



Baltic Engagement
Centre for Combating
Information Disorders

STUDY MATERIALS AND AUDIOVISUAL RESOURCES FROM GENDERED DISINFORMATION CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 2026

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THIS PROJECT WAS FUNDED BY THE BALTIC ENGAGEMENT CENTRE FOR COMBATING INFORMATION DISORDERS (BECID) 2025–2028; PART OF MS17 OF THE EU-FUNDED PROJECT WITH THE ID: 101226242, COORDINATED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF TARTU (UTARTU).



Co-funded by the
European Union

PART 1. UNDERSTANDING GENDERED DISINFORMATION

What is gendered disinformation?

Gendered disinformation is not simply “**false information about women.**” It uses false or misleading gender- and sex-based narratives to undermine individuals, groups or ideas. It can combine disinformation with stereotypes, sexualisation, moral judgment, identity-based attacks and emotionally charged narratives.

A useful distinction is between criticism that focuses on what someone **does** and attacks that focus on what kind of woman, man or person they supposedly **are**. A politician, journalist, researcher or activist may be criticised for their decisions or actions. But when criticism shifts disproportionately towards their gender, appearance, sexuality, family role or supposed morality, identity itself becomes part of the attack.

Gendered disinformation does not necessarily need to persuade everyone that a particular claim is true. Its effect can also be achieved by damaging someone's credibility, generating harassment or making participation increasingly costly. A targeted person may avoid certain subjects, [withdraw from social media or public events](#), or find themselves constantly having to defend their identity rather than their work.

This means that, alongside asking “Is this information true or false?”, we should also ask: Who is given credibility? Who is ridiculed? Who has to defend their identity rather than their ideas? And who may eventually decide that speaking is not worth the cost?

This study material builds on the BECID 2026 conference “Resilient Voices: Women & Disinformation.” Explore videos from the conference and key points for further discussion [here](#).

Why does this matter for GLAM institutions?

Galleries, libraries, archives and museums constantly make choices about information, context and representation. A museum chooses what to display and how to contextualise it. An archive decides how materials are described and made accessible. A library frames public discussions and educational activities. A gallery decides which works, perspectives and voices receive a platform.

This toolkit is not intended to encourage censorship or the avoidance of controversial, provocative or uncomfortable material. Artistic expression may deliberately challenge conventions, use irony, satire, ambiguity or exaggeration, and engage with stereotypes or offensive ideas in order to question them. Likewise, archives,

libraries and museums may have a responsibility to preserve and provide access to historically significant material that reflects prejudice, propaganda or harmful narratives.

The aim is therefore not to determine what GLAM institutions should or should not display, preserve or discuss, but to support informed and context-sensitive professional choices. The key questions are why particular material is being used, how it is framed, what audiences need in order to interpret it, and whether its presentation risks unintentionally reproducing or amplifying the manipulative narrative being examined.

This also puts GLAM institutions in a strong position to help audiences understand not only **what is false, but how manipulation works**. Instead of placing a harmful or misleading claim at the centre of communication, institutions can lead with reliable information, explain the techniques used to manipulate audiences, and reveal the stereotypes and broader narratives that make those messages persuasive.

This toolkit provides practical guidance for doing exactly that: recognising gendered disinformation, understanding the mechanisms behind it, and addressing it through GLAM collections, exhibitions, educational activities and public communication.

PART 2. GENDER STEREOTYPES, SOCIAL MEDIA AND AI

Gendered disinformation rarely creates prejudice from scratch. Instead, it **draws on assumptions and stereotypes that audiences already recognise**. Gender stereotypes can influence ideas about who is competent, rational, trustworthy, respectable or suited for authority. Women, for example, may be portrayed as too emotional, irrational, weak, manipulative, sexual, prudish, submissive or unsuitable for leadership.

These ideas are reinforced through language, images, humour, popular culture and everyday communication. **Repetition can make socially constructed assumptions begin to appear natural or self-evident.** In a manipulative message, a stereotype therefore works as a shortcut: the audience already knows the story it is being invited to believe.

When analysing potentially gendered manipulation, one particularly useful question is therefore: **What assumption must the audience already accept for this message to work?**

What happens on social media?

