

fonteverificata.it

A fake fact-checking site run by an Italian blogger and YouTuber that publishes false claims and debunked conspiracy theories. The site claims to be satire.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.

Ownership and Financing

FonteVerificata.it does not disclose its ownership. The domain was registered in March 2020 by Gian Marco Saolini, who is identified as the “mega galactic editor-in-chief” (“Il Mega Direttore Galattico”) at the bottom of every page. Saolini told NewsGuard he owns and operates the site.

Saolini has been repeatedly found by fact-checkers to have published misinformation on YouTube and on his blog, Il Corriere del Corsaro. On his Facebook page, Saolini describes himself as an “Actor, singer, director, chief ultras, special correspondent and presenter. I dream of a world free of censorship.” (“Attore, cantante, regista, capo ultras, inviato speciale e presentatore. Sogno un mondo libero dalla censura”).

The site runs advertising.

Score: 25/100

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- ✓ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- ✗ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- ✗ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- ✓ Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- ✓ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

[More information.](#)

Content

The site's tagline is "Always check the information you share" ("Verifica sempre le informazioni che condividi"). The site's name combines "fonte" (Italian for "source") and "verificata" ("verified.") FonteVerificata.it presents itself as a fact-checking site, marking some content either with a thumbs-up symbol, a green label, and the phrase "true news" ("notizia vera") or with a red label and the word "bufala", an Italian slang term for false news.

Unlike real fact-checking sites, FonteVerificata.it essentially "fact-checks" its own claims, and frequently marks false articles as true and true articles as false. At the same time, the site claims that it is satirical.

At the bottom of every page, the site states: "Wake up, open your eyes, check the information and do not take anything, do not wait passively for someone to tell you what is true and what is false." ("Svegliati, apri gli occhi, verifica le informazioni e non abboccare ad ogni cosa, non aspettare passivamente che qualcuno ti dica cosa è vero e cosa è falso").

FonteVerificata.it also states at the bottom of every page: "Please, if you take the news on this site for real, at least have the intellectual honesty to give up the right to vote." This is the only indication of the site that it is supposedly satirical.

FonteVerificata.it covers topics including national and international politics, health, and the economy. Content is organized in sections including Politics (Politica), Fake news (Bufale), Breaking News (Ultima Ora), and Sport.

Typical headlines on the site have included: "Boris Johnson positive for Virus' but it is a hoax" ("Boris Johnson positivo al Virus' ma è una bufala"); "Farmer sneezes on the ground: after 15 days the frightening discovery" ("Contadino starnutisce per terra: dopo 15 giorni la spaventosa scoperta"); and "Official: Our Lady really appeared during the Pope's blessing" ("Ufficiale: la Madonna è realmente apparsa durante la benedizione del Papa"). None of these stories are true.

Credibility

The site has repeatedly published unsubstantiated and misleading claims, including false information about the 2020 coronavirus pandemic.

For example, a March 2020 article titled "Virus engineered in laboratory' yes, the news is true and confirmed" ("Virus creato in laboratorio' sì, la notizia è vera e confermata") stated that "through changes to the backbone of the genetic RNA of mice and bats, an

upgrade of the sars has been created” in China (“attraverso delle modifiche alla spina dorsale dell’RNA genetico di topi e pipistrelli, si sarebbe arrivati alla realizzazione di un upgrade del virus della sars”).

The claim that the coronavirus was engineered in a lab has been challenged by biologists, fact-checkers, and major health organizations. A March 2020 study published in the journal Nature Medicine concluded that the virus “is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.” An earlier study, published in February 2020 in the journal Nature, found that the COVID-19 virus is “96 percent identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus.”

Another article published in April 2020 under the headline “Merkel: ‘As soon as the last German is healed we will start helping Italy’” fabricated a quote from German Chancellor Angela Merkel, claiming that she said that “Europe is strong and has funds to help everyone, something will also come to Italy but only when the last German is healed” (“L’Europa è forte e ha fondi per aiutare tutti, arriverà qualcosa anche all’Italia ma solamente quando l’ultimo tedesco sarà guarito”). There is no evidence that Merkel ever made such a statement.

Another article published in March 2020, headlined “Official: China lied about the dead, there are over 15 million” (“Ufficiale: la Cina ha mentito sui morti, sono oltre 15 milioni”), said that “A man from the Chinese state registry office, Leslie Chao, published the real numbers of deaths and there are over 15 million.” (“Un uomo dell’ufficio anagrafe dello Stato cinese, Leslie Chao, ha diffuso il vero numero di morti e sono oltre 15 milioni. Adesso le autorità cinesi hanno arrestato l’uomo per divulgazione di informazioni non autorizzate e rischia fino a 25 anni di carcere”).

There is no evidence to support FonteVerificata.it’s claim about the number of coronavirus deaths in China. In early April 2020, the official death count in China was approximately 3,300. Many experts have said that they believe that China has understated the death toll, but not by that magnitude. For example, the U.S. state-founded Radio Free Asia has estimated that the number of COVID-19 deaths in China was approximately 40,000 people.

An April 2020 article titled “The photo that shook Germany: Angela Merkel is the daughter of the Führer” (“La foto che ha scosso la Germania: Angela Merkel è la figlia del Führer”), falsely claimed that Merkel is Adolf

Hitler's daughter. Another March 2020 story, titled "Putin asked Germany for 600 billion (euro)" ("Putin ha chiesto 600 miliardi alla Germania") made the fabricated claim that Russian President Vladimir Putin is seeking 600 billion euro from Germany as compensation for German aggression during World War II.

Because FonteVerificata.it frequently publishes inaccurate and unsubstantiated claims, NewsGuard has determined that the site has repeatedly published false content, does not gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines. In addition, because the site does not present itself as satire in a way that is clear to readers, and instead claims to be a fact-checking site, NewsGuard has determined not to treat it as an unrated satire site.

FonteVerificata.it does not typically publish opinion content.

FonteVerificata.it does not articulate a corrections policy, and NewsGuard did not find corrections on the site.

In an April 2020 phone interview with NewsGuard, Saolini said the purpose of the site is to challenge mainstream fact-checkers and the Italian government's task force that fights disinformation. "The website is a way to build herd immunity. I want to fill the internet with fake content to create antibodies," he said. "If I had bad purposes," he added, "I could make it really bad. I know how to play with public opinion."

Asked why the site is not clear that it is meant to be satirical, he said that "for such a project, that would be amiss."

Transparency

The site does not disclose its ownership or provide any information about its content creators. Articles generally do not name the writer.

At the bottom of every page, the site identifies Saolini as the "mega galactic editor-in-chief" ("Il Mega Direttore Galattico"), along with an email address to contact the newsroom.

The site distinguishes advertising from editorial content.

In an April 2020 phone interview with NewsGuard, Saolini said that he would add an ownership disclosure to the site. "I'm not hiding," he said. ("Non mi nascondo.") He did not address the lack of disclosure regarding content creators.

History FonteVerificata.it was founded by Saolini in early 2020. He generated controversy by falsely claiming to be a doctor in a hospital hit hard by COVID-19 and publishing false information about the virus.

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Ownership and Financing <https://domainbigdata.com/fonteverificata.it>

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