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1. Introduction

Project description

The Gamedia project aims to provide tools for youth workers and increase their skills in training youth in media literacy and sensitize them to mis/disinformation and fake news. This will make youth conscious and active citizens, positively impacting the development of the communities.

The project will develop a card-based board game which will be the focus of media-literacy training workshops with youth. Youth workers will test and train using the project game, implement media literacy training, and conduct local pilot workshops with youth. They will also develop project videos focusing on the issue of mis/disinformation and fake news, the project game, and media literacy training to improve the quality and impact of the project.

The general OBJECTIVE of this project is to develop media literacy training tools for the youth. The main project result will be the project game. This game will be accompanied by a workshop guideline booklet and informative videos, which youth workers can use to instruct them on implementing media literacy training.

Partnership description

The partnership consists of 5 partners in the project: MIR Akademien AB (Sweden), CEIPES (Italy), Dideas (Spain), Unique Projects (Lithuania), and Scout Society Association (Romania).

MIR Akademien AB is a company that specializes in the field of social development and has a strong focus on promoting social inclusion and integration of disadvantaged communities and individuals into the labor market.

CEIPES – International Centre for the Promotion of Education and Development is an International non-profit association that empowers people, organizations, and communities to promote innovation, education, work, and experience through non-formal education.

Dideas is a social company dedicated to training and strategic consulting in the areas of business model definition, entrepreneurship, innovation, gender equality, prevention of LGTB-phobia, social responsibility, and sustainability.

Unique Projects are engaged in formal and non-formal learning development that covers emotional intelligence, motivation, business awareness, working in organizations, problem-solving, conflict management, and project coordination.

Scout Society Association is a non-governmental organization from Targu-Jiu, Romania. The organization was founded in 2011 with the primary goal of educating members of the local community through non-formal education to become active citizens in their local communities.

The purpose of the research

The purpose is to carry out a field study on mapping the most dangerous forms of misinformation/disinformation, methods of combating fake news and the methods associated with media literacy training conducted nationally in the field of formal and non-formal education. At a general social level, mis/disinformation harms the exchange of ideas, undermines trust in public institutions, silences marginal voices, and damages the integrity of democracy and public debate (Woolley & Howard, 2016). According to the Media Literacy Index for 2021 (by EuPI), European countries have different levels of media literacy. UNICEF (2021) report states that the rapid spread of mis/disinformation online has grown as a public issue of the 21st century that affects all those accessing online networks, above all youth that are active digital users, namely over 69% of those aged 15–24 use Internet to communicate, socialize, and consume and share information.

Methodology

This report analyses the disinformation trends across 5 European countries (Spain, Italy, Romania, Lithuania and Sweden) and how various actors responded to them. The target groups for this research were young people from 13 to 20 years old and youth workers.

This paper is based on state-of-the-art research addressing important challenges in fake news detection, combining both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis as follows:

1. Qualitative Research: Desk Research
 - Each country conducted desk research to analyze the latest papers found addressing mis/disinformation issues and media literacy approaches.
 - Indirect data sources were utilized to gather insights from the latest national publications.
2. Quantitative Research: Surveys
 - Surveys were designed and distributed to youth aged 13 to 20 and youth workers in each country.
 - The field research was carried out in November 2023
 - The youth questionnaire was administered to 15-20 young people
 - The youth workers questionnaire was administered to at least 5-10 trainers, educators, etc.
 - Direct data collection aimed to quantify the extent and impact of disinformation on the target groups.
3. Data Analysis:

- Conducted a cross-country comparative analysis to identify commonalities and differences in disinformation trends and responses.
- Integrated qualitative and quantitative findings to generate a nuanced understanding of the issue across diverse contexts.

Our work focuses primarily on understanding the “fake news” problem, its related challenges and root causes, and the difficulties young people and youth workers have when dealing with it.

The first chapter of this paper regarding misinformation and disinformation is organized as follows:

- We review existing definitions of misinformation and disinformation
- We present the most damaging forms of it
- We point out the most challenging factors
- We discuss the evidence-based policy recommendations from governments and NGOs aimed at strengthening the resilience of young people and youth workers against misinformation and disinformation, or the absence of them

The insights presented in mis/disinformation chapter of this research will be utilized in crafting the content for the project game and media literacy training. This stage is designed to ensure the content will be targeted correctly and also will maximise the impact of the training.

The second chapter of this paper regarding media literacy is organized as follows:

- We review existing definitions of media literacy
- We point out the most important steps of it
- We present the methods that are applied in each country and also the presence or absence of a legal framework if that is the case
- We present a best practice regarding media literacy actions in each country

The information presented in this chapter, along with the outcomes derived from the direct data collection through surveys, will contribute to the realization of the primary goal of this project, which is the development of the project game. The survey results will guide the creation of game content, ensuring that the game mechanics effectively raise awareness about key forms of mis/disinformation. Additionally, they will aid in facilitating the learning of strategies to read information correctly and critically discern between accurate and misleading information.

Sources of information: We broadly searched for journal and conference research articles, books, and magazines as a source of data to extract relevant articles. This extensive examination aims to filter the insights and perspectives from various sources, bringing clarity to the existing knowledge on the subject of fake news.

In summary, the use of a state-of-the-art methodology in this context is pivotal for capturing the complexity and dynamism of disinformation trends among young people and youth workers, contributing to informed policymaking and effective interventions in the fight against misinformation and disinformation.

2. Mis/Disinformation

Italy

First of all, regarding the terminology used, it is worth noting that there is not a single term in Italian that means "unintentional false information," such as misinformation; neither a term that exclusively means "intentional false information" as the English disinformation does - in opposition to misinformation. The term misinformation (misinformazione) is little used in Italian and is not yet officially recognized as a vocabulary entry. It is thought to have been used in Italian for the first time by Alberto Moravia. It still takes second place in front of the "dominance" of the term disinformation (disinformazione), which has been more frequently used as a generic term for both phenomena. Even though the literal translation of misinformation (misinformazione) is gaining relevance, and it is used much more frequently every day, we can still find different expressions used to talk about this phenomenon as "dishonest information" (cattiva informazione, informazione disonesta, etc.) (Lombardi, 2021).

This being clarified, attention may be shifted to Italians' information customs and opinions' regarding these phenomena. In July 2023, the Italian socio-economic research institute, CENSIS, and the communication agency, Ital Communications, published their third report on disinformation and fake news in Italy.

The report reflects the continuously growing relevance of online sources: 83.5% of Italians regularly use the web as a source of news and information, a figure already higher than the 74.1% of Italians that prefer traditional media (such as TV and radio...). The increasing influence of social media is also an undeniable fact: it is now constituted as the third main source of information, with 57,5% of people using social media to get informed.

Even though 64.3% of Italians declare to combine both online and traditional media, there's still 19.2% of people consulting online sources exclusively: they're mainly young people, and they are considered as the ones more exposed to disinformation and fake news phenomena.

In this respect, one of the main findings of the report is precisely the increasing public awareness regarding disinformation phenomena:

“Our annual reports demonstrate how awareness has grown over the years that misinformation exists and can have devastating effects on people's lives, that it is increasingly difficult to distinguish good information from bad information, and that it is necessary to approach the web with caution.”

In the face of the uncontrolled proliferation of news that people witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing fears have been translated into a request for regulatory interventions, awareness raising, and training of the population: not only 76.5% of Italians believe that fake news is increasingly sophisticated and difficult to discover, but they also seem not completely satisfied with their resources to face them; a 20.2% affirm to not count with the necessary skills to recognize them and 61.1% think they only partially have them. An important mark is that the share of those who think they do not have the necessary skills rises to 29.5% among those living in municipalities with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants, to 39.5% among those over sixty-four, to 51.5% among those with low qualifications study. These socioeconomic and demographic differences must be taken into account when analyzing and addressing the phenomena of disinformation and misinformation.

The final fundamental finding of this report is regarding the increasing demand from the population for more solid knowledge and skills on the use and potential of new technologies, for more stringent regulations, and for professionals who are committed to stemming misinformation. According to this report, 89.5% of Italians think that it is necessary to create a stable alliance between all stakeholders who have an interest in circulating reliable and quality information to spread greater awareness of the dangers of bad information and raise skills of the population.

In front of the growing dangers of misinformation and disinformation, some measures have been taken especially during the last decade by Italian institutions.

Regarding the internal legal system, Italy has been among the first states to take an interest in the growing phenomenon of disinformation and fake news (Magnani, 2019). This opened up a vast front for reflection on the risks associated with the presence of social media and viral diffusion of unverified or false content. This climate of attention has reverberated in the political world and has translated into diverse initiatives.

