DiGREEN
GO FOR A GREEN BUSINESS

MODULE 2

I define my green business idea

Learning outcomes

You will learn here:

- You can assess the consequences and impact of ethical and sustainable ideas, opportunities, and actions.
- You can apply ethical thinking to consumption and production processes.
- You can detect the credibility and reliability of data, information, and digital content.

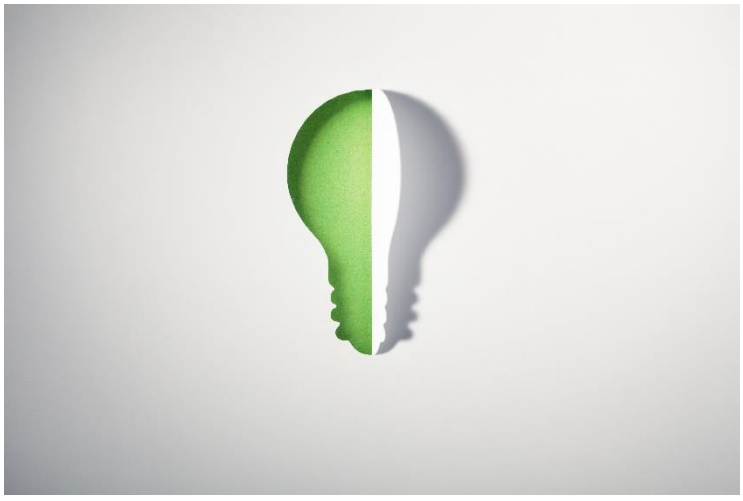

Figure 1: Business idea

Basic information

In this module, you will learn methods to identify green business ideas.

This module contains six exercises.

You will need 15 h to finish the module.

You require 66% correct answers to pass this module.

Your lecturers are Ehab and Amer.

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Erasmus+

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Content

Welcome to Module 2!

Hello, and welcome to Module 2!

Congratulations on your decision to start a business and focus on a green company. You are thus acting in a future-oriented way.

This module is like module 1 again about your green business idea. The first two parts are dedicated to the topic of ethical thinking. The first part is about the consequences and impacts of ethical and sustainable ideas. And the second part is about how to apply ethical thinking to consumption and production processes. The third and, at the same time, last part of this module deals with data, information, and digital content. In this chapter, we would like to draw your attention to the credibility of online sources.

Assess the consequences and impact of ethical and sustainable ideas, opportunities, and actions

The current global economic growth path is environmentally unsustainable. How we consume and produce is causing significant harm and depleting many of the world's environmental resources. As a result, there is an urgent need for new approaches to promote more inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic development – a green economy. Such an economy brings many promises for a sustainable world. It also supports broad-based employment and poverty reduction in its various dimensions.

In this part, you will learn what exactly sustainability means. We also explore why sustainability is becoming increasingly important in the business sector.

And we show some examples of sustainable business.

What does sustainability mean in business?

Sustainability means doing business and generating revenue without harming the environment, the community, or society. Sustainability improves our quality of life, protects our ecosystem, and preserves natural resources for future generations.

Sustainability in business generally concerns two main categories:

The effect business has on the environment

How does my business affect the environment? Does it have a positive-neutral or negative impact?

The effect business has on society

Is my business solving a social problem? Or contributing to more social issues such as inequality or social injustice?

Sustainability in the industry is a holistic approach of an organisation: sustainable organisations pay attention to these areas:

Production	Logistics	Customer service

Sustainable Production is the creation of goods and services using processes and systems that are:

- Non-polluting
- Conserving energy and natural resources
- Economically viable
- Safe and healthful for workers, communities, and consumers
- Socially and creatively rewarding for all working people

Sustainable logistics refers to the following:

- sustainable transport methods and energy sources.
- Sustainable suppliers that meet environmental standards.
- Improving space utilisation and minimising waste due to transport damage.

