

FAIR NEWS

PROJECT:

Fair News: Learning to navigate knowledge

Formative report on the creation and
development of educational
communities using methodologies of
Theory of Knowledge and Media and
Information Literacy



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CONTRIBUTORS



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INTRODUCTION



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IN FEBRUARY 2020,

Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, said “we’re not just fighting an epidemic; we’re fighting an infodemic.” The COVID-19 pandemic has made even more clear how misinformation and disinformation are a threat to our societies, our democracies, our people. Already, in the Strategic Agenda for 2019-2024, it is underlined that the EU is committed to protecting societies, citizens and freedoms from hybrid threats, including misinformation and disinformation actions.



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In this context, new forms of media literacy and critical thinking are of central importance for a new generation of digital citizens. The second major context for this project is the lack of a connected, organic educational community in which all young people can participate.

The project seeks to bring together concepts of media literacy, digital citizenship and educational collaboration to create and promote 'fair news'.

The schools' needs for innovation in the teaching of key competencies is critical thinking and media literacy will be met through the project's focus on collaboration and facilitation as an educational approach.





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Strengthen their digital, literacy and cultural awareness and expression competencies in alignment with the May 2018 EU Council Recommendation on Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning.

Create a training programme for high school students with clearly described competencies in media literacy and critical thinking, and to foster increased connection and educational communities among students of this age.

The development of theoretical and practical knowledge on Medial and Information Literacy and the creation and sharing of media content from the perspective of high school students.



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MEDIA LITERACY AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN EUROPE



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Media and young people in Europe

Within the Fair news project, a particular space was dedicated to the analysis of the relationship between young people and the media.

We have taken data especially from «Digital news report 2022» by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism – University of Oxford.

The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RIS) is a UK-based research centre and think tank founded in 2006, which operates Thomson Reuters Journalism Fellowship Programme.

Thomson Reuters Corporation is the owner of Reuters news agency, which is considered one of the “Big Four”, the most important international news agencies in the world – alongside with France Press, United Press and Associated Press.

«Digital news report» by RISJ is published every year to focus about digital news consumption based on a YouGov survey of over 92,000 online news consumers in 46 markets worldwide, 24 of which are European countries.

In the 2022 report a section is dedicated to «The Changing News Habits and Attitudes of Younger Audiences».

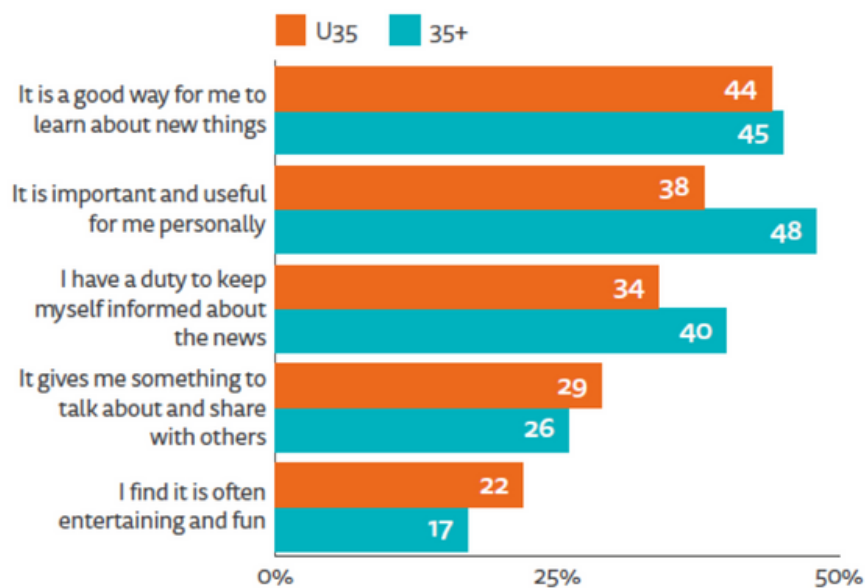
What about younger audiences?

