

CLAD

¹⁾ Citizens and Libraries
against Disinformation

**Design and
implement civic
participation
actions to
counteract
disinformation
in libraries and
community
spaces**

CLAD Training Guide

Index

Introductory Note	6
Purpose of the training guide	7
Target audience	8
How to use this document	8
Part I — Background and Grounds of Appeal	10
1. The CLAD Project: vision, objectives and principles	11
1.1. The European disinformation challenge	11
1.2. Democratic participation and information literacy	11
1.3. The strategic role of libraries	12
1.4. The CLAD Project: central objectives	12
2. Libraries as Citizen Labs	13
2.1. The concept of Citizen Laboratory	13
2.2. Libraries as safe and inclusive spaces	14
2.3. From information mediation to civic mediation	14
2.4. Local, national and European impact	15
Part II — The CLAD Intervention Model	16
3. The CLAD Training Guide as a methodological model	17
3.1. What is the CLAD Training Guide	17
3.2. Guiding Principles of the Training Guide	17
3.3. Guiding principles of the Guidance Guide	18
3.4. Linking training, action and sustainability	18
4. The four steps for the implementation of CLAD actions	19
4.1. Step 1 – Development of professional skills	19
4.2. Step 2 – Institutional involvement of libraries and community centers	19
4.3. Step 3 – Thematic context and framing practices	20
4.4. Step 4 – Community inclusion and broad engagement	21

Part III — Designing Training and Engagement	22
5. How to design a CLAD action	23
5.1. Diagnosis of local needs	23
5.2. Definition of learning and impact objectives	24
5.3. Selection of formats and methodologies	24
5.4. Time, logistical and resource planning	25
6. Recommended participatory methodologies	25
6.1. Focus groups	25
6.2. World Cafés	26
6.3. Living labs	26
6.4. Debates, workshops and public sessions	26
6.5. Forums with policymakers	27
7. CLAD Themes: how to work with sensitive content	27
7.1. General principles for addressing sensitive topics	28
7.2. Environment and climate emergency	28
7.3. Minorities, cultural diversity and inclusion	29
7.4. European identities and citizenship	29
7.5. Health and well-being	30
7.6. Housing and urban culture	31
7.7. Articulation between themes, disinformation and citizen participation	31
8. Communication, dissemination and involvement	32
8.1. Objectives of communication in the CLAD context	32
8.2. Identification of target audiences	33
8.3. Language and tone of communication	33
8.5. Strategies to reach audiences beyond the “usual” ones	34
8.6. Ethical and responsible communication	34
8.7. Post-event communication and continuity	34
9. Evaluation, documentation and impact	35
9.1. Purposes of the evaluation	35
9.2. Types of evaluation	35
9.3. Qualitative and quantitative indicators	36

9.4. Documentation of actions	36
9.5. Ethics, privacy and data protection	37
9.6. Use of results	37
10. Sustainability and replication	37
10.1. Organisational sustainability	37
10.2. Sustainability of professional skills	38
10.3. Replication and adaptation to new contexts	38
10.4. Connection with decision-makers and public policies	38
10.5. Dissemination and valorization of results	39
11. Conclusions and Recommendations	39
References for deepening	40
<u>Annexes</u>	<u>42</u>
Annex A – CLAD operational checklists	43
Annex B – Model planning of a CLAD action	45
Annex C – Example of CLAD Action Timeline	46
Annex D – Basic guide for a Citizen Forum	47
Annex E – Simple valuation template	48

Technical Data Sheet

Authorship

Texts by Tatiana Sanches, Project Manager, Portuguese Association of Librarians, Archivists, Information and Documentation Professionals - BAD, Portugal, ORCID 0000-0002-4902-2628

Based on the EU Grants: Application form, for Project Citizens' engagement and participation [CERV-2023-CITIZENS-CIV], Coordination by Jakob Marcks, Goethe-Institut e.V.

Title

Design and implement civic participation actions to counteract disinformation in libraries and community spaces

Edition

Portuguese Association of Librarians, Archivists, Information and Documentation Professionals (BAD)
Praça Dr. Nuno Pinheiro Torres, 10A
1500-246 Lisbon PORTUGAL
editorial@bad.pt

Project Link: www.goethe.de/clad

February, 2026



Introductory Note



Purpose of the training guide

This training guide was developed within the scope of the *CLAD Project – Citizens and Libraries Against Disinformation*, with the aim of supporting librarians, information professionals, community mediators and other local agents in the design, implementation and evaluation of training and civic engagement actions focused on combating disinformation and strengthening democratic participation. This document takes the form of a **methodological and pedagogical manual**, combining conceptual framework with practical guidelines. It is intended to function simultaneously as:

- a resource to support the training of professionals.
- an operational guide for the design of local activities.
- a replicable and adaptable base to different national and community contexts.

As part of the preparation of this Guide, the Portuguese public libraries participating in the CLAD project - Bragança, Castelo Branco, Condeixa-a-Nova, Grândola, Sta. Maria da Feira, Tavira - as well as the institutional partner DGLAB, shared their testimonies and reflections on the implementation of the actions, the challenges faced and the impacts observed in the respective local contexts. These contributions, integrated throughout the document in the form of illustrative excerpts, aim to anchor the principles, methodologies and guidelines advocated here in concrete experiences, reinforcing their applicability and practical relevance. This editorial option consolidates a collaborative approach in the construction of knowledge, valuing the sharing of learning, the co-creation of work tools and the reinforcement of a common strategy for empowering libraries as agents of literacy, civic participation and combating disinformation.

“The existence of structured methodological guidelines was fundamental to support libraries with different resources and levels of experience.”

(Participating library)

Target audience

The training guide is primarily intended for:

- librarians in public libraries;
- professionals from community libraries and cultural centers;
- socio-cultural mediators and animators;
- adult trainers;
- other professionals involved in information literacy, citizenship and democratic participation projects.