The law that immediately comes to light when talking about the phenomenon of "fake news" is Article 656 of the Italian penal code. The article, in fact, punishes the publication or dissemination of false, exaggerated, or biased news aimed at disturbing public order. Taking this law as a point of departure, there have been few parliamentary initiatives aimed at punishing the publication of false news via the Internet in a broader way (Latorre, 2021). For example, in the year 2017, the first bill was presented containing the "Provisions to prevent the manipulation of online information, guarantee transparency on the web and encourage media literacy". It was followed a few months later by the initiative of senators Luigi Zanda and Rosanna Filippin, entitled "General rules regarding social networks and for combating the spread of illicit content and fake news on the internet". Exposed to diverse criticism -including accusations of censorship-both of them were left aside. (Passuto, 2022).

Regarding institutional regulation in this field, it is also important to mention the AGCOM, which has played a fundamental role in the analysis and monitoring of online information, fake news, and disinformation. It regularly carries out specific analyses and fact-finding investigations which then flow into reports, as well as diverse discussions, conferences, and research, collaborating with the academic and scientific world. Moreover, in 2013, the AGCOM created an observatory on communications (one on journalism and another on online newspapers) (Magnani, 2019), while in 2017, it created the "Technical table for guaranteeing pluralism and correctness of information on digital platforms" with the aim of promoting the self-regulation of platforms (AGCOM, 2018 in Passuto, 2022). From an operational point of view, five working groups have been created within the Table, each with a specific task: monitoring the phenomena of disinformation and hate speech; control of the online advertising system; fact-checking; media and digital literacy; informing citizens about disinformation (Panza and Sciacchitano, 2020, p. 125).

Another initiative worth mentioning is that of the former President of the Chamber, Hon. Laura Boldrini, who stands out for her commitment to combating the phenomenon. She worked together with the MIUR in building the #BastaBufale campaign, which was presented in 2017 and aimed at stimulating the creation of educational initiatives. The #BastaBuffale campaign has provided all Italian schools with in-depth teaching materials and a decalogue to guide young people in surfing the net (Ranieri, Stasio & Bruni, 2018).

The Italian Postal Police has also contributed to fighting the spread of false, abusive, or defamatory news. An interesting initiative is that of the "Red Button" project, created in 2018, thanks to which the users could report possible fake news to the Police. However, after being subjected to diverse criticism, there were indeed no real results from this project, and the page is no longer working.

Recently, in April 2020, in response to the explosion of fake news regarding the coronavirus, a "Monitoring Unit to combat the spread of fake news relating to the coronavirus on the web and on social networks" was established by decree of the Undersecretary of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. It was made up of three representatives, one from the Presidency of the Council, another from the Ministry of Health, and a third from the Department of Civil Protection, who joined a group of eight experts already appointed by the Government and AGCOM (Candido, 2020).

Another recent initiative worth mentioning is the "Appointment with Digital Media" training program: a course for teachers and students of first and second-level high schools organized by TIM and Rai for IDMO (Italian Digital Media Observatory) - a consortium co-financed by the European Commission, dedicated to the fight against fake news online and the conscious use of the media. Furthermore, in 2022, Rai released "Invito alla Lettura - Media Literacy against Disinformation", a five-episode TV and web miniseries designed to prepare students to acquire the skills necessary to deal with disinformation and evaluate the reliability of online information (Di Pierro, 2022).

Sweden

According to the Swedish Committee and Information Literacy and Democratic Dialogue, disinformation, and misinformation are closely related topics. The distinction is made between two concepts based on the matter of attempts. Disinformation refers to attempts to intentionally spread untrue and misleading information in order to cause harm or influence people's attitudes, positions, and actions in a certain direction, while misinformation refers to the unintentional spread of such information, i.e., when such information is disseminated without intent to cause harm (Demokratiska Samtalet, 2018). According to the Stockholm Resilience Center of Stockholm University, the most dangerous form of it comes with the generative AI as a game changer for spreading disinformation (Galaz, Daume & Marklund, 2023). Generative AI is accessible freely, sophisticated as it is sometimes in a moment difficult to distinguish from a real picture, and persuasive enough to manipulate a human's mind.

The challenges that come with disinformation spread are sufficient: such information can include ethnic nationalism promotion, anti-immigrant and anti-refugee attitudes, globalist conspiracies, and nationalistic propaganda to destabilize the system (Bennet & Livingston, 2018). In addition, disinformation causes economic instability, and polarisation and is a threat to democracy as it tends to manipulate decision-makers (Baade, 2018). According to Baade (2018), the biggest challenge is trust. We tend to trust in the availability of the information while not thinking critically or not being critically aware of its insufficiency and incompleteness.

Sweden does not have a clear legal framework against disinformation. Sweden is not a NATO member but is closely cooperating with the NATO Strategic Communication Center in peace and security. The concept of "psychological defense" which was diminished after the end of the Cold War is back on the agenda (NATO StratCom COE, 2015).

One of the biggest cases of disinformation spread in Sweden is 2021, when there was a campaign criticizing Swedish social services for kidnapping Arab Speaking children to make them Christian (Giandomenico & Linderstal, 2023). The information spread on Arab Speaking media.

Freedom of speech is one of the Fundamental Laws in Sweden and is highly protected by the Constitution. It gives citizens the right to express their views. Although there are laws against ethnic hatred, hate speech, agitation, and sedition that could be applied against certain types of disinformation (Giandomenico & Linderstal, 2023).

Since 2022 the Psychological Defence Agency has been open and operating to identify and counter disinformation. It includes coordinating with relevant authorities to malign information influence against social services (Government, 2023). As it is a state agency, to remain impartial, democratic principles forbid it from monitoring domestic actors, so it is focused on foreign campaigns.

The Psychological Defence Agency has the main mission to lead the coordination and development of Sweden's psychological defence together with public authorities and state agencies (Psychological Defence Agency, 2023). Its purpose is to safeguard an open and democratic society (Psychological Defence Agency, 2023). It aims to strengthen the population's

ability to detect and resist malign influence campaigns and disinformation (Psychological Defence Agency, 2023).

Romania

In the Romanian language, according to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, misinformation and disinformation are translated through the same word, and they are explained as (intentionally) misinforming. For the general public, these two terms mean the same thing, and just recently, some organizations are trying to explain the fine line between them as being the intent with which the information is disseminated.

Misinformation is generally related to tabloid headlines, usually only to attract as many hits to the site as possible, and disinformation is disseminated in an organized way and is used mainly in politics, e-commerce, technology and cybersecurity, finance and economy, health and medicine, and crisis situations.

The most damaging effects of disinformation are digital identity theft, changing people's perceptions on issues related to politics, elections, and campaigns, misleading them and endangering minors through fake social media accounts. One of the biggest causes of many of these effects is deepfake technology. Moreover, dangerous false financial pieces of information about economic indicators, companies, or financial markets can lead to fluctuations in stock prices, impact investments, and create economic instability. Furthermore, disinformation can spread rapidly during natural disasters or public health emergencies(like the COVID-19 pandemic), affecting emergency responses, evacuation efforts, and public safety.

One of the most important programs, called Awareness, has been developed within the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), which is one of the Romanian secret services, together with the Foreign Intelligence Service.

The Awareness program reflects their main and ongoing concern to prevent threats to national security from materializing. However, they also carry out activities regarding misinformation and disinformation of the general public.

One of their major campaign related to misinformation is called Fake News (if you're not sure, do not share it).

The Fake News campaign informs people about the definition, purpose, and effects of fake news. They also present an annual report provided by the Reuters Institute from Oxford University, done in 38 countries, which shows that Romania ranks 12th among those who fear that they are victims of misinformation, and 62% of Romanians are worried about their ability to distinguish between fake news and real news on the Internet.

This campaign also presents a survey conducted by Save the Children Organization between the 10th and 16th of April 2020 in 32 counties in Romania and Bucharest, with 819 children aged between 10 and 17 years old. That shows that only 11% of the children check the information in the official sources and only 17% consult with those close to them. Children's primary sources of information are the Internet (49% websites, 24% networks, social networks), TV (57%), and talking to parents (31%). Of all respondents, only 48% know what constitutes fake news, and a

significant number of respondents (22%) stated that TV or news publications cannot broadcast fake news.

The other campaign of the Awareness program is called Social Media-The Unseen Side. This campaign informs people about all the types of social media platforms and the dangers they can encounter using them, about the importance of personal data, that some entities may use their personal information to create a fake account, and exemplifies two of the most common types of attacks on the social media accounts: Scam and Grayware (programs that are meant to affect a computer negatively but are not a virus or Trojan).

Another important pawn in the fight against disinformation and in media education is Freedom House Romania. It is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that promotes freedom, democracy, and human rights. With a well-established reputation, Freedom House Romania works in the fields of human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law, good governance and European integration, and civic education.

