The editorial process

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Module 1 – Structure and language

- **Structure** of a fact-checking article

- **Language and** impartiality

- **Easy tools for** visualizations

Module 2 – Revisions and decisions

- The editorial process: **Double review**

- **Verdicts** : Yes or No?

- Fact-checking and **social networks** : Best practices

Module 1 – Structure and language

Structure of a fact-checking article

1. Introduction

2. Present the evidence

3. Conclusion/The verdict

Introduction

Introduction – Presentation of the claim

- **Clearly quote** the statement to be fact-checked.

- **Mention who made the statement and when it was made.**

Introduction – Presentation of the claim

Original Statement

"According to the latest government report, unemployment has decreased by 2% over the past year".

Introduction – Presentation of the claim

Altered Statement

"The government claims unemployment has massively dropped by 2% recently".

Introduction – Context of the claim

- **Provide background information on the situation or event related to the statement.**

- **Explain why the statement is significant and worth fact-checking.**

Introduction – Brief preview of conclusions

- Indicate whether the **statement appears** to be true, false, or somewhere in between.

- **Give a hint** of the evidence or findings that will be discussed in the analysis section.

Why language and style are so important in fact-checking

Language

Language is vital in political fact-checking articles because it shapes **how** **information is perceived** and understood.

Precise, clear, and neutral language ensures that facts are presented accurately without bias, allowing readers to

Language

Avoiding inflammatory or partisan language maintains the **credibility** of the fact-checking organization and fosters **trust** among diverse audiences.

Effective language use helps distill complex political issues into **accessible insights**, making the fact-checking process transparent and comprehensible.

Five principles

- **Neutral and impartial language**
- **Limit adverbs and adjectives**
- **Clear and specific information**
- **Avoid ambiguity**
- **Present both sides fairly**

Neutral and impartial language

Ensure language remains **unbiased and objective**, avoiding loaded or emotive words.

Dos and Don'ts

- **Correct Example**

  "The policy will impact healthcare costs".

- **Incorrect Example**

  "The terrible policy will

  disastrously impact healthcare costs".

Limit adverbs and adjectives

Minimize the use of descriptive words to maintain objectivity and precision.

Dos and Don'ts

- **Correct Example**

  "The statement was inaccurate".

- **Incorrect Example**

  "The statement was shockingly inaccurate".

Clear and specific information

Use precise and detailed information

to **avoid vagueness** .

Dos and Don'ts

- **Correct Example**

  "The law affects 10,000 people".

- **Incorrect Example**

  "The law affects a lot of people".

Avoid ambiguity

Ensure statements are **clear and definitive** **to prevent misinterpretation.**

Dos and Don'ts

- **Correct Example**

  "The budget increased by 5% this year".

- **Incorrect Example**

  "The budget increased significantly this year".

Present both sides fairly

Give a **balanced view** by fairly representing all perspectives on an issue.

Dos and Don'ts

- **Correct Example**

  "Supporters argue it will create jobs, while critics believe it will harm small businesses".

- **Incorrect Example**

  "Critics are wrong to think it will harm small businesses".

Present the evidence

Present the evidence

- Search for evidence that backs up or refutes the claims.

- Evaluate the sources they find according to **five parameters** .

Present the evidence

1. **Proximity**
2. **Expertise**
3. **Rigour**
4. **Transparency**
5. **Reliability**

1. Proximity

How close is the evidence to the phenomenon?

1. Proximity – Example

A **financial news outlet** reporting on Croatia's GDP growth rate is typically less proximate to the data—and therefore less valuable—than the **Croatian Bureau of Statistics**, which directly collects and publishes the official GDP figures.

2. Expertise

What credentials indicate the quality of the producer of the evidence?

2. Expertise – Example

The economic analysis was authored by a **professor with a PhD** in economics from a prestigious university and has numerous publications in top-tier economic journals, indicating a high level of expertise in analyzing Croatia's economic trends.

3. Rigour

How was the evidence collected?

3. Rigour – Example

Data on household income in Croatia is often collected through **self-reported surveys**. This can introduce biases, as respondents might underreport or overreport their income. Differences in **survey methodologies** and response rates can make it challenging to compare data accurately across different regions
or time periods.

4. Transparency

What do you know about the evidence?