Although designed in the context of the CLAD Project, the training guide was structured in such a way that it could be used by organizations and professionals outside the direct partnership, in different countries and local realities.

“The initiatives involved diverse audiences — young people, the elderly, minorities and adults — with a particularly positive impact on more vulnerable groups.”

(Participating library)

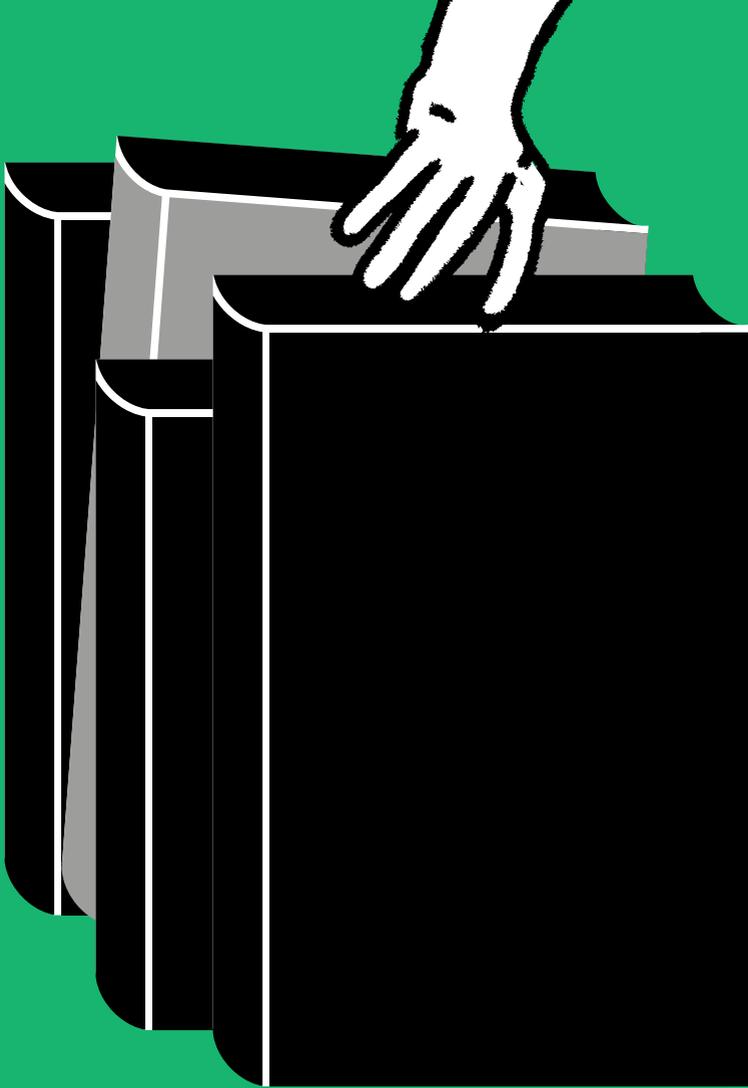
How to use this document

The training guide is organized in a modular way. The chapters can be read sequentially or consulted according to the specific needs of each context. It is recommended, however, to read in full Part I and Part II, which establish the conceptual and methodological framework of the CLAD model.

Throughout the text, the following are presented:

- practical recommendations;
- application examples;
- checklists;
- methodological suggestions.

These guidelines should be understood as **flexible guidelines**, not as rigid prescriptions, respecting the principle of adaptation to local contexts.



Part I

—

Background and Grounds of Appeal

1. The CLAD Project: vision, objectives and principles

1.1. The European disinformation challenge

The proliferation of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation is currently one of the main challenges for European democratic societies. The accelerated circulation of information through digital platforms, social media and hybrid media has contributed to the spread of misleading, manipulated or deliberately false content, with significant impacts on public trust, social cohesion and democratic participation.

“CLAD reinforced the role of libraries as active agents in combating disinformation, going beyond their traditional function.”

(DGLAB)

“Many citizens do not recognize their own vulnerability to disinformation, which requires careful and neutral pedagogical approaches.”

(DGLAB)

These phenomena are not limited to specific national contexts. On the contrary, they take on a wide European and global dimension, affecting electoral processes, public debates, environmental policies, health issues, human rights and cultural identities. The complexity of the problem requires coordinated responses, based on education, information literacy and the active involvement of citizens.

1.2. Democratic participation and information literacy

Informed democratic participation presupposes citizens capable of:

- access reliable information;
- critically evaluate sources and content;
- recognize strategies of information manipulation;
- understand decision-making processes at local, national and European level.

Information and media literacy thus emerges as an essential pillar for the exercise of citizenship. More than technical skills, it is about developing critical,

ethical and reflective skills that allow citizens to participate consciously in democratic life, strengthening their communities and promoting the exchange of reliable knowledge.

“The development of information literacy skills has proven to be essential for responsible civic participation.”

(Participating library)

1.3. The strategic role of libraries

Public libraries occupy a unique position in the informational ecosystem. They are institutions of proximity, widely recognized as reliable, inclusive and accessible spaces. In addition to their traditional function of access to information, libraries have been asserting themselves as:

- spaces for lifelong learning;
- places of meeting and community dialogue;
- cultural and civic mediation platforms.

In this context, libraries have a high potential to act as central agents in the fight against disinformation and in the promotion of democratic participation, particularly among adult and non-digital native audiences.

“The library has established itself as a space of trust, critical learning and informed citizenship.”

(Participating library)

1.4. The CLAD Project: central objectives

The CLAD Project – Citizens and Libraries Against Disinformation has as its main objective to empower European citizens, in particular those who are not digital natives, with the skills and confidence to navigate the complex contemporary information ecosystem.

To achieve this goal, the project proposes:

- strengthen the professional skills of librarians and community mediators;
- using libraries and community spaces as platforms for civic participation;
- develop and implement citizens' forums and other easily accessible participatory events;
- promote a bottom-up approach to knowledge building and connecting with policy makers;
- ensure the sustainability and replicability of actions beyond the duration of the project.

