens in an increasingly digital world.

Chapter 3: Facilitating Workshops in the Eduverse – A Pedagogical Guide for Educators

3.1 Your Role: The Virtual Guide and Mentor

Welcome to the next frontier of adult education: facilitating workshops within the **Eduverse**. In this immersive 3D environment, your role evolves beyond that of a traditional facilitator. You are a **virtual guide, a digital mentor, and a creator of a safe, engaging virtual space**. Your success will depend not only on what you teach but on how you make participants feel as they navigate this new world.

Remember, for many participants, this will be their first time in a metaverse environment. Their potential anxiety about the technology is your first hurdle. Your primary mission is to transform that initial uncertainty into curiosity and excitement, proving that learning in a virtual world can be intuitive, fun, and incredibly effective.

This chapter provides a pedagogical framework and practical steps for leading workshops entirely within the Eduverse. *(For technical controls and setup, please refer to the Eduverse Travel Kit).*

3.2 The Golden Rules of Facilitating in the Eduverse

While the core principles of empathy and safety remain, facilitating in a virtual space requires a unique approach.

1. Technology First, Then Content:

- **Master the Controls Yourself:** Before any session, spend time in the Eduverse. Get comfortable moving, interacting, and using the tools. Your confidence will be contagious.
- **The "Digital Handshake":** The first 10-15 minutes of any workshop **must** be dedicated to basic orientation. Do not assume any prior knowledge. Patiently guide participants through moving their avatar, looking around, and interacting with objects. This initial investment in technical comfort will pay off immensely.
- **Acknowledge and Normalize Glitches:** Technology is imperfect. When a participant gets stuck or a feature doesn't work, treat it with humor and patience. Use it as a real-time problem-solving lesson. Say, "Great, you've found a classic virtual-world bug! Let's figure this out together."

2. Embrace the Space: Go Beyond a "Virtual Lecture":

- **Use Movement as a Teaching Tool:** The Eduverse is not a static PowerPoint. Encourage participants to walk around, explore, and approach exhibits from different angles. Structure your activities so they require movement (e.g., "Everyone, let's gather around the 'Phishing' image panel.>").
- **Be Visibly Present:** As the facilitator, wear your **"STAFF" sweatshirt** at all times. Move around the room, approach individual participants, and use your virtual presence to offer support, just as you would in a physical classroom.

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3. Structure and Freedom in Harmony:

- **Provide a Clear Path, but Allow for Exploration:** While the game has a clear objective (identifying 7 fake images in each module), the environment allows for free exploration. Encourage this. Let participants approach the image pairs in any order they choose. This fosters a sense of agency and discovery.
- **Use Verbal Cues to Guide Attention:** Since you can't use hand gestures in the same way, your voice is your most important tool. Be clear and direct. Use phrases like, "Okay everyone, if you could now direct your avatars to the panel on your right..." or "I'm standing next to the next clue, come and find me!"

3.3 A Sample Structure for a 90-Minute Eduverse Workshop

This structure assumes participants have already received the main link to the Eduverse space.

Phase 1: The Virtual Welcome & "Avatar Driving School" (15 minutes)

- **Greeting at the Entrance:** As participants log in, greet them by their avatar names. Your calm, welcoming voice is the first thing they should experience.
- **Basic Controls Bootcamp (Essential!):**
 - **Movement:** "Welcome! Let's start with the basics. Try using your arrow keys or the on-screen joystick to walk forward and backward. Excellent!"
 - **Looking Around:** "Now, try using your mouse or moving your phone to look left and right. Can everyone see the blue flag?"
 - **Interaction:** "Great! Let's learn the most important button. Walk up to the 'START' sign and press 'F' on your keyboard, or tap it on your screen. Did it work?"
- **Icebreaker Activity:** "Now that we can all move, let's do a quick icebreaker. Everyone, please find the portal to module 4 and stand your avatar next it." This simple task builds confidence and ensures everyone can navigate.