4. Transparency – Example

A government report on Croatia's employment rates includes **detailed methodology**, raw data, and analysis, all publicly accessible online, allowing other economists to review and validate the findings.

5. Reliability

Is there a track record to evaluate?

5. Reliability – Example

The Croatian National Bank has been publishing annual reports on the country's financial stability **for over 15 years**, providing a long-standing track record that allows economists to assess the reliability and consistency of its data and analyses.

The analysis

Easy tools
for visualization

Choosing the right chart : line, bar, and pie charts

Line charts

Line charts display data points connected by straight lines.
They are used to show **trends over time** .

Example : Tracking monthly sales revenue over several years to identify seasonal trends.

Advantages

- **Clearly show** trends and changes over time.

- **Easy to compare** multiple datasets.

Disadvantages

- Can become cluttered with **too many lines** .

- Not suitable for **categorical data** .

Bar Charts
(Vertical and Horizontal)

Bar charts use rectangular bars to represent data values. Vertical bars are called column charts, and horizontal bars are called bar charts.

Example : Comparing the sales revenue of different product categories in a given year.

Advantages

- **Simple and easy to understand .**
- **Effective for comparing quantities across categories .**

Disadvantages

- Can become cluttered with too many categories .
- Not ideal for showing trends over time.

Pie charts

Pie charts show data as **slices of a circle** , with the size of each slice representing a proportion of the whole.

Example : Displaying the market share of different companies within an industry.

Advantages

- **Visually effective** for showing proportions.
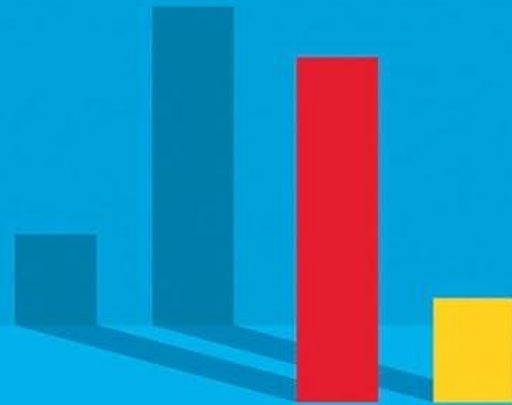- **Easy to understand** at a glance.

Disadvantages

- Not effective for **large datasets** .

- Difficult to compare **slices of similar size** .

- Can become **cluttered** with too many slices.

How Charts Lie

Getting Smarter about Visual Information
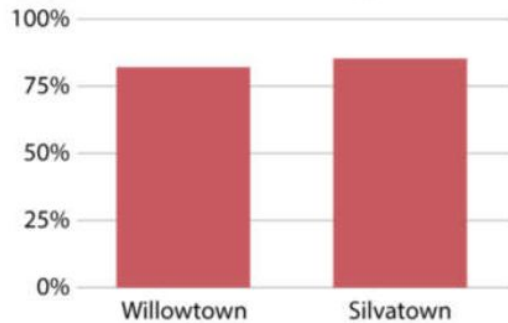
Alberto Cairo

Chart that lies...

- By being **poorly designed** .

- By displaying **dubious data** .

- By displaying **insufficient data** .

- By concealing or **confusing uncertainty** .

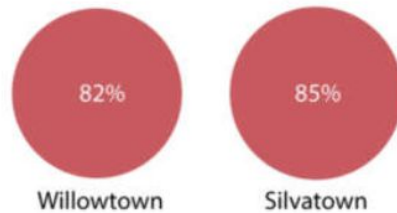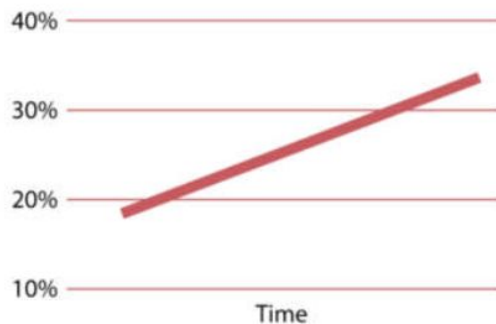- By suggesting **misleading patterns** .