Social media provides an environment in which these familiar stereotypes can be transformed into highly shareable narratives. They can be packaged as memes, short videos, misleading posts, edited images, jokes, coded language, or synthetic content and circulated across different accounts, communities, and platforms.

Strong emotions are particularly important. Anger, fear, disgust, humiliation, and ridicule can prompt people to react and share before pausing to evaluate what they are seeing. As narratives are repeated across social networks, individual pieces of content can become part of something much larger than a single false claim.

This is why it is important to look for patterns, not only fragmented posts. A single meme may seem insignificant. The same stereotype, appearing repeatedly across memes, videos, comments, and accounts, can tell a different story.

Red flags to recognise

- **Sexualised narratives** – sexual rumours, insults or manipulated sexual content are used to undermine credibility.
- **Morality and family roles** – someone is judged as a “bad” mother, wife, daughter, man or woman rather than on their professional or public actions.
- **Identity over actions** – criticism disproportionately focuses on gender, appearance, sexuality, age, or family status.
- **Manipulated visuals** – doctored images, misleading screenshots, edited videos or synthetic media reinforce a narrative.
- **Coded language** – jokes, symbols, slang or seemingly harmless expressions communicate additional meanings to particular communities.
- **Coordinated amplification** – the same narrative repeatedly appears across accounts, groups, platforms or countries.
- **Emotional pressure** – content is designed primarily to provoke anger, fear, disgust, humiliation or ridicule.

AI changes the scale, not the logic

Artificial intelligence did not invent misogyny, gender stereotypes or political harassment. What it can change is the **scale, speed and accessibility** of producing manipulative content. Synthetic images, generated video and voice cloning can make misleading material easier to create, modify and distribute, while increasingly realistic outputs can make it more difficult for audiences to immediately determine what is authentic.

Gender matters here as well. Women and other people in public life may face particular risks from non-consensual sexualised deepfakes and fabricated imagery. **Sensity AI report found that 96% of identified deepfakes were non-consensual sexual content, with women being 99% of those targeted.**

The technology may be new, but the stereotypes and power relationships it exploits are often not. For this reason, asking “**Was AI used?**” is only one part of analysing suspicious material. An equally important question is: “**What existing stereotype or power relationship is being exploited?**”

Look beyond the individual fact

Fact-checking remains essential, but establishing that a claim is false does not necessarily undo its effects. A false story may already have reinforced an association between a person and a stereotype, generated harassment or reached audiences who will never encounter the correction. Reproducing harmful material repeatedly in order to debunk it can also unintentionally give it additional visibility.

A useful way to analyse such content is to move through four levels: begin with the **claim** and what is literally being stated; identify the broader **narrative** that the claim reinforces; consider the **stereotype** or social assumption that makes that narrative persuasive; and finally examine **power** – whose credibility, safety or ability to participate is affected. The key shift is simple: don't ask only “**Is it false?**” Ask “**How does it work?**”

PART 3. HOW CAN GLAM INSTITUTIONS ADDRESS THESE TOPICS?

Addressing gendered disinformation is not simply about telling audiences “**Don't believe this.**” A more sustainable goal is to help people recognise the techniques, stereotypes and narratives used to manipulate them.

There is no single correct response. Depending on the situation, a GLAM institution might **provide context, correct false information, explain a manipulation technique, moderate abusive discussion, protect a targeted person or choose not to amplify harmful material at all.**

When using examples of gendered disinformation, avoid making the harmful claim the main message. Instead, lead with reliable information and explain how the manipulation works.

Five questions to take with you

1. **Who is being targeted?** Whose credibility or legitimacy is being challenged?
2. **Is this about their actions or their identity?** Has criticism shifted towards gender, sexuality, appearance or family roles?
3. **Which stereotype makes the message work?** What familiar assumption is it relying on?
4. **What happens if we amplify it?** Could sharing it give the harmful message more visibility or legitimacy?
5. **What response builds resilience?** How can we help audiences recognise similar manipulation in the future?

Put it into practice

The following posters and editable worksheet are designed for practical use in galleries,

libraries, archives, museums and classrooms. Use them as discussion prompts, educational materials or starting points for activities, and adapt the worksheet to your own audiences, collections and examples.



WHEN DOES CRITICISM BECOME GENDERED?