We focused on the excerpt from the younger audiences analysis:

“We find that this group [under 30s] that has grown up with social media is not just different but more different than they were in the past. We also explore their use of newer visual networks for news such as TikTok and Instagram”.

The report also highlights “the emerging habits of a new generation of social natives” (aged 18-24), different from the digital natives generation (aged 25-34)

PROPORTION WHO SAY EACH IS WHY THEY KEEP UP WITH THE NEWS - BY AGE - ALL MARKETS





Social media

A very important part of the analysis concerns which are the most used social media and their spread of use:

«Facebook remains the most-used social network for news but users are more likely to say they see too much news in their feed compared with other networks.

While older groups remain loyal to the platform [...] the youngest generation has switched much of its attention to more visual networks over the last three years.

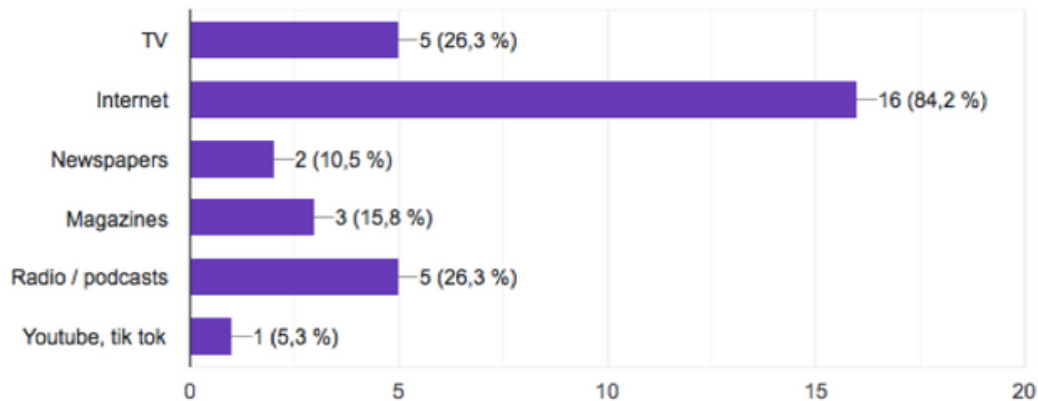
TikTok has become the fastest growing network in this year's survey, reaching 40% of 18–24s, with 15% using the platform for news.

Telegram has also grown significantly in some markets, providing a flexible alternative to Meta-owned WhatsApp».

«Facebook remains the most important network across our basket of 12 countries, but has dropped by 12 percentage points since 2016. Twitter has largely stagnated over the last decade in terms of its user base, though it remains hugely influential with journalists and politicians. Meta-owned Instagram is now more widely used for news, while TikTok has overtaken Snapchat from a low base».

«Most of these changes – such as the decline in Facebook use over the last few years – result from shifts in behaviour of the youngest cohort of social natives, not older respondents, who tend to have more entrenched habits».

n **Where do students mostly interact with news?**



Sources for younger audiences

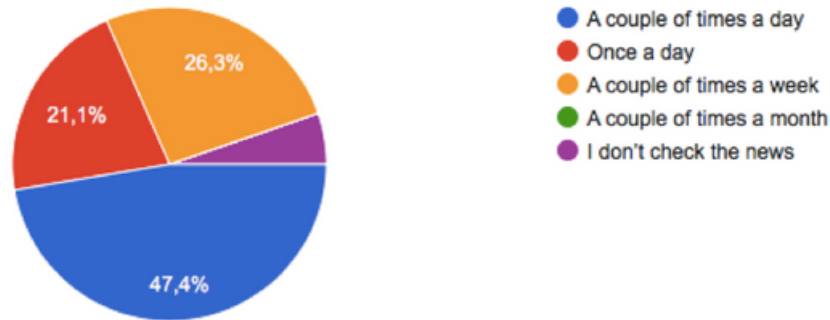
Looking at the report, the difference over the years in the use of the internet and social media is evident:

«Since the Digital News Report began tracking respondents' main source of news, social networks have steadily replaced news websites as a primary source for younger audiences overall, with 39% of social natives (18–24s) across 12 markets now using social media as their main source of news, compared with 34% who prefer to go direct to a news website or app. We also find that social natives are far more likely to access news using side-door sources such as social media, aggregator sites, and search engines than older groups».