Sustainable Customer Service is

- a service that meets the needs of the client
- a service that can be maintained over long periods,
- a service without negatively affecting the client's natural and social environment

Figure 2: Shopping bag

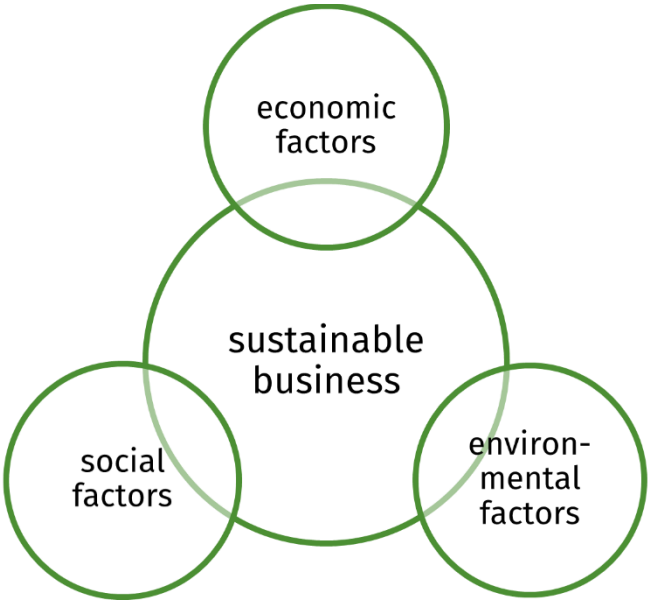
Sustainable business strategy

A sustainable business strategy is used as a tool to contribute positively to the following fields:

- Production
- Logistics
- Customer service.

When companies and business owners fail to take responsibility and create a positive impact, the opposite can lead to issues like environmental degradation, inequality, and social injustice.

Doing sustainable business requires taking into consideration these factors:



Thus, sustainable organisations and businesses monitor the impact of their operations to ensure that short-term profits and gains do not turn into long-term legal and moral responsibilities.

Examples of Sustainability in Business

Many sustainable companies have been founded, and many existing companies have started to shift towards sustainability. Nevertheless, each company has its strategy.

Sustainable business strategies are unique to each company. They are based on the business goals and values adopted by the business owners and the organisation. Sustainability in business can mean, for example:

- Using sustainable materials in the production process.
- Optimising supply chains to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Relying on renwable energy sources to power facilities.
- Supporting the educational journey of youth in the local community.

Why is sustainability important?

Sustainable business does not only solve social and environmental issues, but it can also make the company itself more successful. This is becoming truer because investors and consumers are becoming more interested in sustainable businesses and products. In other words, investors are investing more in green and sustainable companies, and consumers are becoming attracted to sustainable products.

Investors use different techniques to measure how socially and environmentally a business can be and make decisions based on that. Usually, they measure the

- business carbon footprint
- water usage
- community development efforts and many others.

McKinsey research shows that companies with good sustainability ratings or ESG ratings (A good ESG rating means a company is managing its environment, social, and governance risks well relative to its peers) have a lower cost of loan shares created by the business. Also, sustainable initiatives can help improve financial performance while increasing public support.

When creating a sustainable business or adopting a new sustainable business model, the social and environmental positive impacts can grow while making gains and profits. This is called shared value opportunity. In other words, it is called “doing good” for the environment and society can increase the “well-being” of your business and make it thrive. Therefore, many companies are becoming sustainable.

Example of a sustainable business

Etsy

Etsy is the first prominent online shopping store to offset 100 per cent of carbon emissions from shipping. Etsy is an online platform where people can sell their artwork and other handmade products to the public, which creates many packages shipped daily.

To counteract carbon emissions released into the environment by package shipments, Etsy has partnered with renewable energy company 3Degrees. The goal is to fund verified carbon emission reduction projects, such as

- protecting forests
- sponsoring wind and solar farms
- and developing greener methods for auto part production.

In this way, the company ensures it counteracts at least the amount of carbon emissions its shipping creates.

Good Eggs

Good Eggs is an online organic grocery shop. The owner's mission is to deliver fresh and organic food and products that are mostly locally sourced (up to 70%) of all products, such as milk, eggs, and drinks.