Trying to tackle disinformation and misinformation and to support correct information delivered to society, they have created three platforms:

1. The Lie Detector <https://detectoruldeminciuni.ro/>
2. Press HUB <https://www.presshub.ro/>
3. Clean Justice <https://justitiecurata.ro/>

Through all these platforms, the aim is to report false information that is perceived in the public space, thus contributing to the fight against the phenomenon of misinformation in Romania, to ensure the spread of correct information at a broad level and to counteract the effect of misinformation, and also to transform the public that is passive to misinformation into an active one that takes action to stop this phenomenon.

While NGO and media initiatives can play a significant role in raising awareness and promoting media literacy, the absence of government involvement through legal measures may pose challenges in effectively combating misinformation and disinformation at a systemic level. This suggests a reliance on civil society and independent media to address the issue, potentially due to various factors such as governmental priorities, resource allocation, or political considerations.

Spain

In Spain, Order PCM/1030/2020, of 30 October, which publishes the Procedure for action against disinformation approved by the National Security Council, has regulated the governmental actions carried out to combat the scourge of disinformation. The document points out that it is imperative, given the rapid progress of the digital environment and the intensive use of digital media, to establish means of operation and mechanisms aimed at continuously assessing the phenomenon of disinformation globally and particularly for the country.

The text echoes the European Commission's definition of disinformation as "verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for profit or to deliberately mislead the public, and which may cause public harm", and includes in this public harm threats to democratic processes and public goods such as health, the environment or security. It also points out that in the fight against disinformation, citizens consider the media, public authorities and social media platforms to be primarily responsible for curbing the spread of fake news.

Therefore, and with the aim of complying with the requirements established by the European Union in the Action Plan for the fight against disinformation, approved at the European Council on December 13 and 14, 2018, the text identifies the bodies, agencies, and authorities that make up the system and marks the procedure for their actions. The Procedure has, among other purposes, to establish the levels for prevention, detection, early warning, analysis, response, and evaluation and to describe the specific tasks involved for the levels established in the fight against disinformation.

Without being a normative text, it is worth mentioning the Charter of Digital Rights adopted in July 2021, which contains some elements of interest in the field of disinformation.

Regarding the legal treatment of disinformation and fake news in Spain, as they cover a wide range of content, depending on what they refer to and with what intention they are disseminated, they can be included in very different types of criminal offenses, including hate crimes, discovery and disclosure of secrets, crimes against moral integrity, public disorder, libel and slander, crimes against public health, fraud, intrusion, crimes against the market and consumers, among others.

Disinformation can take various forms and its impact can be significant in different aspects of society. In Spain, as in many other countries, some of the most damaging forms of disinformation might include:

1. **Health disinformation:** False or misleading information about health topics, treatments, or vaccines can lead to public health risks, reluctance to seek medical help, or refusal of vaccination, impacting individual and community well-being.
2. **Political disinformation:** False or misleading information during elections or about political candidates can distort public opinion, undermine trust in democratic processes, and influence voting behaviors.
3. **Social Unrest and Polarization:** Misinformation that fuels social divisions, exacerbates tensions between different groups, or incites violence can have severe societal repercussions, leading to unrest and conflicts.
4. **Economic disinformation:** False information about economic policies, market trends, or financial institutions can lead to panic, affect market stability, and cause economic harm at both individual and national levels.

5. **Climate disinformation:** Inaccurate information about climate change or environmental issues can misguide public perception, hinder efforts toward sustainability, and impede necessary actions to address these global challenges.

These forms of disinformation can have far-reaching consequences, affecting public trust, safety, and well-being. Addressing and combating these issues often involves a combination of media literacy, fact-checking initiatives, regulation, and responsible information dissemination by both individuals and institutions.

Disinformation poses several risks and challenges in Spain. Some of the significant ones include:

1. **Public Health Impact:** False information about health, treatments, or vaccines can lead to reduced vaccination rates, health risks, and a lack of trust in healthcare systems, especially during health crises such as pandemics.
2. **Social Cohesion and Polarization:** Disinformation can deepen societal divisions, fueling polarization among different groups based on political, social, or cultural beliefs, which can lead to social unrest and conflicts.
3. **Erosion of Trust in Institutions:** Continuous exposure to misinformation can erode trust in media, government, and other institutions, leading to skepticism and cynicism among the public.
4. **Impact on Democratic Processes:** Disinformation, particularly during elections or political events, can manipulate public opinion, undermine the legitimacy of democratic processes, and influence voting behaviors.
5. **Economic Consequences:** False information about economic policies, market trends, or financial institutions can lead to economic instability, affecting investor confidence, market behaviors, and individual financial decisions.
6. **Cybersecurity and Digital Threats:** Disinformation can be used as a tool in cyberattacks, social engineering, or phishing attempts, exploiting people's trust and spreading false narratives to gain access to sensitive information.

Addressing these risks involves a multifaceted approach that includes enhancing media literacy, promoting critical thinking skills, fostering fact-checking initiatives, regulating information dissemination, and promoting responsible use of social media and online platforms. Collaboration between government, technology companies, media organizations, and civil society is crucial to mitigate the impact of misinformation in Spain

Spain carried out some strategies and models to combat misinformation:

1. **Media Literacy Initiatives:** Spain has implemented educational programs focused on media literacy in schools and communities. These programs aim to teach critical thinking skills and help individuals identify and evaluate misinformation. e.g.: The educational program 'Fake News. The Factory of Lies' educational program.

2. **Fact-Checking Organizations:** In Spain, there has even been a bill to regulate the verification activity through the Proposition of Organic Law for the partial regulation of the verification of fake news in social networks, blogs, websites in general, and printed, digital and audiovisual media (Official Gazette of the Spanish Parliament, 2020). Several independent fact-checking organizations operate in Spain, such as Maldita.es and Newtral, which actively debunk false information and provide accurate information to the public.
3. **Collaboration with Tech Platforms:** The Spanish government has worked with social media and tech companies to address the spread of disinformation on their platforms. Efforts include promoting reliable sources, limiting the reach of false information, and implementing fact-checking mechanisms.
4. **Government Awareness Campaigns:** Periodic campaigns by government agencies aim to educate the public about the risks of misinformation and encourage critical thinking when consuming news and information. e.g.: No me líes' campaign of the Government of Castilla-La Mancha.
5. **Research and Monitoring:** Academic institutions and research organizations often conduct studies to understand the impact of misinformation on society and propose strategies to counter it effectively. e.g.: INCIBE National Institute of Cybersecurity and Disinformation Observatory (Complutense University of Madrid).

These strategies often involve collaboration between government bodies, civil society organizations, media outlets, technology companies, and educational institutions to create a comprehensive approach to combat misinformation.

Lithuania

A device that can easily fit in everyone's pocket, connect to the Internet, and contains more information than the world's largest library. Therefore, it is not surprising that it becomes increasingly difficult for the human mind to process such amounts of different information. And with the help of improving technology, these days it becomes a real challenge even for professionals. During the first decade of the 21st century, the number of Internet users grew rapidly and this is where the first turning point occurred - with the help of various social networks and platforms, Internet watchers became creators - 1.97 billion Internet users, 152 million social network users, 2 billion videos and 5 billion photos per day.

Lithuania, like other countries, faced the negative impact of such a large amount of information, therefore the purpose of this report is to define the phenomena of disinformation and misinformation, examine their forms, assess the risks they pose, and review the national strategy and policy that combats these phenomena in the state of Lithuania.

In Lithuania, disinformation and misinformation are separated, according to the intentions of its spreading. The informational publication "Challenges and Internet Security of Fake News"

published by Vilnius University in 2018 contains the definitions of misinformation and disinformation:

Misinformation - sharing false information without wanting to cause harm. This group includes fake news written or disseminated based on unverified sources. Content is created to make fun of or to educate the public.

Disinformation - information created and spread by people who want to harm. It is fake news that is purposefully created and distributed for malicious actions, to distort the facts, to make money, and to have more influence.

In summary, misinformation is spread without intent to harm, while disinformation is the opposite, with the intent to harm or cause harm.

Two main forms of disinformation prevail in Lithuania - political and social.

Political disinformation. Since Lithuania was the first state of the Soviet Union to declare its independence on March 11, 1990, Lithuania is still considered one of the main reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union and is constantly exposed to Russian cyberattacks and disinformation. Debunk.eu analyst A. Kazlauskas has indicated the main targets of disinformation in Lithuania - to cause public distrust in the government, health system and institutions that defend the principles of democracy, such as NATO and the European Union.

This form of disinformation has deep roots in Lithuania. This form of disinformation can also be attributed to campaigns supporting and worshiping Russia, the Soviet era, socialism, and communism. We could consider this form of disinformation to be a feature - that it is spread by external, hostile forces towards the state of Lithuania.