Correct versions

Percentage of population with access to safe drinking water

(Bar chart, y-axis 0%–100%, Willowtown ~82%, Silvatown ~85%)

Percentage of population with access to safe drinking water

Willowtown 82% Silvatown 85%

Access to safe drinking water by minority ethnic group

(Line chart, y-axis 10%–40%, Time on x-axis)

Deceptive versions

Percentage of population with access to safe drinking water

(Bar chart, y-axis 81%–85%, Willowtown 82%, Silvatown 85%)

Percentage of population with access to safe drinking water

Willowtown 82% Silvatown 85%

Access to safe drinking water by minority ethnic group

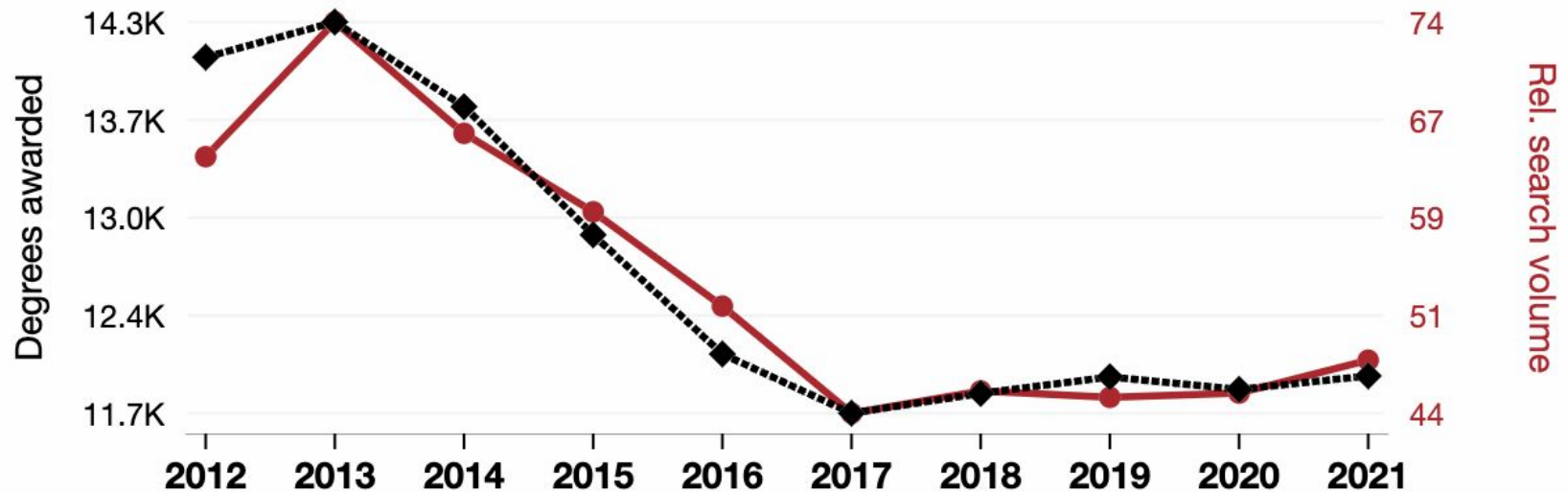(Line chart, y-axis 10%–60%, Time on x-axis)

Spurious correlations

Bachelor's degrees awarded in Philosophy
correlates with
Google searches for 'Nicolas Cage'

◆▪▪ Bachelor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, in field of
study: Philosophy and religious studies · Source: National Center for
Education Statistics

●— Relative volume of Google searches for 'Nicolas Cage' (Worldwide,
without quotes) · Source: Google Trends