On top of that, all the employees in the shop are shareholders and have some stock from the business. This way, they can ensure complete transparency and stick to their social and environmental missions.

EXERCISE 1

M 2_E 1: Aspects of sustainable businesses

Open a writing programme or take a sheet of paper. On the top, write the number of the module and the number of this exercise.

1) List the main features and aspects of a sustainable business based on what you have read so far.

2) Search for some other examples of sustainable businesses on the internet.

3) Identify which features and aspects of sustainability apply to these examples you found.

When you have completed the exercises, name your digital document after the number of this exercise, and save it in the folder to Module 2!
If you did the exercise on paper, take readable photos, and save them.

Apply ethical thinking to consumption and production processes

To think ethically and sustainably means to be able to understand and assess the consequences and impact of business ideas, opportunities, and actions. It also means that an ethically and sustainably thinking business owner does not just have profit in mind. She or he also thinks about the well-being of the people and planet.

This might sound logical and easy to understand. But is it easy to apply? Do it in practice when planning and opening your own business?

In this chapter, we would like to introduce two frameworks: EntreComp and GreenComp. The EntreComp framework consists of 15 important business competencies. GreenComp is a reference framework for sustainability competencies.

At the end of this chapter, we want to introduce the terms blue and green economy. Blue and green economies demonstrate to do business sustainably and socially.

EntreComp

The EntreComp framework consists of 15 key competencies. Professionals in business teaching and training recognise these 15 competencies as very important for someone who wants to start a business.

As a basis of the Go4DiGreen training to apply ethical and sustainable thinking when producing and consuming goods, we recommend you do parts of the EntreComp Implementation Training on the website.

https://entre-comp.eu/ficha.php?id_ficha=7.

The contents of the EntreComp Implementation Training are available in audio play and can be downloaded in doc, pdf, and PPT format. This makes it easy for you to get the bigger picture of ethical and sustainable thinking in the business world.

For our platform, Go4DiGreen, the sections about sustainable thinking and assessing impact are particularly important.

Videos about ethical dilemmas in business open the discussion between learners and their Go4DiGreen trainers and peers:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahH_P_5yVSo
Dilemma scenarios help us consider all different parties affected by a decision. They link our real-life experiences.

EXERCISE 2

M 2_E 2: Description of ethical dilemma

Open a writing programme or take a sheet of paper. On the top, write the number of the module and the number of this exercise.

First, read or listen to the sections “Behave ethically” and “Ethical and sustainable thinking” from the

EntreComp Implementation Training

Then describe an ethical dilemma in sustainability and green economy, e.g. the decision of the EU to include nuclear power (atomic energy) in the EU taxonomy of sustainable activities.

When you have completed the exercises, name your digital document after the number of this exercise, and save it in the folder to Module 2! If you did the exercise on paper, take readable photos, and save them.

GreenComp

In January 2022, the European sustainability competence framework GreenComp was published.

GreenComp is a framework for sustainability skills and acts for all people, irrespective of their age and their education level. The framework is created in response to the increasing need for people to improve and develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to live sustainably.

For Go4DiGreen, GreenComp is very important because it provides a common ground to learners and trainers by defining what sustainability as a competence entails.

GreenComp details and download: publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC128040

To be able to apply ethical thinking to consumption and production processes, we need to get a better understanding of HOW to do that.

Figure 3: Growing plants

EXERCISE 3

M 2_E 3: Three videos about ethical thinking in consumption and production processes

Open a writing programme or take a sheet of paper. On the top, write the number of the module and the number of this exercise.