Social disinformation. One of the most striking examples of this form could be observed during the COVID-19 pandemic, when people in Lithuania who were affected by misinformation refused to get vaccinated and follow the established procedure, the work of healthcare institutions was disrupted, and there was a large public opposition that ended with a rally and riots. Other examples of this form that are currently gaining popularity include disinformation related to climate change, LGBTQ community rights, student education, and the migrant crisis. One of the distinguishing features of this form is parties operating within the state, whose goal is to create distrust in political opponents, in pursuit of power, power, etc. operation.

Although in both cases, misinformation leads to mistrust and divides the community, and ultimately the consequences are reflected in politics, it can be observed that in the first case, Lithuania is acted against as a state, while in the second case, it is aimed at achieving power, power, popularity or support within the state. In general, both one and the other forms of disinformation are very dangerous: they cause distrust in institutions and official media, they cause danger to democracy and making informed decisions, and most importantly, they create chaos, create fear, and divide society.

According to the World Press Freedom 2021 Index survey, Lithuania ranks 28th (35th in 2016) out of 180 countries. The first project started to be developed in 2017 by the news portal "DELFI" and the foundation "Digital News Innovation Fund" (founded by Google) - the platform "Demaskuok.lt" (<https://demaskuok.lt>). This project is a national initiative that mobilizes societies

and mass media to combat fake news that causes confusion and undermines trust in the state and its democratic institutions. It can be understood that this project is more focused on fake political news at the state level and aims to protect Lithuania, which often receives targeted online disinformation attacks. However, it should be noted that the solutions to combat disinformation currently implemented in the media do not respond to the trend that social networks are increasingly taking over traditional forms of media.

What is more, in 2023, Lithuania already stands in 7th place according to the World Press Freedom Index – it was a huge improvement in a 3-year period.

During the year 2023 Lithuanian partner engaged in the research on media literacy financed by the CERV programme's project "Democracy over Disinformation", partnering with Lithuania's partners "Unique Projects", "CEIPES" from Italy and "Einzigartige Projekte e.V." from Germany/ The prepared research report indicated results about 139 respondents surveyed in Lithuania.

Of them, 61,2% answered that they had recently noticed disinformation on social networks. The most frequently observed topic of disinformation in Lithuania was related to the war in Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic, the health system and the immigrant crisis. In this report, it was observed that the 26-35-year-old group of respondents was the most capable of distinguishing and identifying disinformation, while the 18-25-year-old group of respondents were the most likely to improve their media literacy skills. A total of 57,3% of respondents in the three countries expressed a desire to deepen their media literacy knowledge. In conclusion, it is encouraging that the majority of respondents expressed their belief in promoting media literacy as a key tool in the fight against disinformation and the spread of lies.

In summary, it can be stated that although there are no special legal acts in Lithuania for information security and there is no special information security strategy in the country, this issue is dealt with in various official documents, for example, the National Security Strategy of Lithuania and the Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania.

These strategies identify various informational threats, including state and non-state propaganda, attempts to undermine national security, and efforts to influence democratic and electoral processes. The Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission plays an important role in mitigating these threats, with the authority to temporarily block channels spreading propaganda narratives, as seen in various cases involving Russian channels. Considerable progress was made in Lithuania on the issue of stopping disinformation after Russia attacked Ukraine. Dissemination of any form of disinformation related to Russia was very quickly restricted in Lithuania: glorification of the Soviet Union, Russia, the war, and display of Soviet paraphernalia and symbols. And disinformation spreaders can receive fines and imprisonment for today. This shows that the fight against disinformation is taking place, but to date it is very fragmented, focused only on Russian military aggression, but the topics that divide society continue to remain untouched.

3. Media Literacy

Italy

Italian national strategy regarding media literacy is mainly reflected in the National Digital School Plan (PNSD), provided for by the 'La Buona Scuola' law (Law 107/2015), which focuses on innovation in the school system and the opportunities of digital education.

It helps to 'catalyze' the use of multiple resources in favor of digital innovation, such as the resources of the European Structural Funds (PON Education 2014-2020) and the funds of Law 107/2015 itself. The objective is to ensure access to the information society for all schools by ensuring the availability of digital tools as well as connectivity. (EACEA Page).

Within this plan, several provisions are focused on encouraging digital literacy as a fundamental pillar of media literacy. For example, action 4 "Environments for integrated digital didactic" of the PNSD, seeks to support the creation of lab spaces in order to promote the teaching of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects in schools. In addition, the Plan introduces an interesting figure, the Digital Animator, a teacher devoted to supporting the head teacher in the planning and implementation of digital innovation projects. (EACEA Page).

Another fundamental figure is that of the territorial training teams, established by Law No. 145 of 30 December 2018 and coordinated by the Regional School Offices from their region, which action is essential for the spread of the actions of the Digital School Plan while enhancing the training of teaching staff as well as students' skills. The schools to which the team members belong play an active role in facilitating and providing technical and organizational support. (EACEA Page).

Besides the National Digital School Plan, different efforts, initiatives and associations may be highlighted. For example, since the year 1996, the MED (the Italian Association for Media and communication education) has been operating in the field of training and research of Media Education, with various annual proposals as Media Education Month, for supporting diverse events on media education; the organization of three prize competitions, each linked to the production of good media education practices; and, finally, the Summer School, which is full of related activities and workshops – for example, in 2022, the theme was "Rethinking interaction and education in the time of digital platforms" (Di Pierro, 2022).

Other interesting projects are the "Open the Box" project -developed by the training project company Dataninja-, which provides interactive lessons and teaching materials for teachers and students for combating disinformation; or the new edition of the "Quotidiano in class", the media literacy project promoted by the Permanent Youth Observatory, which brings three different sources of journalism into high school classes to compare the different ways in which the news is told. Another recent project worth mentioning is "ESSERCI - The educating communities for the immaterial reconstruction of the Apennines from Abruzzo to Emilia Romagna", started in October 2022, and organized by the Media Literacy Foundation, in collaboration with the L'Aquila 2009 Consortium. The project was devoted to the creation of three radio and multimedia journalism workshops in the schools of the areas hit by the earthquake, with the aim of revitalizing the communicative life of the territory while supporting media literacy (Di Pierro, 2022).

Sweden

Media Literacy is a subject that requires critical thinking and consists of digital literacy, digital competencies, and digital learning (Axelsson, 2013). According to the Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority, the model of media literacy should include building skills that are related to accessing information, evaluating information, and creating media content.

In 2015, the Government commissioned the Swedish National Agency for Education to propose 2 IT strategies: one for preschool and compulsory education and another for upper secondary education (European Commission, 2023). The strategy included the vision for digital skills development and finding a way for a digitalization to contribute to the efficiency of digital tools and resources. In 2017, the Government decided on the following:

- programming is introduced as a distinct element in various subjects in compulsory education, especially in technology and mathematics
- the abilities of students to critically evaluate sources to be strengthened
- the abilities of students to solve problems and translate ideas into action in a creative way with the use of digital technology is to be strengthened
- students are to work with digital texts, media, and tools
- students are to use and understand digital systems and services
- students are to develop an understanding of the impact of digitalization on the individual and society (European Commission, 2023).

The Swedish Media Council created a tool called “MIL for me” (Media and Information Literacy Tool for me) which is an online training platform on media and information literacy that is aimed at strengthening young people’s skills to cope with anti-democratic messages online (European Commission, 2023). The Swedish Media Council is a government agency with the primary task of empowering youth biomed-conscious media users (Statens Medieråd, 2021). According to Nordicom Review, 88% of teenagers among 483 who participated between the age between 16 and 19 years old could not distinguish news from advertising as well as many had difficulties distinguishing factual information from biased texts (Lindell, 2019). To conclude, it is simply important to provide media literacy training for citizens to advance their digital literacy skills.

In the best practice presented further down, 4C Strategies in collaboration with Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency conducted a series of workshops to upskill public employees in combating disinformation. This approach can be transformed to the needs of the youth as the most important message here is that it is crucial to have such training ongoing as the variety of forms of disinformation is growing continuously as well.

Romania

The term “media literacy” refers to the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to use and interpret the media. Media literacy is a kind of critical literacy; it involves learning to “read” the

media but cannot be subsumed under the strict criteria of learning. It also involves analysis, evaluation and critical reflection.

The first step in media literacy is the component of teacher training. Teachers with appropriate education and training in this field can best teach media education in schools. The best for them would be to be trained in the course of their professional development, both in the use of audiovisual teaching aids and in media education issues. According to an index conducted in 2021 by the Open Society Foundation in Sofia/Bulgaria, which assesses a country's potential resistance to fake news, Romania ranks 28th out of 35 countries surveyed in Europe, a sign that Romanians are more prone to the phenomenon of fake news and have a limited understanding of the information they receive. More than ever, this underlines the need for teachers to have more training opportunities to keep up with new trends in education.