Criticising someone's ideas, decisions or actions is part of **public debate**.

Using their gender or identity to undermine them is something **different**.

CAN YOU SPOT THE DIFFERENCE?

CRITICISM

'I disagree with her policy.'

'She handled the situation poorly.'

'Her argument isn't convincing.'

Questioning someone's decisions.

GENDERED ATTACK

'Women are too emotional to lead.'

'She should focus on being a mother.'

Attacking her appearance instead of her argument.

Using sexualised rumours or images to humiliate them.

ASK YOURSELF

Would this criticism still make sense if the person were another gender?

If not, a gender stereotype may be doing some of the work.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Gender-based discrimination, intimidation, and silencing weaken democratic debate



HOW DOES GENDER BECOME A TOOL OF MANIPULATION?

Gendered disinformation builds on stereotypes that feel familiar. Ideas we have encountered since childhood in stories, media and popular culture.

But familiar does not mean true.

1. START WITH A STEREOTYPE

“Women are too emotional.”

“Real men must be strong.”

“Gender equality threatens traditional values.”

2. TRIGGER AN EMOTION

Strong emotions can make manipulative messages more powerful, and more shareable.

3. PACKAGE THE MESSAGE

Memes, videos, misleading posts, edited images, deepfakes, slang and coded messages.

Even apparently harmless memes, emojis and jokes can contain meanings intended for particular audiences.

4. AMPLIFY IT

Users and networks posting the content → engagement from users → amplification by algorithms → wider audiences

People and networks spread the message. **Reactions and shares increase its visibility, while algorithms can help it reach much larger audiences.**

5. CREATE AN IMPACT

Harassment, distrust, polarization, silencing, withdrawal from public debate.

Gender and identity can be used to deepen existing divisions and turn social issues into an **“us versus them” conflict.**

BEFORE YOU SHARE, ASK:

What emotion is this trying to create?

What stereotype does it rely on?

Who benefits if I believe or spread it?

Is the message challenging someone's actions or attacking who they are?

DECODE THE MESSAGE

[INSERT CHANGEABLE EXAMPLE HERE]

A social-media post, meme, advertisement, photograph, newspaper article, historical object or something from the institution's own collection.

1. What is the first thing that catches your attention? What do you think the message wants you to think, feel or do?

2. What assumptions does the message make about gender or identity?

Does it suggest how someone should look, behave, work, lead, parent or live? Where might you have encountered this idea before?

☐ Stories and fairy tales ☐ Films and TV ☐ News and advertising ☐ Social media
☐ Family or friends ☐ History and tradition ☐ Somewhere else: _____

Remember: familiar does not mean true.

3. What does the message make you feel?

☐ Anger ☐ Fear ☐ Disgust ☐ Amusement ☐ Outrage ☐ Sympathy
☐ Other: _____

Why might this emotion make the message more powerful or shareable?

4. Imagine this appeared on social media.

**Users and networks posting the content → engagement from users →
amplification by algorithms → wider audiences**

What would make people stop, react, comment or share?

Who might benefit from the message spreading?

5. THINK ABOUT THE IMPACT

What could happen if many people encountered or believed this message?

- ☐ Someone is discredited ☐ A stereotype is reinforced ☐ Groups become more divided
- ☐ Someone experiences harassment ☐ Trust is weakened ☐ Someone becomes less willing to speak publicly
- ☐ Other: _____

NOW CHANGE THE MESSAGE

Can you communicate the same criticism, concern or topic without relying on the stereotype?

ONE LAST QUESTION

Are you reacting to what someone has done, or to who they are?

This toolkit was developed following the **BECID2 conference “Resilient Voices: Women & Disinformation”**, held in Riga on 3 March 2026. The conference brought together researchers, journalists, civil society representatives and policy experts to examine gendered and targeted disinformation, stereotypes, hybrid threats and their impact on democratic participation.

Gendered disinformation is more than a collection of false claims. It builds on existing social attitudes, stereotypes and inequalities, combining them with familiar manipulation techniques to undermine credibility, reinforce divisions and shape who feels able to participate in public life.

Developed by BECID2 media literacy specialists, this toolkit translates key insights from the conference into practical guidance for professionals working in galleries, libraries, archives, museums and other cultural and memory institutions.