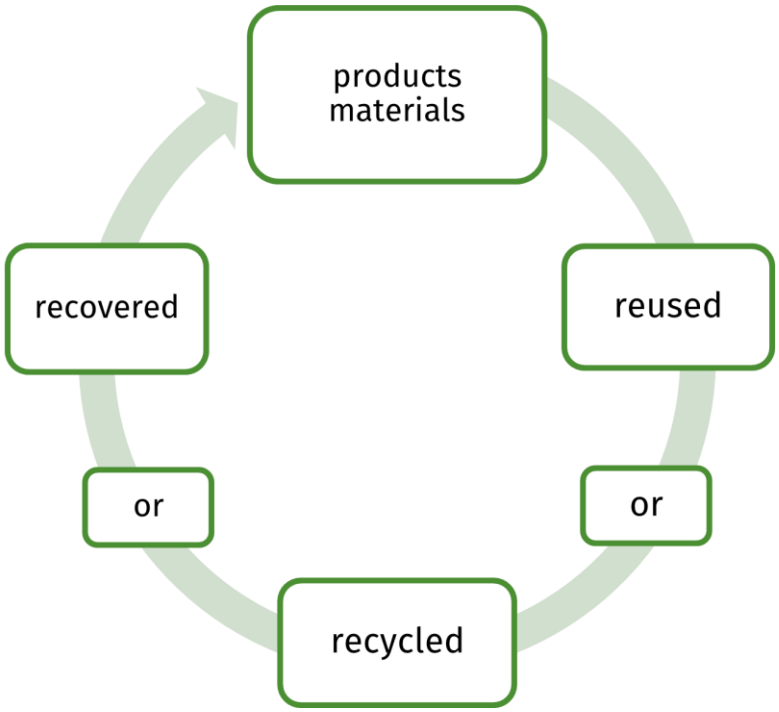
Search for “Apply ethical thinking to consumption and production processes” on YouTube. List three exciting videos or TedTalks about this topic.

When you have completed the exercises, name your digital document after the number of this exercise, and save it in the folder to Module 2! If you did the exercise on paper, take readable photos, and save them.

Responsible consumption and production

Responsible consumption and production are one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN). Integrating environmental sustainability with economic growth and welfare is one of the most significant global challenges.

A circular economy is one of the current sustainable economic models of the UN and EU. In a circular economy, products and materials are designed in a way that they can be reused, recycled, or recovered.



As a result, products, goods, and natural resources are maintained in the economy for as long as possible. This process helps significantly reduce waste and CO2 emissions.

To dive deeper into the topic, you are encouraged to enrol in one of the free online courses provided by the United Nations, e.g., the Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements:

https://elearning.informea.org/

or to take one of the many free Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) about sustainable goods or food production, e.g., at

https://www.coursera.org/

https://www.futurelearn.com/partners/food

Green and Blue Economy

Green and Blue Economy show us how to do business sustainably and socially, even with fewer costs and resources for consumers and businesspeople.

Here comes the definition of GREEN BUSINESS again. We use this definition in the Go4DiGreen project and training program. It has been developed by the Go4DiGreen consortium and is based on the official EU strategy.

Green business definition

Is any business actively contributing to sustainable development and a healthy future for all (humans, nature, and the earth) by supporting the goals of the EU Green Deal, e.g.:

- longer-lasting products that can be repaired, recycled, and re-used
- healthy and affordable food
- fresh air, clean water, healthy soil, and biodiversity,
- renovated, energy-efficient buildings
- more public transport – responsible use of mobility
- globally competitive and resilient industry
- clean technological innovation
- future-proof jobs and skills training for the transition

Recent developments, such as the EU taxonomy of sustainable activities where gas and atomic energy have been included, are ethical dilemmas (see above): While reducing CO2 emissions, power plants generate toxic waste that is extremely dangerous for many generations.

EXERCISE 4

M 2_E 4:

Your opinion about the continued use of nuclear power, gas and oil

Open a writing programme or take a sheet of paper. On the top, write the number of the module and the number of this exercise.

What is your opinion about the continued use of nuclear power, gas and oil?

How to avoid these energy sources or make them “green”?

Do you know your carbon footprint? Go and calculate it: carbonfootprint.com

When you have completed the exercises, name your digital document after the number of this exercise, and save it in the folder to Module 2! If you did the exercise on paper, take readable photos, and save them.