The second step would be for the teachers to teach the students and use media literacy skills in all possible disciplines, not just some. Media literacy skills and critical thinking can be helpful in a vast range of situations and fields like economics, politics, literature, health, communication, safety and others.

As students age and enter adulthood, learning media literacy will be impactful in identifying ethical and technical standards in media and understanding how media ties to their cognitive, social, and emotional needs. Media education can occur not only within the education system but can also be continued in lifelong learning because it will help individuals of all ages develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression needed to be critical thinkers, effective communicators and active citizens in today's world.

The most significant player that I found in media literacy education in Romania is the Centre for Independent Journalism. It is a non-governmental organization that has been active for over 28 years in protecting democracy and those who believe in its values. It has been 28 years in the service of freedom of expression and education, activism, and training. Over 15,000 media professionals, 4,500 teachers and 100,000 students have passed through the IJC over the years. They coordinate the most extensive media education program in schools, supported by the Ministry of Education, and are present in 163 high schools nationwide.

One of their ongoing projects is called BROD Bulgarian-Romanian Observatory of Digital Media. The Bulgarian-Romanian Observatory of Digital Media aims to create an international and multidisciplinary centre for detecting, analysing and combating disinformation circulating in Bulgaria and Romania. It is a hub of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), an independent observatory funded by the European Union.

The project works in two directions; on the one hand, it aims to support and train journalists to have the necessary media literacy tools to recognise and avoid any form of misinformation. Fact-checking tools and databases are available on the <https://brodhub.eu/en/> website. On the other hand, they will organise media education courses and events for young people and adults and produce educational materials focusing on resilience to misinformation and information verification.

This is one of their latest projects, but they have had many more related to media literacy. Here are some of them:

- I teach media education - Media Education and Culture Lab
- Media education - a shield against info-demics
- MEDIADELCOM - Research on media risks and opportunities
- Bad News Game

Although most of the actions taken in the fight against disinformation and media education are carried out by NGOs in Romania, the government has started to get more and more involved as a partner in NGO projects and through specific related units of pre-university education called "House of the Teaching Staff" (Casa Corpoului Didactic) subordinated to the Ministry of National Education and coordinated locally by the County School Inspectorate. The main purpose of these units is to strengthen and improve teachers' professional skills by participating in continuous training programmes in priority areas.

I have managed to identify units from seven counties that are already organising courses and activities related to disinformation, fake news and media literacy. It is not a huge number, but it's certainly an excellent start for the government of Romania.

Spain

The Study on the Impact of Fake News in Spain prepared by the Universidad Complutense de Madrid shows that 86% of the Spanish population believes fake news. On the other hand, 54% of Spanish people consider that they do not know how to differentiate fake news, according to data from the Trust Project, a report promoted by several national media.

In 2022 The Unión de Televisiones Comerciales en Abierto (UTECA) together with the University of Navarra have carried out the first study on DISINFORMATION in Spanish society, in collaboration with Barlovento Comunicación. As part of the initiative, 1,224 interviews were carried out and the results showed a growing concern in Spanish society about the influence of fake news and the alarming number of citizens who report not having identified or identifying this situation at some point. They perceive it as a destabilizing element for democracy and the stability of nations and recognize that disinformation has increased after Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine.

In Spain, addressing disinformation among adolescents involves specific educational approaches and initiatives tailored to their age group and digital habits. Here are some methods applied to combat misinformation among adolescents:

1. Media Literacy Programs in Schools: Spain integrates media literacy into the school curriculum, aiming to teach adolescents critical thinking skills, source verification, and the ability to differentiate between credible and false information. Ex: "Forge of Destiny" is the first Spanish RPG to combat disinformation through a steampunk dystopia and the initiative of the Col·legi de Periodistes de Catalunya, which in 2020 launched a training program in schools to reflect on new forms of communication and combat fake news.

2. Interactive Workshops and Activities: Educational institutions, libraries, and youth organizations often conduct workshops and interactive sessions focused on media literacy. These sessions engage adolescents in activities that teach them how to critically assess information online and in traditional media.
3. Digital Citizenship Programs: Initiatives to promote responsible digital citizenship emphasize the importance of ethical online behavior, including the responsible sharing and verification of information. These programs encourage adolescents to think critically about their online interactions and content sharing habits. e.g.: Fake off! project of the European Intercultural Association "GoEurope" and the EduCAC project of the Audiovisual Council of Catalunya.
4. Partnerships with Fact-Checking Organizations: Collaboration with independent fact-checking organizations allows adolescents to access reliable information and learn how to verify sources. These partnerships often involve educational materials specifically designed for young audiences.
5. Online Resources and Platforms: Online platforms and resources dedicated to media literacy provide adolescents with tools and guidelines for navigating digital media responsibly. These platforms offer interactive content and games that teach critical thinking skills in an engaging way.
6. Parental and Teacher Involvement: Educating parents and teachers about the importance of media literacy helps create a supportive environment for adolescents to learn and practice critical thinking skills. Parental involvement at home and teacher guidance in schools reinforce media literacy principles.
7. Encouraging Critical Consumption Habits: Encouraging adolescents to question, fact-check, and cross-reference information before accepting or sharing it is a fundamental aspect of combating misinformation. Teaching them to verify information from multiple reliable sources fosters healthy skepticism.

By implementing these methods, Spain aims to equip adolescents with the necessary skills to critically evaluate information, navigate digital spaces responsibly, and become more resilient to the influence of misinformation.

Lithuania

In Lithuania, the term "media and information literacy" corresponds to the UNESCO definition, which includes essential competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) needed to effectively use various media (e.g. press, radio, television, films, internet) and information sources such as libraries and museums, regardless of the technology used. Media literacy includes not only critical thinking and lifelong learning skills necessary for socialization and active civic participation, but also aspects of active citizenship such as civic activism and critical thinking. Experts emphasize that media literacy should combine emotional intelligence with digital skills and knowledge.

Historically, media and information literacy have always been on the strategic agenda of Lithuania, although their priorities were unstable, depending on the constantly changing national and foreign political situation. Back in 2012 The Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania approved the Lithuanian progress strategy "Lietuva 2030" which provided for the formation of a vibrant public information space, promoting civically responsible media and developing the public's abilities to critically analyze and evaluate information presented in the public space, respect the free press, promote media self-regulation, implement media and information literacy education programs. Based on the strategic direction of the Public Information Policy for the years 2019-2022, digital and information literacy skills in Lithuania are defined as a competitive state advantage, significantly contributing to the competitiveness of the economy, the development and sustainability of the national digital infrastructure, the growth of culture and a resilient society, as an integral part of the attitude of the whole society.

In the Lithuanian media literacy model for 2022, several main steps of media literacy are emphasized:

- Retrieving Information: Understanding how to find and access various sources of information.
- Content analysis: Development of skills in analysis and interpretation of media messages.
- Media Development: Media Development: Encourage active participation in media development and understanding of its impact.
- Safe and responsible use: Focus on ethical aspects and responsible use of media.

These steps are integrated into the education, culture and national security sectors, driven by key ministries and involving various stakeholders, including state institutions, NGOs and academia.

Over the past three years, Lithuania has made significant progress in integrating media and information literacy into policy-making, and new programs have been launched in the fields of education, culture and national security. The Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports and the Ministry of National Defense lead the development and implementation of the media literacy policy. The general education system is being reformed - the new curriculum focuses on communication, citizenship and digital skills. Some of the most prominent examples of good practice: the Demaskuok.lt project carried out by the largest news portal Delfi.lt and the 15min.lt special column *have been verified*. "LRT facts" investigative journalism project. Also, international donors such as IREX contribute to strengthening the media by implementing initiatives such as the Baltic Digital Resilience Research Fund "Digires", which aims to detect, analyze, prevent and curb disinformation activities in Lithuania and beyond. Local media literacy initiatives and organizations, such as the Union of Young Journalists and the Lithuanian Journalism Center and Media4Change, are directly engaged in the professional development of media institutions and individual journalists. It should be noted that many other initiatives carried out by national and regional media, although not called media literacy projects, contribute significantly to media literacy. For example, LaisvesTV Academy of Young Journalists.

4. Analysis

Comparative analysis of the country research

A worthy note is the comparison of the definitions of misinformation and disinformation in the language terminology. Apart from Sweden, in all the other countries (Romania, Lithuania, Italy and Spain), the term used for disinformation and misinformation translates through the exact words. This linguistic aspect contributes to a general public perception that these terms mean the same thing, using the translation for disinformation for both concepts.

Despite a wide diversity in terms of political systems, media landscapes and civil society development, all the countries face remarkably similar challenges when it comes to disinformation. The main fields that are affected in every country are politics, health, and economics, all of which represent a threat to the democracy of the countries.