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Phase 2: Setting the Context – "Why We Are Here" (10 minutes)

- **Gathering Point:** Gather all participants in the central area.
- **Connect to the Real World:** Briefly explain the goal of the workshop. "Today, we're going to become digital detectives. The internet is full of fake and misleading images, and our mission is to learn how to spot them. We'll do this by playing a game right here in this virtual room."
- **Introduce the "Pause-Think-Check" Principle:** Before they start the game, introduce the core concept. "Remember the most important rule: when you see something online that makes you feel surprised, angry, or too good to be true, the first step is to **Pause**."

Phase 3: The Game is On! – Guided Exploration & Learning (45 minutes)

- **Starting the Game:** Guide everyone to the "START TEST" entrance and have them begin the activity.



- **Active Facilitation:**

- **Observe and Support:** Keep an eye on the participants. Notice if anyone is stuck or seems confused.
- **Provide Timely Hints (Not Answers):** If you see a group struggling with a particular image pair, you can unmute and say, "For this one, remember what we said about checking for strange details in the background," or "Take a closer look at the text in that image. Does it look professional?"
- **Encourage Use of Tools:** Remind them they can click the magnifying glass icon to get a closer look at the images.
- **Facilitate Peer Learning:** If you hear participants discussing a clue, encourage it. Say, "That's an excellent observation. Curious Badger, what do you think about that?"

Phase 4: The Debrief – Consolidating the Learning (15 minutes)

- **Gathering After the Game:** Once most participants have finished (or after a set time), gather everyone back in the central area of module 0.
- **Group Discussion and Reflection:**
 - "Which image pair was the most difficult? Why?"
 - "How did it feel when you successfully spotted a fake?"
 - "How can you use this 'digital detective' skill in your everyday life?"
- **Explaining the "BuBi Badge":** Congratulate everyone who completed the challenge. Explain that the virtual badge is a symbol of their new skills and mastery.
- **Final Empowerment Message:** End by reinforcing the core message. "Today, you proved that you can navigate a new virtual world and think critically about what you see. This skill is your superpower online. Use it to stay safe and help others do the same."

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This pedagogical approach ensures that the Eduverse is not just a novelty but a powerful, effective, and memorable learning environment. Your role is to make that experience as seamless and empowering as possible.



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Conclusion: Empowering the Future, One Learner at a Time

As we reach the end of this handbook, we return to the core mission of the BU.BI project: to move **beyond a lack of understanding and beyond disinformation**. The journey we've outlined—from understanding the deep-seated fears of adult learners to facilitating immersive workshops in the Eduverse—is designed to do exactly that.

This handbook has provided you with a philosophy, a structured curriculum, and a pedagogical guide. But these are merely tools. The true magic of this project will happen in the moments of connection you create, in the "aha!" expressions of your participants, and in the newfound confidence they carry from your workshops into their daily digital lives.

Your role as an educator is both a challenge and a profound opportunity. You are not just teaching digital skills; you are restoring a sense of agency, building resilience, and fostering critical thinking in an era when these competencies have never been more vital. You are helping individuals reclaim their place in an increasingly digital society, ensuring they are not left behind.

Remember the key takeaways from our journey together:

- **Start with Empathy:** Acknowledge and validate the fears of your learners. A safe and supportive environment is the non-negotiable foundation for all learning.
- **Empower Through Action:** Shift from passive lecturing to active, hands-on, and problem-based learning. Let your participants *do*, *explore*, and *discover*.
- **Embrace Innovation with Purpose:** The Eduverse is not a gimmick; it is a powerful pedagogical tool that makes learning engaging, safe, and memorable. Use it to create experiences that traditional methods cannot replicate.
- **Celebrate Small Victories:** Every new skill learned, every fear overcome, and every question asked is a victory. By celebrating this progress, you build the momentum and confidence that fuels lifelong learning.

The work you are about to do is incredibly important. Every person you guide, every workshop you facilitate, contributes to a more informed, critical, and resilient society. You are on the front lines of the fight against disinformation, and your greatest weapon is empowerment.

Thank you for being part of the BU.BI experience. Together, we are not just teaching skills—we are building a more aware, connected, and confident digital generation.



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