Blue Economy

What is the blue economy?

In the EU, the term blue economy is used differently than in Go4DiGreen. EU says blue economy when reporting about sustainable oceans and fisheries:

Blue-Economy

The concept and achievements of the blue economy as we use it in the Go4DiGreen project stem from Gunter Pauli. Pauli's idea of the Blue Economy follows the analogy of ecosystems. Ecosystems create neither waste nor emissions and supply themselves with local resources only.

Gunter Pauli published a book in 2010, introducing the notion of this economy: The Blue Economy: 10 years – 100 innovations – 100 million jobs.

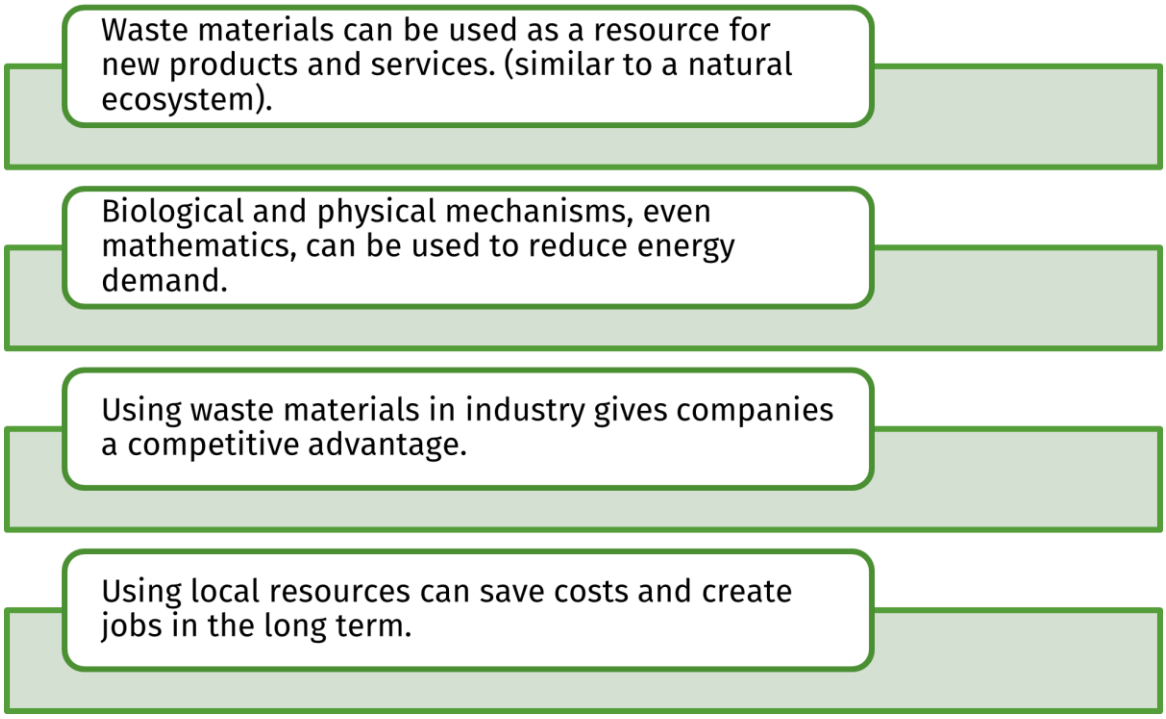
In this book, Gunter Pauli tackles environmental problems in new ways. He introduces his vision of a Blue Economy business model that will shift society from scarcity of resources to abundance where we have enough for everyone "with what is locally available" and without exploiting the natural resources.

Blue Economy is inspired by natural examples of developing a more sustainable model that increases local production without further investment and exploitation of green resources.

Blue Economy proves that it can generate more revenue, create more jobs, and compete with other businesses in the market. Blue Economy considers social, economic, and environmental factors.

Four principles of Blue Economy:

In an article, Axel Uhl and Oliver Hanslik summarise four principles of Green Economy:



Waste materials can be used as a resource.