“Giving visibility to the library and reinforcing its recognition in the community was one of the most relevant impacts of the project.”

(Participating library)

2. Libraries as Citizen Labs

2.1. The concept of Citizen Laboratory

The concept of **Citizen Laboratory** refers to open spaces for social experimentation, where citizens, professionals and decision-makers come together to identify problems, exchange perspectives and co-create solutions to collective challenges.

Applied to the context of libraries, this concept translates into the transformation of these spaces into active environments of:

- informed dialogue;
- collaborative learning;
- democratic participation;
- social innovation.

“Spaces for debate and community reflection on socially sensitive and relevant issues were created.”

(Participating library)

2.2. Libraries as safe and inclusive spaces

One of the fundamental principles of the CLAD model is the conception of libraries as safe, inclusive and welcoming spaces, where diversity of opinions can be expressed with mutual respect. This aspect is particularly relevant when working on sensitive or potentially polarizing topics, which are more prone to disinformation.

For libraries to function effectively as citizen laboratories, it is necessary to ensure:

- respect for the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion;
- physical, cognitive and communicational accessibility;
- institutional neutrality combined with an ethical commitment to quality information.

“Libraries have asserted themselves as neutral, welcoming and safe spaces for informed dialogue.”

(DGLAB)

2.3. From information mediation to civic mediation

In the context of the CLAD Project, the role of the librarian evolves from traditional information mediation to civic mediation, which includes:

- facilitation of informed debates;
- support for the understanding of democratic processes;
- creating conditions for the active participation of citizens.

This transformation does not imply the loss of professional identity, but rather its expansion, anchored in the core competencies of Information Science and in the role of libraries.

“Information mediation has evolved into civic mediation, focused on deconstructing myths and promoting informed debate.”

(Participating library)

2.4. Local, national and European impact

The actions developed within the scope of CLAD always start from concrete local challenges. However, they are embedded in a logic of scale, recognizing that many local problems reflect national, European and global dynamics.

By positioning libraries as active centers of democratic participation, the CLAD model contributes to:

- the strengthening of active citizenship at local level;
- the creation of bridges between citizens and decision-makers;
- the construction of a more informed and participatory European public sphere.

“The partnerships created generated synergies with the potential for continuity and replication at other scales.”

(Participating library)



Part II

—

The CLAD

Intervention Model

3. The CLAD Training Guide as a methodological model

3.1. What is the CLAD Training Guide

The **CLAD Training Guide**, developed within the scope of the Citizens and Libraries Against Disinformation Project, is the methodological model that guides all the training, civic involvement and democratic participation actions foreseen in the project. This framework is based on the idea that libraries and community centres can – and should – **serve as** structured spaces for citizen participation, capable of responding to complex challenges **posed by** disinformation and the potential weakening of democratic processes.

“The Project worked as a structuring reference for the design, implementation and evaluation of the actions.”

(Participating library)

The CLAD Training Guide is not a closed curriculum or a rigid set of activities. On the contrary, it is a **guiding model**, sufficiently structured to ensure coherence and quality, but flexible enough to allow adaptation to different local, institutional and cultural realities.

3.2. Guiding Principles of the Training Guide

At the heart of the CLAD Training Guide are the Citizens’ Forums, understood as easily accessible participatory events, organized in libraries or community spaces, which promote:

- informed dialogue between citizens;
- the development of information literacy skills;
- critical reflection on topics relevant to the community;
- the connection between citizens, experts and policy makers.

“The forums promoted active participation, intergenerational dialogue and community ownership of the themes.”

(Participating library)

Citizens’ Forums are distinguished from traditional information events by privileging participatory and collaborative methodologies, where knowledge is co-constructed and where local experiences and knowledge are valued.

3.3. Guiding principles of the Guidance Guide

The CLAD Training Guide is based on a set of transversal principles that should guide all the actions developed:

- **Citizen-centricity:** actions are based on the real needs, interests and concerns of local communities.
- **Combating disinformation through education:** a formative, critical and ethical approach is privileged, to the detriment of merely reactive, punitive or polarizing strategies.
- **Inclusion and accessibility:** Events should be designed to include diverse audiences, in particular non-digital native citizens.
- **Institutional neutrality and information accuracy:** libraries maintain their position as trusted institutions, promoting evidence-based information.
- **Connection to decision-making:** Whenever possible, Citizens' Forums should build bridges with policy-makers and policy-making processes.

"The combination of formal and informal methodologies proved particularly effective."

(Participating library)

3.4. Linking training, action and sustainability

The CLAD model articulates three fundamental dimensions:

1. **Training of professionals** — training of librarians and community mediators;
2. **Local action** – implementation of Citizens' Forums and participatory activities;
3. **Sustainability and replication** – Creating reusable templates beyond the duration of the project.

This articulation ensures that the impact of the project is not limited to specific activities, but contributes to a more lasting transformation of professional and institutional practices.

4. The four steps for the implementation of CLAD actions

The CLAD Training Guide is structured in a model of **four interdependent stages**, which guide the process from the preparation of professionals to the effective involvement of the community. These steps should be understood as a cycle, and not as a rigid linear sequence.

4.1. Step 1 – Development of professional skills

The first step is to strengthen the skills of the professionals involved, in particular librarians and community mediators. This training is an essential condition for the success of CLAD actions.

Skills to be developed include:

- understanding of the concepts of disinformation, misinformation and fake news;
- knowledge of the main mechanisms of information manipulation;
- information and media literacy;
- facilitation, moderation and communication skills;
- basic notions of local, national and European democratic processes.

Training should focus on design thinking and participatory approaches, based on practical examples and real-world situations, allowing professionals to gain confidence to act as civic mediators.

"The project contributed significantly to the reinforcement of the technical skills of the professionals."