In light of the increased access to the internet and thus the increased access to social media, another common threat for every country and one of the most damaging forms of misinformation and disinformation is the increasing presence of AI applications that have infiltrated many fields of interest. One of the most common ones that are available for the general public is deep fake applications (ex: Lensa AI, Reface, DeepArt Faceplay, FaceMagic), which can pose as well a very big threat to our democracy and our human rights regardless of the fact that at this point, it's promoted as fun applications used for social interactions.

Regarding legal actions, Spain and Italy are the only countries that have a legal framework against disinformation. However, despite this legal stance, both countries do not rank among the top nations in the 2021 Media Literacy Index. Among the five countries examined in our research, Sweden stands out with the highest media literacy rate. One particular thing that differentiates Sweden from all the other countries is that it has a fundamental law regarding freedom of speech that the Constitution highly protects. Taking all this information into consideration, we can conclude that one of the most important actions in fighting disinformation might not be laws that punish its act but educating the population at the highest level possible and supporting the freedom of the media institutions.

Relating to media literacy implications in the countries researched, we can see a very high level of implication of the government and educational institutions in Italy, Sweden, and Spain and a lower level in Lithuania and Romania.

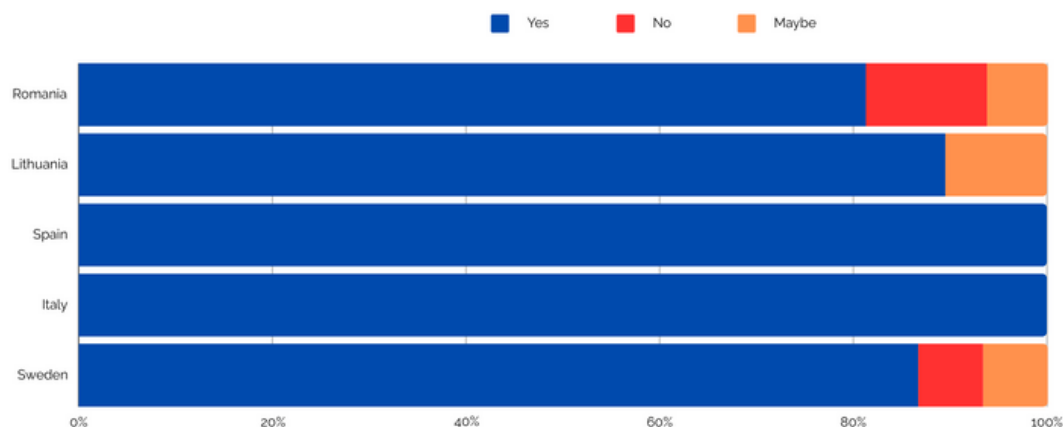
In the first three countries, there are clear and direct implementations of media literacy activities in the school curriculum, which represents a big step forward for them. It is worth noting that the only country that has all these implications supported by a legal framework is Italy.

In Lithuania and Romania, most of the actions taken in media education are carried out by NGOs and Journalism projects in which they're trying to include as many schools as possible.

Comparative analysis of the youth surveys

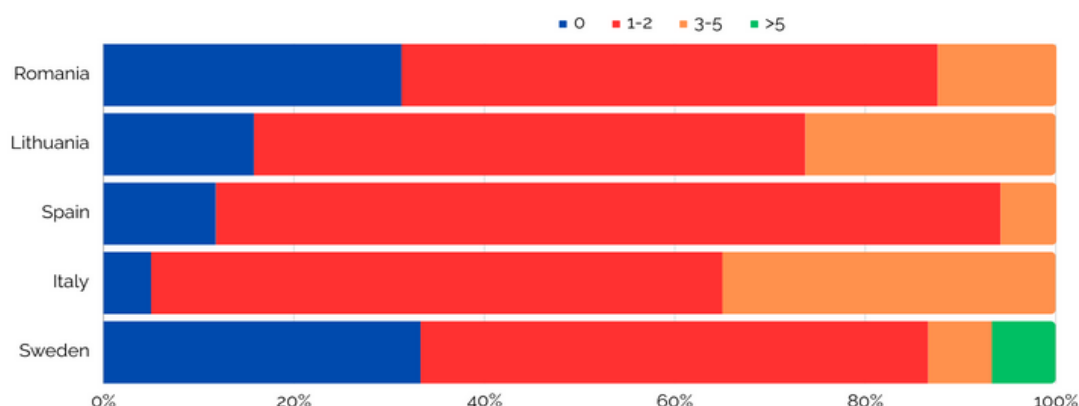
Regarding the question "Do you know what fake news is?"

As you can see in the graphic below, a very important commonality between the five countries is that all of them have a high level of awareness regarding what fake news is. However, Italy and Spain stand out with 100% on this topic.



Regarding the question "How many sources do you check when verifying the information?"

As you can see in the next graph, a significant portion of the respondents in all countries fact-checks the information they receive by consulting at least two other sources. Sweden stands out in this situation, having some people checking more than three sources of information. At the same time, Sweden and Romania stand out with the highest percentages of people who do not check any source.



Regarding the popularity of different platforms across the countries are sometimes similar and sometimes different. Instagram and TikTok are popular channels for getting informed across all countries. In Lithuania, Spain and Romania, one of the most used sources of information is also Online Websites. Also, Facebook's popularity has decreased among new generations in all countries, in Italy and Spain, almost all the respondents have declared they never use it anymore. Regarding the perceived reliability of channels, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok are recognized as the least reliable sources of information across all countries. Online Websites and traditional media (TV programs) are generally considered more reliable in general.

Youngsters from all five countries share a common habit of immediately clicking the "Like" button upon receiving new information. However, Lithuania distinguishes itself by also demonstrating a high percentage of individuals who prioritize checking the source of the information.

A universally shared perception among young people in all countries is that the primary challenge when encountering new information is the difficulty in determining its truthfulness. Two additional significant factors contributing to the challenge of dealing with new information include the struggle to trust the information and the challenge of verifying the information's source.

As technology and social media continue to shape information dissemination, fostering critical thinking skills and promoting reliable sources become paramount in navigating this evolving landscape.

Comparative analysis of the youth workers surveys

While each country presents distinct challenges and priorities, these commonalities underscore shared concerns and values among youth workers across Italy, Sweden, Romania, Spain, and Lithuania.

Awareness of Fake News:

All five countries report that 100% of their youth workers are aware of what fake news is, indicating a universal understanding of the issue.

Skills Priorities:

Youth management skills, including teamwork and stress management, are considered important by youth workers in Italy, Lithuania, and Romania, highlighting a shared recognition of the need for effective team coordination and stress management. In Sweden and Spain youth workers consider leadership skills the most important, which involve motivating, coordinating, and cooperating, as the most crucial for their roles. Leadership skills are valued as well by youth workers in Sweden, Romania, and Spain, indicating a common emphasis on the importance of effective leadership in their roles.

Challenges in combating fake news

A common challenge among youth workers in Italy, Sweden, and Romania is the frequency of generated fake news, suggesting a shared concern about the widespread dissemination of false information.

Spain is more concerned about the manipulative tactics used in fake news.

Lithuania identifies a challenge in fake news originating from actual media outlets. This may be related to the fact that Lithuania is constantly exposed to Russian cyberattacks and propaganda.

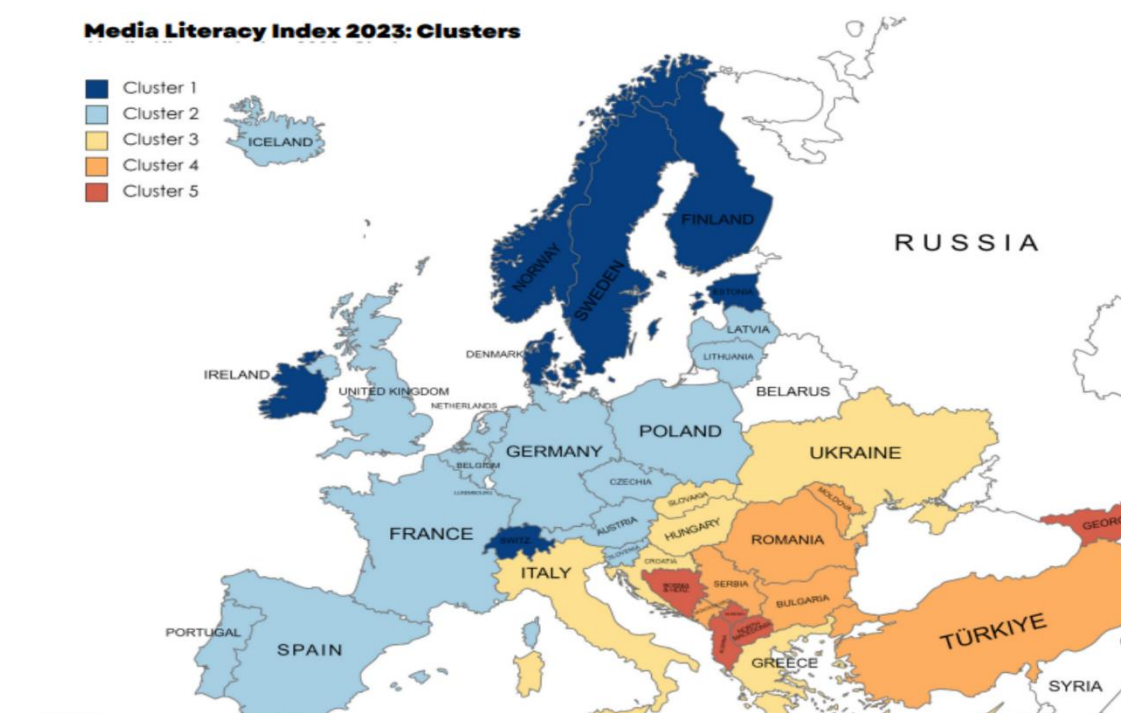
Challenges in Teaching Media Literacy Skills