The Blue Economy assumes that there is no unusable waste in natural ecosystems. Transferred to the economy, previously superfluous waste materials are the basis for new products and services. This reduces waste disposal costs or the procurement of basic materials for downstream processes. Coffee grounds, for example, are an ideal breeding ground for protein-rich shiitake mushrooms. As a result, oak forests would no longer have to be cut down as they have been in the past. CO2 can also be used profitably. For example, the emissions from a coal-fired power plant can be captured in the power plant's cooling tank and fed to algae. Algae can then be used to produce protein-rich food supplements or biofuel. This is also an essential contribution to reducing CO2 emissions.

Biological and physical mechanisms to reduce energy demand

With the help of air vortices, air components in the water can be displaced from the liquid. Without these air components, the water can be frozen more efficiently and with much less energy. This technique could be used for cooling warehouses. The principle of vortices can also make water treatment more efficient. In nature, eddies often have a self-cleaning function for the water. The buoyancy of air components leads to killing bacteria - without the need to use chemicals. Two Swedish inventors have already applied for a patent for a device that creates water vortices and delivers clean water without additives.

Using waste materials gives companies a competitive advantage.

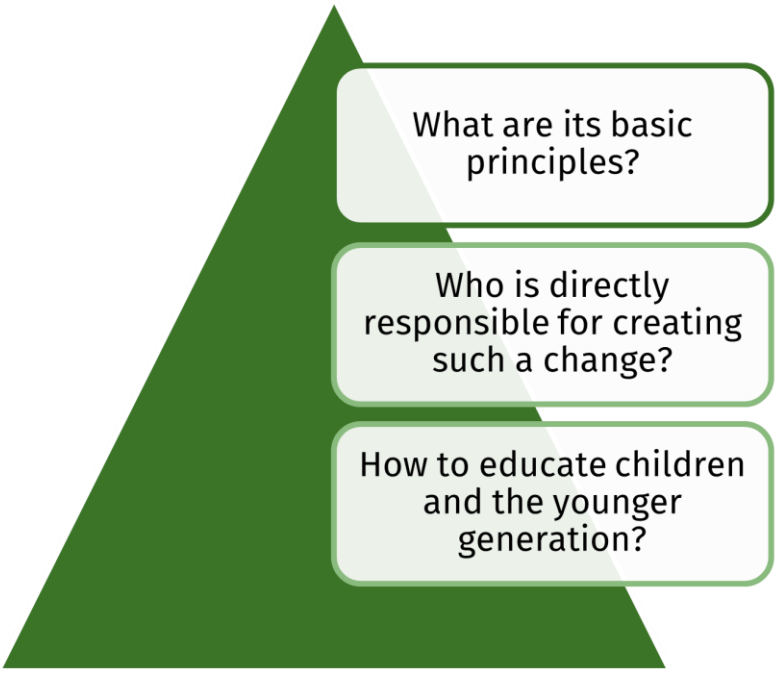
Using waste materials can also open up potential savings in industrial manufacturing processes. The German chemical company BASF transports raw materials and by-products that usually accumulate directly to the right place for further processing. The heat generated by exothermic reactions produces steam, an energy source for additional production steps. As a result, there are almost no more waste materials that cannot be further processed. BASF reduced energy requirements by 31%, while production increased by 36%. In other words, this approach has grown both BASF's competitiveness and sustainability.

Using local resources can save costs and create jobs in the long term.

Bhutan has banned conventional plastics from general use. Instead, only bioplastics based on organic waste from agriculture are allowed. Bioplastics decompose into compost heaps at the end of their life. The country wants to replace all fossil fuels. In doing so, Bhutan aims to become not only carbon neutral but carbon negative. 72% of Bhutan's land

area is forested, 40% of which is pine forest. Bhutan extracts turpentine from the resin of the pines and uses turpentine as fuel. The country uses vertical wind turbines to generate electricity. This enables nationwide supply as the turbines can be installed locally. Water reclamation also plays an important role. By using the vortex principle, the water is treated without chemical additives. These and similar initiatives are expected to create around 40,000 new jobs in the future. The example of Bhutan clearly shows that using local resources saves costs, protects nature, and contributes to job creation.