A TV reporter who also has a TikTok page gives us regular updates ... feels comforting and more intimate than watching on TV news.

Female, 22, UK

How often they check news?



Who do we trust? What is the interest?

Interests that are developed:

«The proportion of news consumers who say they avoid news, often or sometimes, has increased sharply across countries. This type of selective avoidance has doubled in the UK (46%) over the last five years, with many respondents saying news has a negative effect on their mood.

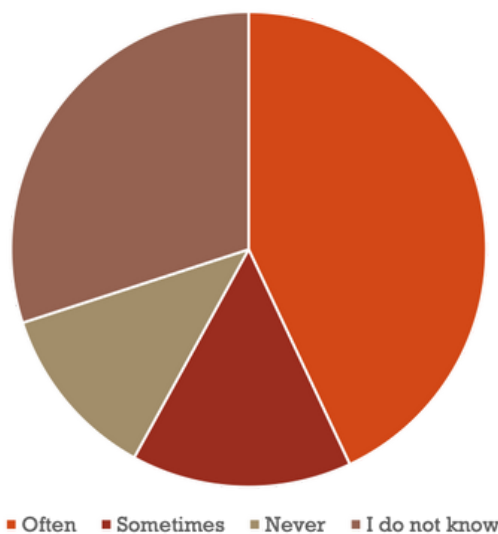
A significant proportion of younger [...] people say they avoid news because it can be hard to follow or understand –suggesting that the news media could do much more to simplify language and better explain or contextualise complex stories».

«Younger groups [hold] a stronger preference for journalists being able to express their personal opinions freely on social media. As some media organisations tighten social media guidelines, they are facing resistance from younger journalists who take a different view and are trying to push the boundaries. This is just another way in which journalistic norms are being challenged by social and digital media».

I do sometimes finish reading articles maybe more stressed about a situation, or sometimes just confused.

Female, 24, UK

Do you ever get confused or unsure about what to trust on media while reading/watching/listening to information? If yes, how often?

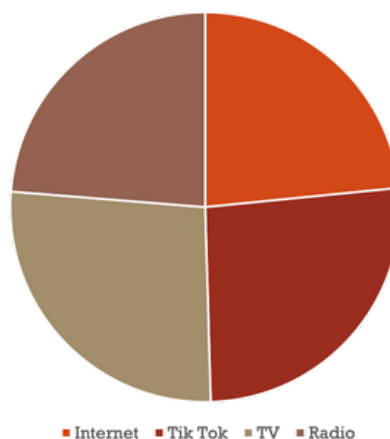


«We continue to see longer-term falls in interest and trust in news across age groups [...] particularly among younger audiences. Under 35s are the lowest-trusting age groups, with only a third (37%) of both 18–24s and 25–34s across all markets saying they trust most News most of the time, compared with nearly half of those 55 and older (47%). Young people also increasingly choose to avoid the news, with substantial rises in avoidance among social natives since we last asked this question in 2019».

«Most often, younger audiences (under 35) say the news has a negative effect on their mood (34%) and, most recently, that there is too much news coverage of topics like politics or Coronavirus (39%). In particular, the longstanding criticism of the depressing or overwhelming nature of news persists among young people. For instance, in the UK, two-thirds (64%) of news avoiders under 35 say the news brings down their mood. Our qualitative research participants described forming habits of avoiding this negativity».

I actively avoid news about politics as it frustrates me. It makes me feel small and no matter what my views it won't make any difference at all to what goes on in the country or world, so there is no point listening to it.

Female, 22, UK



Which news sources do you not trust? (More options are possible)

"Young people, particularly digital natives (27%), also at times avoid the news because they perceive it as biased or untrustworthy. As under 35s grew up in the digital age and have been socialised by older generations to be critical of the information they consume, our qualitative research suggests they take a particularly sceptical approach to all information».