(Participating library)

4.2. Step 2 – Institutional involvement of libraries and community centers

In addition to individual training, it is essential to ensure the institutional commitment of the libraries and community centers involved. This step involves:

- alignment between the project's objectives and the institution's mission;
- clear definition of responsibilities;
- selection of topics relevant to the local community;
- strategic planning of activities over time.

"The support of the municipalities was decisive at the institutional, logistical and strategic level."

(Participating library)

At this stage, it is recommended that each library prepare a clear presentation of its involvement in the project, highlighting the chosen themes, the target audiences and the strategies envisaged. It is important to ensure that bibliographic collections are strengthened and updated, in particular with regard to the topics under consideration and disinformation.

4.3. Step 3 – Thematic context and framing practices

Framing is a critical step, especially when dealing with sensitive subjects or subjects subject to strong polarization. Proper framing should:

- linking local challenges to wider contexts (national and European);
- avoid simplistic or Manichean discourses;
- promote critical thinking and respectful dialogue;
- be based on accurate and plural information.

Libraries should take an active role in creating the conditions for informed debate, without imposing positions, but ensuring the quality and diversity of sources. They should promote diversity of opinions and plurality of participants involved in the discussion.

"The adaptation of the themes to local realities was fundamental for the public's adherence."

(Participating library)

4.4. Step 4 – Community inclusion and broad engagement

The last step focuses on effective community engagement. The goal is to go beyond the usual audiences of libraries, reaching citizens who do not normally participate in cultural or civic initiatives.

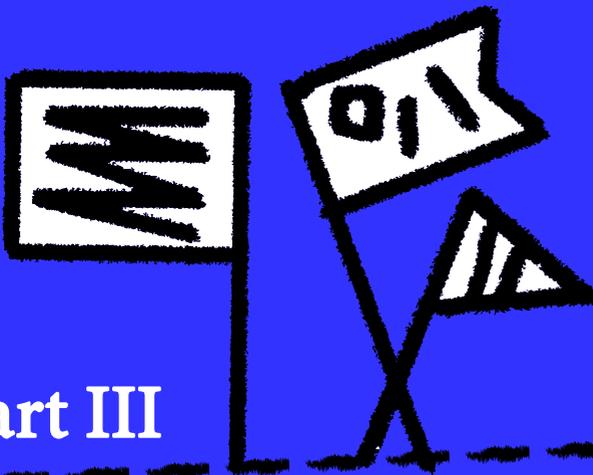
Some strategies include:

- partnerships with local associations;
- collaboration with schools, health centers and social organizations;
- use of language that is accessible, inclusive and in informal formats;
- offer free and easily accessible events.

The success of CLAD actions depends mostly on the ability to create a welcoming environment, where citizens feel valued and motivated to participate.

“Direct contact with social and community institutions proved essential to reach vulnerable audiences.”

(Participating library)



Part III

Designing Training and Engagement

5. How to design a CLAD action

The design of actions under the CLAD Project should be based on a structured approach, but flexible enough to respond to the specificities of each community. This chapter presents the fundamental steps for the design of actions consistent with the CLAD Training Guide, from the initial diagnosis to operational planning.

“The personalization of content to the needs of audiences was decisive for engagement.”

(Participating library)

5.1. Diagnosis of local needs

The starting point for any CLAD action is in-depth knowledge of the local context. The diagnosis of needs allows us to identify:

- priority themes for the community;
- relevant target audiences;
- existing levels of information literacy;
- social, cultural and institutional dynamics of the territory.

This diagnosis can be carried out through simple methods, such as informal conversations with library users, meetings with local partners, analysis of available statistical data or small exploratory consultations.

“Listening to the community made it possible to identify real gaps in access to reliable information.”

(Participating library)

5.2. Definition of learning and impact objectives

Based on the diagnosis, clear objectives must be defined, realistic and aligned with the principles underlying here. These objectives may include:

- development of skills in identifying disinformation;
- increased citizens' confidence in the use of information;
- promotion of dialogue and civic participation;
- strengthening the connection between citizens and decision-makers.

Whenever possible, it is recommended to formulate learning and social impact objectives, distinguishing between what participants are expected to learn and what is expected to change in the community.

"The strengthening of critical thinking was a transversal objective to all actions."

(Participating library)

5.3. Selection of formats and methodologies

The choice of the format of the action must consider:

- the defined objectives;
- profile of two participants;
- the available resources;
- the expected duration.

Within the scope of CLAD, participatory and collaborative formats are privileged, such as citizens' forums, workshops, guided debates or collaborative laboratories. These formats favor active learning and the involvement of participants.

"Practical sessions, small group work and everyday examples proved particularly effective."

(Participating library)

5.4. Time, logistical and resource planning

Successful action requires careful planning, including:

- definition of dates and duration;
- identification of suitable spaces;
- preparation of support materials;
- human and financial resources management;
- definition of responsibilities.

This planning must be documented, in a simple and clear way, facilitating the future replication of the action.

6. Recommended participatory methodologies

Participatory methodologies are a central element of CLAD actions. They allow citizens to actively engage, value their knowledge and experiences, and promote the co-construction of solutions to collective challenges. This chapter presents some of the methodologies best suited to the context of libraries and Citizens' Forums.

“Participatory methodologies increased adherence and appropriation of content by participants.”

(Participating library)

6.1. Focus groups

Focus groups are guided discussions, held with small groups of participants, with the aim of exploring perceptions, experiences and opinions on a given topic.

When to use:

- in the diagnostic phase;
- to deepen specific topics;
- to collect qualitative input.

Precautions to be taken:

- ensure diversity of participants;
- ensure a safe and respectful environment;
- avoid the imposition of opinions by the moderator.

6.2. World Cafés

The world café is a structured dialogue methodology, based on small group conversations that rotate between thematic tables.

When to use:

- to promote dialogue between different perspectives;
- in medium-sized groups;
- to generate ideas and proposals.

Vantagens:

- informal atmosphere;
- high participation;
- Ease of adaptation to different themes.