Italy, Sweden and Romania identify information overload as a challenge, highlighting a mutual recognition of the impact of excessive information on the efficacy of media literacy education. Conversely, Lithuania and Spain's emphasis on the lack of critical thinking as the biggest challenge in teaching media literacy skills highlights the importance of cultivating analytical abilities among individuals to effectively navigate in today's media landscape.

5. Conclusion

Although they face the same challenges, the countries participating in this research belong to totally different categories concerning the level of media literacy and the large population's awareness of mis/disinformation, according to the Media Literacy Index from 2023. You can see in the picture below each country what cluster belongs from 1 to 5(1-lowest, 5-highest).

Sweden -cluster 1; Spain and Lithuania-cluster 2; Italy-cluster 3; Romania-cluster 4



As we can see here Sweden takes first place from the five countries analyzed. In conclusion, Sweden's approach to tackling misinformation and disinformation stands out as exemplary, with the country prioritizing education, media support, and freedom of speech through well-crafted legislation. This strategy appears to yield positive results. Conversely, while Italy and Spain have legal frameworks in place to combat misinformation and disinformation, they may not achieve the same level of success as Sweden due to other factors at play. This underscores the importance of a holistic approach that considers education, media support, legal measures, and other relevant factors in effectively addressing misinformation and disinformation.

In conclusion, addressing the pervasive issue of disinformation and misinformation demands a nuanced and multifaceted approach. While education is vital, it must be complemented by

effective regulation, careful consideration of the role of social media, and a return to foundational principles such as democracy and civic education. Understanding psychological factors like confirmation bias in seeking, selecting, and interpreting information that conforms to one's preconceived notions is crucial in crafting strategies to combat misinformation effectively. In the European Union, there is a growing recognition of the importance of supporting democratic values and initiatives to tackle disinformation. By adopting a comprehensive approach that addresses both immediate challenges and long-term solutions, we can strive to mitigate the harmful effects of fake news and safeguard the integrity of our information ecosystem and democratic institutions.

Overall, this analysis underscores the multifaceted nature of the disinformation challenge and will play a pivotal role in bringing these countries together and addressing the issue of fake news in a more comprehensive way and moreover achieving the project's objectives. The findings and insights gathered through the research will be utilized by various stakeholders involved in the project, including educators, youth workers, and community leaders serving as a guiding resource to bring about positive change and improvements into the communities.

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Annex - Best Practices

Italy

| GOOD PRACTICE INFORMATION | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Name of the Good Practice * | Summer School |
| Type of the Good Practice * | <i>Initiative</i> |
| Country * | Italy |
| City/Region * | Italy. Every year it is based in a different Italian city. |
| Description * | The Summer School of Media Education is an educational and didactic activity aimed at developing a critical understanding of the nature and categories of media, the techniques they use to construct messages and produce meaning, specific genres and languages. It combines theoretical reflection and seminar-laboratory activities (webinars, laboratories masterclasses, plenary sessions, etc.) covering topics related to media education, choosing every year a diverse main topic as the focus of the edition. |

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| Target Audience * | It is targeted at parents and teachers who increasingly address the problem of Media Education, at social workers who use the media as place and tool for personal development and promotion, and finally to media professionals as actors not only in communication but also in education, hoping that everyone can network within a more general training system to act in a media-educational sense. |
| Good Practice Level * | <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Regional <input type="checkbox"/> National <input type="checkbox"/> European (Refers to EU Projects that implemented a relevant activity locally. Indicate the Name of the project and the Funding Programme. Local Partner should be considered as Responsible Organisation in 2.7 and co-partners should be mentioned in 2.9) |
| Responsible Organisation * | MED associazione italiana media education |
| Type of Organisation * | <input type="checkbox"/> Public / Governmental Organisation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non Profit Organization/ NGO <input type="checkbox"/> Private Organisation <input type="checkbox"/> Other [please specify.....] |
| Involved Organisations and Stakeholders | |
| Timescale Dates * | From: 1992 <input type="checkbox"/> On-going. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Repeating |
| Objective * | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support formation and training of diverse professionals as teachers or youth workers in the media education area. |

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| Results * | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 32 editions of “Summer School” Support education professionals in updating their skills to the changes and innovations of media for ensuring quality media education. |
| Innovative elements | |
| Website | https://www.medmediaeducation.it/ |
| Contact Details * | info@medmediaeducation.it – segreteria@medmediaeducation.it |
| Media (Photos, Infographic etc) | |
| | |
| Consideration as a BP * | <p><i>Why do you consider this practice as a Good Practice?</i></p> <p><i>Include additional information, measurable indicators, specific results, success factors, lessons learned etc.</i></p> |

Fields marked with [*] are mandatory

Sweden

| GOOD PRACTICE INFORMATION | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Name of the Good Practice * | 4C Strategies - Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) |
| Type of the Good Practice * | <i>public policy, public strategy, initiative, method, model, project platform, article, tool(specify)</i> |
| Country * | Sweden |
| City/Region * | Government official across Sweden |
| Description * | It is a series of small-scale exercises that involve real scenarios and intensive training to learn fact checking as a part of the countering disinformation strategy |
| Target Audience * | Government Agencies, Country Administrative Boards: 200 attendees from 55 governmental agencies, country councils and municipalities |

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| Good Practice Level * | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National <input type="checkbox"/> European (Refers to EU Projects that implemented a relevant activity locally. Indicate the Name of the project and the Funding Programme. Local Partner should be considered as Responsible Organisation in 2.7 and co-partners should be mentioned in 2.9) |
| Responsible Organisation * | Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) |
| Type of Organisation * | <input type="checkbox"/> Public / Governmental Organisation <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit Organisation / NGO <input type="checkbox"/> Private Organisation <input type="checkbox"/> Other [please specify.....] |
| Involved Organisations and Stakeholders | Municipalities, Regions, Governmental Agencies, Country Councils. |
| Timescale Dates * | From: [] to: [] <input type="checkbox"/> On-going. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Repeating |
| Objective * | Prepare government agencies and county administrative boards to effectively counter disinformation, in accordance with industry best practices |
| Results * | In one kind of exercise, participants were challenged to analyse target groups and worked through a series of questions to develop a strategic narrative. In another, they were presented with information from tailored scenarios and were asked to use tools to identify who was behind the message. As a result, they implemented the received knowledge in skills into practice right after the exercises as it is the big part of their day-to-day tasks: receive, process information and identify s response strategy. |
| Innovative elements | |
| Website | https://www.4cstrategies.com/case_study/countering-disinformation-in-sweden/ |
| Contact Details * | Email: info@4cstrategies.com . |
| Media (Photos, Infographic etc) | |

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| Consideration as a BP * | As for combating disinformation/ misinformation and fake news, it is crucial to stay up-to-date. Not only this strategy includes real cases that are more creative and manipulative but also continuously upsills citizens in identifying them. It is a more tailored and customised approach. In the end, there is no guidance on how to combat fake news as they are created by people and people are so different the same way as their ways of thinking and creative ideas. But there are certain attributes that one can identify when receiving such a piece of information and that is something we can train ourselves in. |
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Romania

| GOOD PRACTICE INFORMATION | |
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| Name of the Good Practice * | I teach media literacy - Media Education and Culture Lab |
| Type of the Good Practice * | Project platform <i>public policy, public strategy, initiative, method, model, project platform, article, tool(specify)</i> |
| Country * | Romania |
| City/Region * | Across Romania |
| Description * | The Media Literacy Lab is a strategic programme run by the Center for Independent Journalism in partnership with the Romanian-American Foundation, through which media literacy concepts are introduced into high-school courses for humanities subjects, following an extensive teacher training process. |
| Target Audience * | high school teachers high school students |
| Good Practice Level * | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National <input type="checkbox"/> European (Refers to EU Projects that implemented a relevant activity locally. Indicate the Name of the project and the Funding Programme. Local Partner should be considered as Responsible Organisation in 2.7 and co-partners should be mentioned in 2.9) |
| Responsible Organisation * | Centre for Independent Journalism |