2012-2021, r=0.970, r²=0.942, p<0.01 · tylervigen.com/spurious/correlation/9974
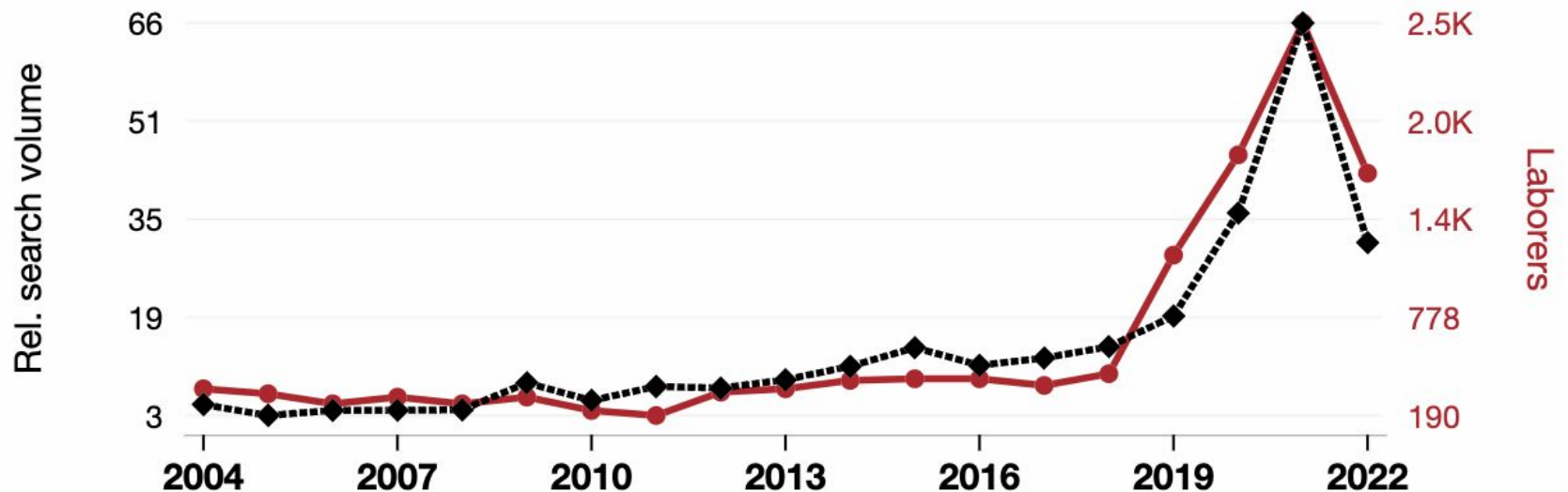
Spurious correlations

Google searches for 'do vaccines work'

correlates with

The number of marriage therapists in Illinois

◆-- Relative volume of Google searches for 'do vaccines work' (United States, without quotes) · Source: Google Trends

●— BLS estimate of marriage and family therapists in Illinois · Source: Bureau of Larbor Statistics

2004-2022, r=0.964, r²=0.929, p<0.01 · tylervigen.com/spurious/correlation/10352

Rules of thumbs

Don't trust any chart built or shared by a source you're **not familiar with** —until you can vet either the chart or the source, or both.

Rules of thumbs

Don't trust chart authors and publishers who don't mention the sources of their data or who don't link directly to them. Transparency is another sign of appropriate standards.

Rules of thumbs

Don't assume ill intentions when haste, sloppiness, or **ignorance** is the more likely explanation for a bad chart.

Module 2 – Revisions and decisions

Double Review

Double review in fact-checking is crucial for ensuring accuracy, reliability, and quality .

By having at least two colleagues independently review each article , errors and biases can be identified and corrected, enhancing the credibility of the content.

Double Review

This peer-review process helps maintain consistency, uphold editorial standards, and provide readers with **trustworthy information**.

It also fosters a **collaborative environment** where feedback and improvements are continually integrated, ultimately leading to more thorough and reliable fact-checking.

Ten steps
of double review

1. Verification of original sources

- **Ensure all cited sources are reliable and official.**

- **Check that links and references are correct and functional.**

2. Accuracy of Data

- Verify that the reported data is **precise** and not manipulated.

- Ensure that **any rounding** is done correctly.

3. Contextualization

- Make sure the data and statements are **properly contextualized**.
- Verify that the conclusions drawn from the data are **consistent** with the provided information.

4. Impartiality

- **Check that the article is written in a neutral and objective manner .**

- **Avoid language or tones that might appear partisan or biased .**

5. Completeness

- **Verify that all relevant aspects of the topic are covered.**

- **Ensure that no crucial information is missing that could alter the reader's understanding.**

6. Correctness of quotations

- **Ensure quotations are accurate and** **faithfully reported** **.**

- **Verify that quotations are not taken** **out of context** **or distorted.**

7. Internal consistency

- **Check that there are no contradictions within the article.**

- **Ensure consistency between various paragraphs and sections of the article.**

8. Clarity and precision

- Ensure that the article is clear and **understandable for readers**.
- Verify that there are **no ambiguities** or vague statements.