Important questions to Blue Economy



Gunter Pauli, the initiator of the Blue Economy, Economist, answered these and other questions in a written interview:

http://www.lteconomy.it/en/topic-interviews-en/interviste/gunter-pauli-blue-economy

If you like videos, Blue Economy is explained in a cartoon video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1af08PSlaIs

After reading the interview and watching the video, it can be good practice for you to think and write down your definition of the Blue Economy:

If you want to look for more concrete examples and innovations of the blue economy, you can visit the website https://www.theblueeconomy.org

and you will find 100 innovations and 12 clusters where Blue Economy is applied:

From Nuclear Exit (Case 55) to The Magic of Hot Chili (Case 96) and Beer (Case 84), from Clean water without sewage (Case 18), to Fish farming without animal feed (Case 47).

EXERCISE 5

M 2_E 5: Description of Blue Economy example

Open a writing programme or take a sheet of paper. On the top, write the number of the module and the number of this exercise.

Pick one example of Blue Economy and explain in detail why you find this example interesting.

When you have completed the exercises, name your digital document after the number of this exercise, and save it in the folder to Module 2! If you did the exercise on paper, take readable photos, and save them.

International Standards

Sustainable companies and organisations that need practical tools to manage their sustainable practices can refer to the so-called ISO 14000 family. ISO stands for International Organisation for Standardization, and the 14000 family is a collection of ISO's environmental standards; it is for environmental management:

https://www.iso.org/iso-14001-environmental-management.html

Detect the credibility and reliability of data, information, and digital content

Online research can be done quickly and conveniently from the comfort of your desk. There is hardly a topic on which information cannot be found. Online information's quick retrieval and immediate availability influence research behaviour. Thus, an information style has developed that often values the accessibility of information more highly than its quality.

Figure 4: Digital Content

But it is precisely the quality on the net that is not easy to judge. And the time pressure under which information has to be procured in education and at work makes a thorough quality check even more difficult.

There are examples of how even seasoned journalists have taken information from the internet without reflecting on it and disseminated it further.

Under these circumstances, how can it still distinguish high-quality information from dubious information?

What is dubious information, and how can it be recognised? What possibilities exist to check an internet source's trustworthiness and reliability and recognise misinformation, hidden public relations or deliberate lies?

In this chapter, we look at the credibility of online sources and how you can spot fake news.

Sensitivity about the website domain

Established reliable information sources often control their domains and have a consistent appearance with which you are likely familiar. Sites with domains that look “shady” might look doubtful and should raise attention to the fact that the provided data and information needs to be checked.

Sensitivity about the ownership of the website

Most websites will feature much information about the company or the organisation that owns it, its members of the leadership, and its goal and ethical statement. Usually, the terminology used in these sections is straightforward.

Information about who stays behind the website, mainly in the “About us, “ must be double-checked. Knowing that people who remain behind the business are accurate is very important.

Sensitivity about the comments

Comments often accompany the online information, or the comments themselves contain data and information; sensitivity about credibility in these comments is also needed. Much of this false and deceptive information is spread on social media channels. Headlines are designed to catch the reader's attention, but they should reflect the news content correctly. These articles frequently generate many comments on Facebook or Twitter. When many of these comments are negative about the reliability of the article, then it is most likely to be false.

Fake News

Fake news is manipulated or false information. Intentionally untrue claims are made to deceive other people.

Those who create or spread Fake News pursue financial, personal, and political goals. Fake News, therefore often deals with topics that are discussed very emotionally. In this way, the authors of Fake News try to influence public opinion and create sentiment for or against something or someone.