6.3. Living labs

Living labs are spaces for collaborative experimentation, where citizens, professionals and experts work together to develop solutions..

When to use:

- for complex challenges;
- when you want to co-create prototypes or recommendations;
- in medium or long-term processes.

6.4. Debates, workshops and public sessions

Debates and workshops remain relevant formats, as long as they are designed in a participatory way.

It is recommended:

- limit prolonged lectures;
- integrate moments of discussion in small groups;
- use visual materials and concrete examples.

6.5. Forums with policymakers

The participation of policymakers in the Citizens' Forums allows for a direct link with decision-making processes.

For these forums, it is important to:

- clearly define the objectives of the meeting;
- prepare the participants;
- ensure a balance between dialogue and accountability.

These methodologies should be chosen and combined according to the local context, always respecting the principles of this CLAD Training Guide.

7. CLAD Themes: how to work with sensitive content

The actions developed within the scope of the CLAD Project focus on socially relevant topics that are often the target of disinformation, polarizing discourses or manipulated narratives. Working with this content in libraries and community spaces requires a careful, ethically grounded and methodologically structured pedagogical approach.

This chapter presents general guidelines for addressing sensitive content and then specific lines of work for each of CLAD's priority themes. These themes, already worked on throughout the project, have proven to be suitable for the objectives, discussion and work with disinformation, precisely because this phenomenon requires a practical and contextual approach. This means that work with disinformation should always be supported by a theme, disciplinary area or reason for public debate, being put into perspective with examples and practical cases.

7.1. General principles for addressing sensitive topics

Regardless of the topic addressed, CLAD actions must respect a set of cross-cutting principles:

- **Informative accuracy:** use of reliable, plural and evidence-based sources;
- **Institutional neutrality:** the library does not promote political or ideological agendas, but it does guarantee conditions for informed debate;
- **Critical thinking:** encouragement of analysis, comparison, and questioning of narratives;
- **Respectful dialogue:** creating safe environments for the expression of different perspectives;
- **Contextualization:** link between local experiences and national and European frameworks.

The mediation carried out by professionals should favor open questions, active listening and facilitation of dialogue, avoiding normative or confrontational positions. It is important to remember that sensitive topics can potentiate extreme positions, and trigger intense reactions, so there must be preparation to deal appropriately with more emotional situations, in a rational and evidence-based way, always with a pedagogical and enlightening purpose.

7.2. Environment and climate emergency

Challenges and disinformation narratives

Climate emergency is one of the topics most targeted by disinformation campaigns, including climate change denial, the distortion of scientific data or the political instrumentalization of environmental issues.

Lines of work in a CLAD context

Libraries can play a central role by:

- promote basic scientific literacy;
- explain the difference between scientific consensus and opinion,
- relate global impacts with local consequences;
- stimulate reflection on individual and collective actions.

Using visual data, infographics and local examples makes it easier for participants to understand and engage. Topics related to natural resources can be explored, such as water, recycling and garbage, preservation and conservation of species, global warming, among others.

“The community framework of issues such as the environment and housing proved to be particularly mobilizing.”

(Participating library)

7.3. Minorities, cultural diversity and inclusion

Challenges and disinformation narratives

Issues related to cultural, ethnic, religious and identity minorities are often the target of disinformation, stereotypes and hate speech. Simplifying or manipulated narratives can reinforce prejudices, fuel conflicts, and weaken social cohesion.

Lines of work in a CLAD context

CLAD actions in this area should:

- promote factual knowledge about cultural diversity and human rights;
- deconstruct stereotypes and generalizations;
- value local stories and experiences;
- Reinforce mutual respect and empathy.

Methodologies such as moderate debates, sessions with community guests, or thematic exhibitions can be particularly effective. Topics such as immigrant communities, including from former colonies, LGBTQIA+ identities, refugees or asylum seekers, Roma communities, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism or other prejudices based on religion, linguistic minorities, or indigenous people are key topics that can be addressed, according to the needs of each community.

“The actions promoted respect for difference and the representation of groups that are usually less heard.”

(Participating library)

7.4. European identities and citizenship

Challenges and disinformation narratives

The European Union and the European project are often the target of disinformation, including narratives that distort institutional competences or promote widespread mistrust.

Lines of work in a CLAD context

In this area, libraries can:

- clarify the functioning of the European institutions;
- to promote understanding of the rights and duties of European citizenship;
- to stimulate the debate on identity, belonging and diversity;
- strengthen the role of citizens in democratic processes.

Pedagogical activities, informative quizzes, and debates with experts can be effective. Historical and geographical aspects in the construction of European identity, limits and approximations represented by borders, among other topics can be explored and deepened.

7.5. Health and well-being

Challenges and disinformation narratives

Health misinformation has direct impacts on the lives of citizens, affecting individual and collective decisions. It includes false information about treatments, vaccines, mental health, or lifestyles.

Lines of work in a CLAD context

CLAD actions must:

- promote health literacy;
- strengthening trust in institutional and scientific sources;
- help citizens assess the credibility of information;
- Addressing mental health responsibly and inclusively.

Partnerships with health professionals and local institutions are highly recommended. In this theme, aspects related to public health, disease prevention, vaccination, breastfeeding and breastfeeding, ageism and other prejudices related to the physical characteristics or mental situations of individuals can be explored.

**“Collaboration with health professionals
has strengthened the credibility and impact
of the initiatives.”**

(Participating library)

7.6. Housing and urban culture

Challenges and disinformation narratives

Housing shortages and urban transformations are often accompanied by simplistic narratives that blame specific groups or hide structural factors. The first strategy to face this problem is to debate it in community, according to the principles of openness and willingness to welcome the various ideas and proposals around the theme.

Lines of work in a CLAD context

CLAD actions must:

- contextualize the problem in economic, social and demographic terms;
- to promote the understanding of existing public policies;
- giving voice to citizens' experiences;
- avoid blaming or excluding speeches.