9. Compliance with editorial guidelines

- Check that the article adheres to the **editorial guidelines** and standards.

- Ensure that the structure of the article meets the **expected format** .

10. Comments and feedback

- **Leave detailed and constructive comments where necessary.**

- **Highlight any weak points or areas that need further clarification or elaboration.**
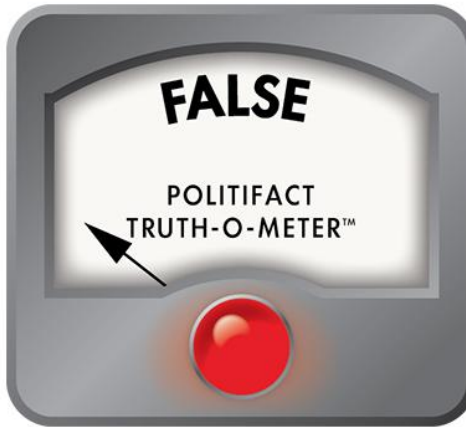
Verdicts

- **Key aspect** of fact-checking: Showing if a claim is supported by evidence.
- **Many fact-checking organizations use a rating system .**
- **There are some advantages and disadvantages .**

Truth-O-Meter

TRUE — POLITIFACT TRUTH-O-METER™

MOSTLY TRUE — POLITIFACT TRUTH-O-METER™

HALF TRUE — POLITIFACT TRUTH-O-METER™

MOSTLY FALSE — POLITIFACT TRUTH-O-METER™

FALSE — POLITIFACT TRUTH-O-METER™

PANTS ON FIRE! — POLITIFACT TRUTH-O-METER™

True

The statement is **accurate** and there's nothing significant missing.

Joe Biden

stated on May 15, 2024 in a speech at a police memorial service:

> "Violent crime is near a record 50-year low."

Mostly True

The statement is accurate but
needs clarification or additional information.

Joe Biden

stated on June 4, 2024 in a speech:

"**Due to the arrangements that I've reached with (Mexico) President Obrador, the number of migrants coming … to our shared border unlawfully in recent months has dropped dramatically.**"

Half True

The statement is partially accurate but **leaves out important details** or takes things out of context.

Joe Biden

stated on June 4, 2024 in an interview with Time magazine:

> "Wage increases have exceeded" the cost of inflation.

Mostly False

The statement contains **an element of truth** but ignores critical facts that would give a different impression.

Joe Biden

stated on May 1, 2024 in a campaign event:

> **Former President Donald Trump told Time magazine that "states should monitor women's pregnancies and prosecute those who violate abortion bans."**

False

The statement is **not accurate** .

Joe Biden

stated on May 14, 2024 in an interview with Yahoo Finance:

> Inflation "was 9% when I came to office."

Pants on Fire

The statement is not accurate and makes a **ridiculous claim** .

Joe Biden

stated on February 11, 2020 in a campaign event in South Carolina:

"I had the great honor of being arrested with our U.N. ambassador on the streets of Soweto trying to get to see (Nelson Mandela) on Robbens Island."

Pagella Politica

Vero

C'eri quasi

Ni

Pinocchio andante

Panzana pazzesca

Vero

The data or facts are **reported accurately**, or correctly rounded, and can be verified in official documents or other reliable sources.

C'eri quasi

The data or facts are reported slightly inaccurately but **close to the truth** , or the data is mostly correct but the conclusions drawn distort their meaning.

Nì

Multiple facts or data points are cited simultaneously, some of which are not reported accurately: the statement is therefore **only partially correct** .

Pinocchio andante

The statement starts with a fact or assertion that is not entirely unrealistic, but at the very least vague or overly general, and then draws incorrect conclusions from it.

Panzana pazzesca

The data or fact is entirely fabricated or completely distorted to support a **fundamentally false thesis** .

Advantages and disadvantages of verdicts

1. Advantage

Assigning a rating helps make the article **more straightforward** for readers. Given the overwhelming amount of information they encounter, readers will value the ability to quickly grasp the core message.

1. Advantage

For example, if a fact-checker rates a politician's statement as "False", readers **immediately understand** the claim's inaccuracy without needing to sift through extensive analysis.