Another source taken into consideration by our analysis is the Ofcom News Consumption in the UK 2021/22 report, that is based on the British population but which can still give interesting insights:

"Teenagers in the UK are getting their news from social media rather than traditional news channels to stay up to date. For the first time Instagram, TikTok and YouTube are now the most popular news sources among 12 to 15-year-olds.

According to the figures, Instagram was the most popular with young people and was used by 29% of teenagers, ahead of TikTok and YouTube, both of which were used by 28%.

ITV news, including regional ITV news bulletins was fourth, while the BBC's two main channels, one and two - historically the most popular news source among this age group - has been knocked down to fifth place.

However trust in social media news sources varies - half of YouTube and Twitter users think they provide trustworthy news stories.

Despite its popularity, fewer than a third of teenagers (30%) trust TikTok's news content.

News viewing to BBC One, BBC Two, the BBC News channel, ITV and Sky News is now below pre-pandemic levels, which is part of a longer-term decline in traditional TV news viewing.

However, TV news remains the most trusted news source among UK adults, with social media considered the least reliable".



Media literacy

A central point to be explored when talking about young people and the media is the level of media literacy that the younger generations have and how much they can be taught about this issue

Media literacy has become increasingly important in the modern world, particularly among young people. In fact, the latter have more and more access to the media and new technologies, but often do not know how to use them and how to distinguish between real information and fake news.

In Europe, the relationship between the media and young people is complex, but increasingly close. Young people are the most connected generation ever, with social media and the internet at their fingertips for most of their day. This has led to increased attention to how the media affect their daily lives and the need to educate them to use the media safely and consciously.

Media literacy has therefore become a priority in the European Union, where more and more countries are introducing educational programs to teach students how to surf the internet safely, avoid online pitfalls, and distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources.

Furthermore, the problem of the spread of fake news and disinformation has made the need for adequate media literacy even more urgent. The European Commission has approved guidelines to fight fake news and to help citizens avoid falling into online traps.

Another important aspect is the promotion of media pluralism and freedom of expression, fundamental for any democracy. Supporting independent media and protecting press freedom are central issues for the European Union.

In summary, media literacy is an issue that affects all of society but has a particular impact on young people. Educating young people to use the media consciously is a priority to ensure an informed society and to flourish with vital and reliable information. Mass communication can be a double-edged sword, but if people are educated to use it correctly, its benefits can be enormous.



Here are some examples of activities that can raise young people's awareness of the subject:

Teaching digital skills: It is essential that young people acquire a good understanding of how digital media work, such as how social networks, search engines and messaging platforms work.

Promote criticism: Young people should be encouraged not to take for granted the information they find online, but to constantly question, analyze and verify it.

Use reliable sources: Suggest that young people use reliable sources of information such as reputable news organizations and organizations specializing in data verification.

Checking the source of news: Ask young people to check the source of news and to look out for websites that publish fake or made-up news.

Use news checking tools: There are many tools available online, such as FactCheck.org, Snopes, and PolitiFact that provide information about the veracity of news stories.



Watch out for sensational headlines: Explain to young people that sensational headlines are often used to get attention, but that they are not always the truth.

Use critical thinking: explain to young people that critical thinking is the ability to analyse, contextualize and evaluate information objectively and helps to avoid falling into the trap of fake news.

Promote responsible sharing: suggesting young people to only share information they have verified as true, avoiding spreading false or misleading content.

There are several useful tools to better develop media literacy especially with younger people:

Media education: it is an educational approach that aims to develop critical awareness of the media in order to face and understand the information, images and stories that the media transmit.

Role-playing: creating make-believe situations where young people can develop media literacy such as creating a TV programme, news bulletin or website.

School journalism projects: both written and digital, where students can develop their research, interviewing and writing skills.