Participatory workshops and citizens' forums are suitable formats for this theme. The debates can delve into aspects such as inequalities in the right to housing, real estate pressure, community life, urban culture, and the territories of belonging, memory and freedom as collective spaces.

7.7. Articulation between themes, disinformation and citizen participation

Regardless of the specific topic, all CLAD actions must explicitly integrate:

- the identification of disinformation narratives;
- strategies for their critical analysis;
- opportunities for citizen participation and dialogue with decision-makers.

In this way, the themes work as gateways to the development of information literacy skills and to the strengthening of active citizenship. Disinformation should be understood not as an isolated phenomenon, but as a cross-cutting process that crosses areas such as the environment, health, science, politics and human rights, among others.

The analysis of these themes favors the development of a critical reading of information, showing how misleading narratives exploit emotions, previous beliefs and information literacy gaps to influence individual and collective behaviors.

In this context, the training should promote strategies that empower participants to identify, analyze and question misinformative content, while underlining the importance of informed, responsible and ethical citizen participation. By

“The approach to sensitive issues reinforced informed and conscious civic participation.”

(DGLAB)

recognizing the active role of citizens in the production, sharing, and validation of information, the idea that combating disinformation is an individual and collective exercise is reinforced, fundamental for strengthening democracy, social trust, and conscious decision-making in public and community contexts.

8. Communication, dissemination and involvement

Communication is a strategic element for the success of CLAD actions. It’s not just about publicizing events, but about **actively engaging the community**, building trust, and ensuring that initiatives reach diverse audiences, including those who don’t usually attend libraries or civic activities.

This chapter provides guidance for designing communication strategies that are consistent with the values of the CLAD Project and adapted to local contexts.

“Digital tools were essential to give visibility to the project and bring new audiences closer.”

(Participating library)

8.1. Objectives of communication in the CLAD context

The communication strategies associated with CLAD actions should:

- clearly inform about the objectives and formats of the initiatives;
- reduce barriers to participation;
- promote the perception of libraries as open and inclusive spaces;
- stimulate the interest and curiosity of citizens;
- to strengthen trust in information and in the institutions involved.

Communication should be understood as a continuous process, which begins before the action and continues after its realization.

8.2. Identification of target audiences

Effective communication presupposes the clear identification of the audiences you want to reach. In CLAD context, these may include:

- regular library users;
- non-digital native adult citizens;
- underrepresented or marginalized groups;
- local associations and civil society organizations;
- political decision-makers and institutional representatives.

Whenever possible, it is recommended to adapt messages and communication channels to each specific audience.

8.3. Language and tone of communication

The language used in the communication of CLAD actions should be:

- clear and accessible;
- inclusive and non-technical;
- respectful and non-polarizing;
- consistent with the principles of institutional neutrality.

The use of alarmist or excessively specialized language should be avoided, favoring messages that invite dialogue and participation.

8.4. Communication channels and tools

Libraries and community centres have several channels that can be mobilised in a complementary way:

- **Face-to-face communication:** posters, leaflets, direct contact with users;
- **Digital channels:** institutional websites, newsletters, social networks;
- **Local partnerships:** dissemination through associations, schools, health centres;
- **Local media:** regional newspapers, radios and televisions.

The choice of channels should consider the information habits of the local community, ensuring that communication is not limited to digital media.

8.5. Strategies to reach audiences beyond the “usual” ones

One of CLAD’s central challenges is to reach citizens who rarely participate in cultural or civic initiatives. Some strategies include:

- collaboration with community mediators;
- presence at local events;
- carrying out activities outside the physical space of the library;
- flexible schedules and informal formats;
- provision of complementary services (e.g. short sessions, intergenerational activities).

These approaches contribute to strengthening the inclusive dimension of actions.

8.6. Ethical and responsible communication

In the context of countering disinformation, the communication of CLAD actions itself should be exemplary. This involves:

- rigorous verification of the information disclosed;
- respect for the privacy of participants;
- responsible use of images and testimonials;
- transparency regarding the objectives and partnerships involved.

Communication should reinforce the values of trust, accountability and integrity that characterize libraries.

8.7. Post-event communication and continuity

After carrying out the actions, it is important to maintain communication with the participants and the community, through:

- sharing of results and learning;
- dissemination of materials produced;
- invitation for future initiatives;
- strengthening of the networks created.

This continuity contributes to the sustainability of CLAD actions and to the consolidation of libraries as permanent spaces for citizen participation.

9. Evaluation, documentation and impact

Systematic evaluation and documentation of CLAD actions are essential components to ensure the quality, transparency and sustainability of the project. In addition to responding to institutional and funding requirements, these processes allow for critical reflection on the practices developed and demonstrate the impact generated in communities.

This chapter presents guidelines for the evaluation of CLAD actions, focusing on realistic, proportional and appropriate approaches to the context of libraries and community spaces.

“Documenting actions are critical for continuous improvement and future replication.”

(Participating library)

9.1. Purposes of the evaluation

Assessment in the CLAD context should serve multiple purposes:

- continuously improve the practices developed;
- understand the effects of actions on participants;
- document learning and results;
- demonstrate social and civic impact;
- support future decision-making.

It is important to underline that evaluation should not be understood as a bureaucratic exercise, but as an organizational learning tool.

9.2. Types of evaluation

It is recommended to combine different types of assessment:

- **Process evaluation:** analyzes how actions were planned and implemented;
- **Evaluation of results:** identifies immediate changes in participants (knowledge, attitudes, skills);
- **Impact assessment:** observes broader effects on the community, albeit in an exploratory way.

Not all actions require the same level of evaluative depth; The approach should be adjusted to the scale and objectives of the initiative.

9.3. Qualitative and quantitative indicators

Setting clear indicators makes it easier to collect and analyze data. In the CLAD context, the following may be used, among others:

Quantitative indicators:

- number of participants;
- diversity of the audiences involved;
- number of actions performed;
- frequency of participation.