2. Advantage

One advantage is that requiring a rating compels the reporter to arrive at a **definitive conclusion** . Fact-checkers might find it challenging to determine the truthfulness of a claim,

but this effort is exactly what readers value in this type of journalism.

2. Advantage

For instance, if a fact-checker rates a politician's statement as "Mostly true" after thorough investigation, it shows readers that the claim has been carefully evaluated and provides a clear assessment of its accuracy.

3. Advantage

One advantage is that utilizing a rating scale enhances brand recognition and attracts a larger audience. The rating system is often the most identifiable feature of a fact-checking organization, and it is also highly shareable on social media.

3. Advantage

For example, a fact-checker that uses a distinctive "five-star" rating system can **become well-known** for this approach, making it easier for users to share and discuss their findings online, thereby increasing the fact-checker's visibility and credibility.

4. Advantage

A rating provides readers with a quick and **engaging element** alongside the in-depth, often intense analysis.

4. Advantage

For instance, a fact-checking article that concludes with a clear "True" or "False" rating gives readers an immediate understanding of the claim's validity, making the information more accessible and **less overwhelming**, while still offering detailed context for those who want to delve deeper.

1. Disadvantage

Not all fact-checks **neatly fit** into a rating category. For instance, two misleading statements might be rated the same despite differing significantly in their impact.

1. Disadvantage

A minor inaccuracy about a politician's background and a major falsehood about public health policy might both receive a "False" rating, even though the latter has far **more serious consequences** .

2. Disadvantage

Distinguishing between "Mostly true" and "Half true" is **not an exact science**, even when fact-checkers rigorously adhere to their methodology. This can lead to inconsistencies across numerous fact-checks.

2. Disadvantage

For example, one fact-checker might rate a claim about economic data as "Mostly true", while another might rate a similar claim as "Half true", **causing confusion** and reducing the perceived reliability of the ratings.

3. Disadvantage

Assigning a rating adds considerable effort to the editorial process. It is undoubtedly **easier to publish** findings without having to decide on a specific rating.

3. Disadvantage

For example, fact-checkers could **quickly release** an analysis of a politician's speech without the additional step of categorizing the accuracy of each statement, thereby saving time and resources.

4. Disadvantage

Assigning ratings can be more confrontational and **attract more criticism** from readers and the politicians being fact-checked than simply presenting the facts and figures.

4. Disadvantage

For example, rating a politician's statement as "False" might **provoke backlash** and shift the focus of critics to disputing the rating itself, rather than engaging with the detailed analysis provided.

VERDETTO SINTETICO

Il ministro delle Imprese e del Made in Italy esagera.

IN BREVE

- Ci sono almeno tre controesempi che non supportano la dichiarazione di Urso. Anche in Croazia, Portogallo e Polonia i partiti del capo di governo e quelli alla guida del Paese hanno aumentato i loro consensi. TWEET

In realtà c'è chi ha fatto meglio del PD.

IN BREVE

□ Alle elezioni europee il PD ha preso il 24,1 per cento dei voti, cinque punti percentuali in più rispetto alle elezioni politiche del 2022. Altri partiti hanno guadagnato punti percentuali, ma non tanto quanto il PD. TWEET

□ Alleanza Verdi-Sinistra, però, ha preso circa 600 mila voti in più rispetto al 2022, una crescita più alta di quella del PD, e ha quasi raddoppiato i suoi voti in percentuale sul totale. TWEET

Why updates and corrections are so important in fact-checking

Corrections and updates

Updates and corrections are crucial in fact-checking because they **ensure the accuracy** and reliability of information.

They maintain transparency by acknowledging and rectifying errors, which **enhances the credibility** of the fact-checking organization.

Corrections and updates

By keeping information current and accurate, updates and corrections **help readers trust** that they are getting the most precise and relevant information available.

Errors of fact

- Serious errors changing the overall perspective receive a correction **mark at the top**.

- Text is **updated with new information**, stating the correct and, if necessary, the incorrect information.

- Update the **section "Corrections and errors"**.

Typos, grammatical errors, misspellings

- **Corrected** without a correction mark .

- Fixed as soon **as they are noticed.**

Updates

- Additional information added post-publication for **reader service** (e.g., a response from the speaker or relevant breaking news).

- Updates can be noted within the text or at the **start with a date** .

How to promote

fact-checking articles on social networks