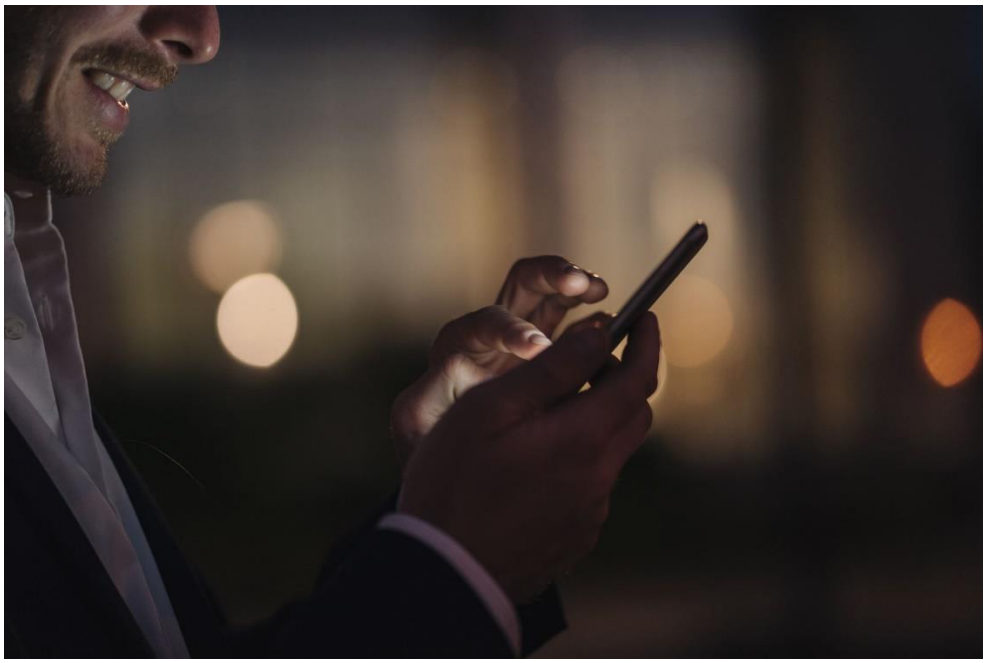


Figure 5: News

Rumours and fake news have always existed. Nowadays, however, they spread much faster via the internet and thus reach many more people.

Fake news is mainly spread via social platforms (e.g., Twitter and Instagram) or messengers (such as WhatsApp and Telegram).

But video portals (YouTube) or conspiracy portals (watergate. tv) also play an important role.

How to detect Fake News?

Do not believe everything straight away! First impressions are often deceptive. You should be sceptical about the following things:

- Tearful, excited language (e.g. "Madness! UNBELIEVABLE!", "You won't believe what happened then!")
- Emotional terms (e.g. "terrible", "heartbreaking", "unbelievable")
- Drastic, shocking images
- Missing source references
- Questionable figures and statistics without supporting evidence
- Fuelling fear (e.g. "This is a threat to us all!", "You'll see")
- Click-bait videos (video ends with cliffhanger, must be clicked to continue watching)
- Generalisations (e.g. "All ... are ...")
- Conspiracy theories (e.g. about secret string-pullers, beneficiaries, unknown powers, etc.)

Credibility of pictures

Information is often accompanied by pictures, which influence how we understand it. A visual should depict the story accurately, but in many cases, this is inaccurate. Therefore, the picture accompanying the text must be checked to see if it is related. The search engines provide the functions to search for a specific picture, simplifying the procedure of checking if the picture is correct according to the text in the online sources. For example, use a reverse image search (e.g., www.images.google.com or www.tineye.com) to research the original source of images.

EXERCISE 6

M 2_E 6: Check the credibility

Open a writing programme or take a sheet of paper. On the top, write the number of the module and the number of this exercise.

Please visit Wikipedia and search there for information on the topic of the "digital divide." Then check the following:

1. Is the information on that page trackable to the main source/owner?
2. Are the pictures appropriate and fit for the topic?

When you have completed the exercises, name your digital document after the number of this exercise, and save it in the folder to Module 2! If you did the exercise on paper, take readable photos, and save them.

Congratulations!

You finished Module 2. You are now able to take a quiz on the platform to test your knowledge and apply for a certificate with ECQA.

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List of figures