Qualitative indicators:

- participants' perceptions;
- degree of involvement and participation;
- quality of the dialogue generated;
- Evidence of critical thinking.

The collection of qualitative data can be done through brief questionnaires, informal conversations, participant observation or reflective records of the mediators.

9.4. Documentation of actions

Proper documentation of CLAD actions is critical to project memory and replication. It is recommended to register:

- action plans;
- attendance lists;
- photographs and visual materials;
- summaries of the discussions;
- materials produced by the participants.

Wherever possible, these registers should be organised in a systematic and accessible manner.

9.5. Ethics, privacy and data protection

Evaluation and documentation must respect fundamental ethical principles, including:

- informed consent of two participants;
- protection of personal data;
- anonymization of sensitive testimonies;
- Responsible use of images.

Libraries, as trusted institutions, must ensure high ethical standards at all stages of the process.

9.6. Use of results

The results of the assessment should be used to:

- adjust and improve future actions;
- inform decision-makers and partners;
- to feed strategic planning processes;
- communicate impact to the community.

Sharing results helps to enhance the transparency and credibility of CLAD initiatives.

10. Sustainability and replication

Sustainability is a structuring principle of the CLAD Project. The actions developed should not be seen as isolated initiatives, but as part of a broader process of transformation of libraries and community spaces as agents of democratic participation.

This chapter provides guidance to ensure the continuity and replication of CLAD actions beyond the formal duration of the project.

10.1. Organisational sustainability

Organizational sustainability implies the integration of CLAD practices into the mission and routines of the institutions involved. This may include:

- incorporation of CLAD activities into the regular schedule;
- continuous training of professionals;
- creation of internal civic mediation teams;
- alignment with local strategies and policies.

10.2. Sustainability of professional skills

Investment in the training of librarians and community mediators must be translated into long-term skills. To this end, it is recommended:

- promotion of communities of practice;
- sharing of experiences between institutions;
- regular updating of knowledge on disinformation and civic participation;
- Access to up-to-date resources and toolkits.

10.3. Replication and adaptation to new contexts

The CLAD model was conceived as a **structured and flexible framework**. Replicating actions requires:

- analysis of the new context;
- adaptation of themes and methodologies;
- respect for the fundamental principles of the Guide;
- Flexibility in implementation.

This adaptability ensures relevance in the face of emerging challenges, but the model should serve as a basis for the planning, implementation and evaluation of actions, allowing adjustments according to the context, audiences and specific objectives.

10.4. Connection with decision-makers and public policies

The sustainability of CLAD actions is enhanced when there is an effective link to decision-making processes. Libraries can play a bridge role between citizens and decision-makers, contributing to:

- participatory policy-making processes;
- local development strategies;
- strengthening participatory democracy.

10.5. Dissemination and valorization of results

The dissemination of the results of CLAD actions contributes to their appreciation and expansion. Various means can be used:

- reports and publications;
- sharing events;
- national and European professional networks;
- institutional platforms.

By promoting the dissemination and adaptation of practices, CLAD contributes to the strengthening of a European culture of informed participation and active citizenship.

11. Conclusions and Recommendations

The challenges analyzed throughout this guide highlight the growing complexity of contemporary professional contexts, but also the significant opportunities for qualified, critical and transformative intervention. More than closed answers, it is essential to assume a reflective, informed and ethical posture, capable of articulating technical knowledge, human skills and social responsibility. It is therefore recommended that continuous investment in lifelong learning, the sharing of good practices and collaborative work among peers are fundamental strategies to strengthen professional identity and the quality of intervention.

It is equally crucial that professionals recognize themselves as active agents of change, with the ability to question routines, adapt methodologies and contribute to innovation in their contexts of activity. In a scenario marked by rapid transformations, openness to dialogue, scientific updating and conscious experimentation should not be seen as a risk, but as a path to professional growth and appreciation. Thus, this guide aims to be not only a support tool, but an invitation to informed action, commitment to excellence and the collective construction of more sustainable, inclusive and meaningful practices.

References for deepening

Barros, F., Kish, I., Moltmann, L. and Silvestre, S., Quaglia, A. and Martinho Guimaraes Pires Pereira, A. (2023) (Eds.) Rough Guide to Citizen Engagement in Public Libraries Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. ISBN 978-92-76-60599-7, doi:10.2760/957683, JRC132175

<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC132175>

Cunliffe-Jones, P. (2025). Fake News-What's the Harm? Four Ideas for Fact-Checkers, Policymakers and Platforms on Countering the Consequences of False Information and Defending Free Speech. University of Westminster.

<https://www.fulcrum.org/concern/monographs/3197xq21t?locale=en>

European Commission (2018.05.12). Action Plan against Disinformation. Joint communication to the European Parliament, The European Council, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the Regions. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/action_plan_against_disinformation.pdf and Factsheet:

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/disinformation_factsheet_march_2019_0.pdf

European Commission (2022). 2022 Strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation.

<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/2022-strengthened-code-practice-disinformation>

European Commission (2022). EU Citizenship Report 2020: Empowering citizens and protecting their rights.

<https://op.europa.eu/pt/publication-detail/-/publication/d15166bf-abe7-11eb-927e-01aa75ed71a1>

Future of Privacy Forum (2025). A School Administrator's Guide to Addressing Deepfakes: Problem of Practice Toolkit. Issue Brief: Education.

<https://share.google/Nd97Uy4DyQgiSProP>

Giraldo Gutiérrez, F. L., De Jesús Toro Ríos, H., Perlaza Lopera, C., & Mejía Upegui, J. E. (2023). Citizen laboratories as scenarios of cultural and political democratization. *Social Sciences*, 12(10), 548.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12100548>

Potts, T. (2026). The Misinformation Challenge: Rebuilding Trust in a Post-Truth World. Evidence for Democracy (E4D).