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| Type of Organisation * | <input type="checkbox"/> Public / Governmental Organisation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit Organisation / NGO <input type="checkbox"/> Private Organisation <input type="checkbox"/> Other [please specify.....] |
| Involved Organisations and Stakeholders | Romanian-American Foundation Romanian Ministry of Education and Research Norsensus Mediaforum |
| Timescale Dates * | - The program has been running since 2017 and is now in its 4th year of implementation. The programme runs in several phases until 2030. <input type="checkbox"/> On-going. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Repeating |
| Objective * | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. know-how and support for introducing media literacy into learning practice for secondary school students, in collaboration with teachers of humanities subjects 2. Advocacy for the inclusion of media literacy in the common core of skills that pupils acquire |
| Results * | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 79 high schools have become our partners, hosted the workshops for students and facilitated the inclusion of other teachers from their high schools in the program, fostering the creation of extended media education zones currently operating in Iasi, Bistrita, Tecuci, Roman, Tulcea and Timisoara • To develop a model of continuous professional development that helps Romanian language teachers incorporate media education into their classroom work, reaching 480 teachers and approx. 48,000 students • To continue the advocacy process for the inclusion of media literacy skills in the high school curriculum |
| Innovative elements | |
| Website | https://cji.ro/pem/ https://www.facebook.com/groups/Educatiemedial/ |
| Contact Details * | contact@cji.ro cristina.jamschek@cji.ro |
| Media (Photos, Infographic etc) | https://radioas.ro/2021/12/24/proiectul-predau-educatie-media-laboratorul-de-educatie-si-cultura-media-sprijin-pentru-dezvoltarea-comunitatilor-locale/ |


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| Consideration as a BP * | <p><i>Why do you consider this practice as a Good Practice?</i></p> <p>The most impressive aspect of this programme is the large scale to which it relates and, at the same time, the ambition to introduce media literacy into the school curriculum.</p> <p>In one year only, they reached 120 teachers and around 12000 high-school students, and they were working during regular class time.</p> |
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Fields marked with [*] are mandatory

Spain

| GOOD PRACTICE INFORMATION | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Name of the Good Practice * | Antirumor day |
| Type of the Good Practice * | Public strategy and project |
| Country * | Spain |
| City/Region * | Almassora |
| Description * | This initiative has been carried out by the Department of Social Services and the Pangea office of attention to migrants of the City Council of Almassora. From these offices have organized several editions of this conference in order to raise awareness among the population about the negative stereotypes that are transmitted about citizens of foreign origin. To do this, the professionals in charge of the activities guide the attendees on how to analyze different sources of information and to develop a critical sense before considering all the information received as accurate. |
| Target Audience * | General public, youth, youth workers, policy makers, social workers, ect. |
| Good Practice Level * | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Regional <input type="checkbox"/> National <input type="checkbox"/> European (Refers to EU Projects that implemented a relevant activity locally. Indicate the Name of the project and the Funding Programme. Local Partner should be considered as Responsible Organisation in 2.7 and co-partners should be mentioned in 2.9) |
| Responsible Organisation * | City Council of Almassora |

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| Type of Organisation * | <p>X Public / Governmental Organisation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit Organisation / NGO</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Private Organisation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other [please specify.....]</p> |
| Involved Organisations and Stakeholders | NGOs in the province that work with the migrant population and the Universitat Jaume I. |
| Timescale - Dates * | <p>From: 2019 to: present day</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> On-going. X Repeating</p> |
| Objective * | <p>The main objective of these sessions has been focused on providing volunteers, social workers, youth workers and members of the community in general with theoretical and practical tools and training in anti-rumor strategies.</p> <p>To this end, we are working to raise awareness of the existence of this problem, which mainly affects children and adolescents in the community. It also seeks to raise awareness about the importance of removing the stereotypical view of the population and how rumours contribute to that perception.</p> |
| Results * | The anti-rumor conference has been very well received by the associative network of the community and even the province, and has even been related to its counterparts, the Stop Rumors Castelló conference, which has a wider scope. Thanks to these sessions it has been possible to reach a significant number of community members and staff specialised in working with adolescents and young people, to provide them with positive tools in the fight against misinformation and the spread of rumours, especially about the migrant population. All of this results in increased social dialogue and inclusion, with the aim of enhancing responsible and inclusive citizenship. |
| Innovative elements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitates contact between personnel specialised in working with adolescents and young people and the community. - Provides volunteers, association staff and social workers with practical tools for working with the youth population. - It becomes a space for open dialogue between the community and the municipality to detect problems and propose solutions that result in a better social understanding. - It allows to detect and describe manifestations of hate speech and ways of spreading fake news in the youth population. |
| Website | https://www.almassora.es/ca |

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| Contact Details * | ajuntament@almassora.es |
| Media (Photos, Infographic etc) |  |
| Consideration as a BP * | <p><i>Why do you consider this practice as a Good Practice?</i></p> <p><i>Include additional information, measurable indicators, specific results, success factors, lessons learned etc</i></p> |

Lithuania

| GOOD PRACTICE INFORMATION | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Name of the Good Practice * | "Digital News Innovation Fund" - platform "Demaskuok.lt" (https://demaskuok.lt). |
| Type of the Good Practice * | National initiative, project platform, volunteering |
| Country * | Lithuania |
| City/Region * | Across Lithuania |
| Description * | It is a national initiative that brings together representatives of the public, the media and the state to fight fake news, which causes confusion, undermines trust in the state and its democratic institutions, and has negative psychological, emotional and economic consequences. |
| Target Audience * | Internet users, young adults and students, educational institutions, journalists and media professionals, policymakers and government officials, general public interested in current affairs, engaging citizens |

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| Good Practice Level * | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National <input type="checkbox"/> European (Refers to EU Projects that implemented a relevant activity locally. Indicate the Name of the project and the Funding Programme. Local Partner should be considered as Responsible Organisation in 2.7 and co-partners should be mentioned in 2.9) |
| Responsible Organisation * | An initiative created and managed by "Delfi", which is one of the largest news websites in Lithuania and the Baltic States. Delfi launched this platform as part of its broader commitment to providing accurate news and information and combating the spread of misinformation and disinformation. |
| Type of Organisation * | <input type="checkbox"/> Public / Governmental Organisation <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit Organisation / NGO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Organisation <input type="checkbox"/> Other [please specify.....] |
| Involved Organisations and Stakeholders | Media organizations, media specialists and journalists, educational institutions, various NGO's, Google, experts and academics |
| Timescale Dates * | From: [] to: [] <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On-going. <input type="checkbox"/> Repeating |
| Objective * | Bringing together professionals and amateurs from a wide range of disciplines - from the social sciences, humanities and exact sciences to the media, business, entertainment and their followers - who can contribute to the fight against disinformation. |
| Results * | Over the years, the platform has made significant strides in combating misinformation in Lithuania. The owner of the platform shared that in the first year platform has reached around 90% of Lithuanians population. By leveraging a blend of automated systems and expert volunteer input, it has effectively monitored and debunked disinformation, particularly from Russian and Lithuanian media sources. After receiving attention and funding from Google, the world's largest search engine, the DEMASKUOK.LT project became a separate initiative of national importance. DEMASKUOK.LT is being developed as a distinct channel, where representatives from different fields, competitors and partners, members of the state and individual communities join forces for a common goal. |

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| Innovative elements | The platform, known as Demaskuok.lt, employs an automated mechanism that scrutinizes roughly 10,000 news pieces from Russian and Lithuanian media outlets across both nations. This system is designed to detect articles containing certain key phrases that may signal the presence of disinformation. |
| Website | https://demaskuok.lt |
| Contact Details * | Email: info@debunk.eu |
| Media (Photos, Infographic etc) | |
| | |
| Consideration as a BP * | To instantly monitor, identify, and dispel disinformation, the platform efficiently blends powerful automated technologies with the vital knowledge of volunteers. Its ability to analyse thousands of items from numerous media sources, detecting potential disinformation, and then applying human insight for verification, sets a high standard for accuracy and speed in fact-checking. Furthermore, Demaskuok.lt's broad reach, which affects a sizable section of Lithuania's population, demonstrates how digital platforms may be used to develop an informed and resilient public. The platform's ability to respond to misinformation quickly, frequently within a few of hours, illustrates its success in a world where prompt correction of inaccurate information is critical. |

Fields marked with [*] are mandatory

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