<https://evidencefordemocracy.ca/research/the-misinformation-challenge-rebuilding-trust-in-a-post-truth-world/>

Sanches, T. (2024). Towards a Library Citizen Laboratory: How can Libraries and Community Centres become spaces of democratic participation? Citizen Forum Framework. BAD.

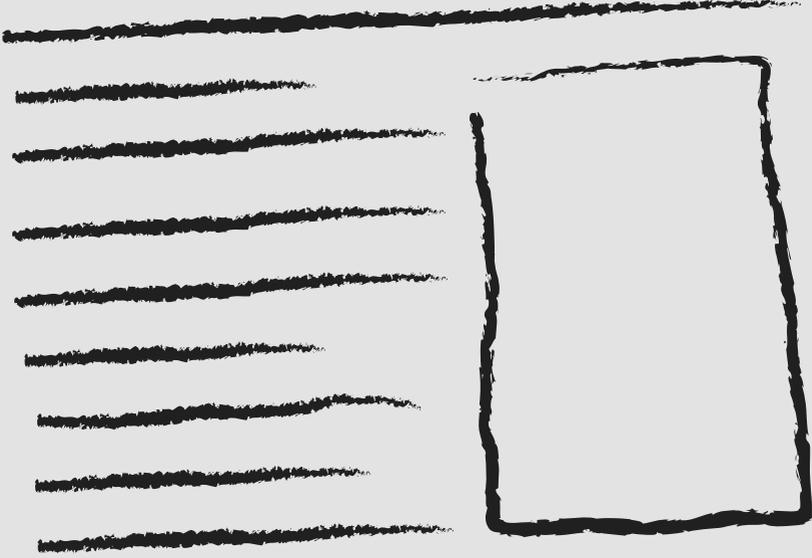
<https://publicacoes.bad.pt/ebooks/index.php/bad/catalog/book/35>

Veeckman, C., & Van Der Graaf, S. (2015). The city as living laboratory: Empowering citizens with the citadel toolkit. Technology Innovation Management Review, 5(3), 6–17.

<http://timreview.ca/article/877>

Additional material available in Portuguese:

<https://bad.pt/formacao/projetos/clad-citizens-and-libraries-against-disinformation/>



Annexes

Annex A – CLAD operational checklists

A1. General checklist for planning a CLAD action

Before the action:

- Identify the priority theme for the community
- Perform a preliminary needs diagnosis
- Define learning and impact objectives
- Select participatory methodology(s)
- Identify audiences
- Ensuring institutional commitment
- Set dates, duration, and location
- Prepare informational and pedagogical materials
- Plan communication and dissemination
- Ensure principles of inclusion and accessibility

During the action:

- Ensure a safe and respectful environment
- Facilitate dialogue and active participation
- Use reliable sources of information
- Register key contributions and discussions
- Collect data for evaluation

After the action:

- Document results
- Analyze collected data
- Reflect on strengths and areas for improvement
- Communicating results to the community
- Identify possibilities for continuity

A2. CLAD Framework step-by-step checklist

Step 1 – Development of professional skills

- Professionals with training in information literacy
- Basic knowledge about misinformation
- Facilitation and mediation skills

Step 2 – Institutional involvement

- Alignment with the library's mission
- Clear definition of responsibilities
- Choice of relevant topics

Step 3 – Thematic framework

- Appropriate and inclusive framework
- Plural and rigorous sources
- Connection to local and European contexts

Step 4 - Community Inclusion

- Strategies to reach diverse audiences
- Active local partnerships
- Guaranteed accessibility

Annex B – Model planning of a CLAD action

Title of the action:

CLAD Theme:

Local context / summary diagnosis:

Learning Objectives:

Impact objectives:

Target audiences:

Methodology(s):

Dates and duration:

Location:

Human resources involved:

Materials needed:

Communication strategy:

Evaluation indicators:

Possibilities for continuity:

Annex C – Example of CLAD Action Timeline

Week 1-2: diagnosis and planning

Week 3: preparation of materials and communication

Week 4: Active Outreach

Week 5: Carrying out the action

Week 6: Assessment and documentation

This timeline should be adapted to the scale and complexity of each action.

Annex D – Basic guide for a Citizen Forum

1. Library welcome and presentation (10 min)
2. Introduction to the topic and information background (15 min)
3. Identifying disinformation narratives (20 min)
4. Small group work / participatory methodology (30–45 min)
5. Plenary sharing and synthesis (20 min)
6. Connecting to civic participation and decision-makers (15 min)
7. Closing and brief evaluation (10 min)

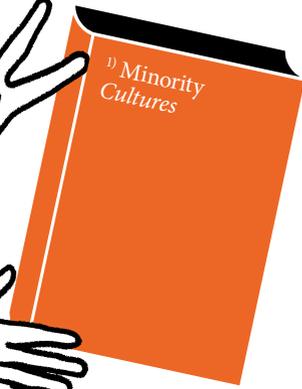
Annex E – Simple valuation template

Quantitative evaluation:

- Number of participants
- Profile of two participants

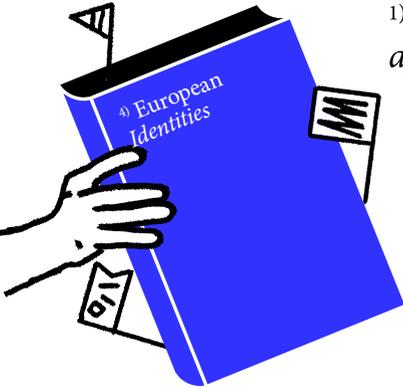
Qualitative evaluation (sample questions):

- What did you learn in this action?
- What aspects did you consider most relevant?
- Do you feel more confident identifying misinformation?
- Would you like to participate in similar initiatives?



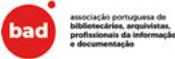
CLAD

1) Citizens and Libraries
against Disinformation



Funded by
the European Union

Main partners



Associated partners