21 Jul 24°
18°

Watch Li

Business Fnts & Arts Travel Offbeat
Instagram, TikTok



Social Media Educational Counseling: Helping young people understand how social media can affect their lives and develop the skills to use these tools ethically and safely.
Workshops and labs: Organize specific training activities and labs focusing on media literacy and online safety.

Assessment Tools: Develop tools to assess youth's understanding of media, including analysis of advertising, understanding of copyrights, and ability to recognize misinformation.





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SITUATIONAL REPORT



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AUSTRIA

The research phase in Austria among students and teachers was very fruitful and led to important discoveries about media consumption and how it affects students from the perspective of both students and teachers.



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Important to note that this was a considerable contribution to the preparation for the labs in Austria. Having a general view on the situation, how, for instance, students perceive fake news, check information (if they do), which social networks they like to use, and what possible danger overuse of socials can cause, helped in the adaptation of the material to students in Austria.



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The research phase has demonstrated that it is something students are, first of all, interested in. There were many students and teachers who wanted to participate and share among their peers. Moreover, it was also noted that students are already much aware of the issue.



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When analyzing the responses, one could notice that the responses are more positive in understanding the topic. It means that students of the target age in Austria are fully aware that there is fake news out there, and they must check information. That is why, while preparing for the workshops, trainers and teachers could dig more deeply into the topic and ask more difficult questions, making students stop, think and provide more profound responses.

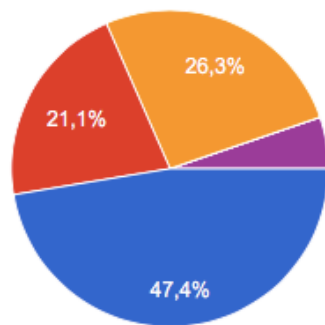
That is why, a big focus was given to the critical thinking and Theory of Knowledge, since these notions are deeper and the base for our perception.

The other important thing is teachers' perspective of students' media usage. That was also one of the blocks in the workshop preparation which was taken into consideration.

In the following pages, there are some results from the research phase.

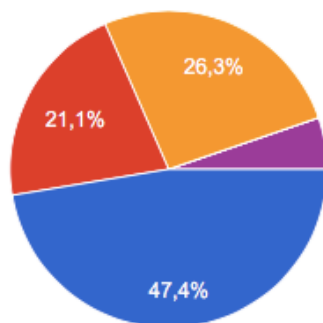


How often they check news



- A couple of times a day
- Once a day
- A couple of times a week
- A couple of times a month
- I don't check the news

What platforms they use



- A couple of times a day
- Once a day
- A couple of times a week
- A couple of times a month
- I don't check the news



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What news sources students do trust:

The most common answers: .

- BBC, Economist, Bloomberg, Zeit im BILD
- Official governmental websites
- "my brain"



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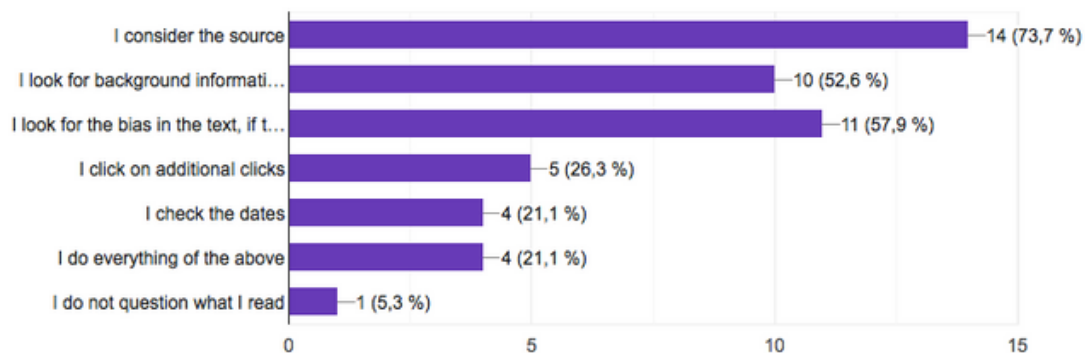
What news sources students do not trust:

The most common answers: .

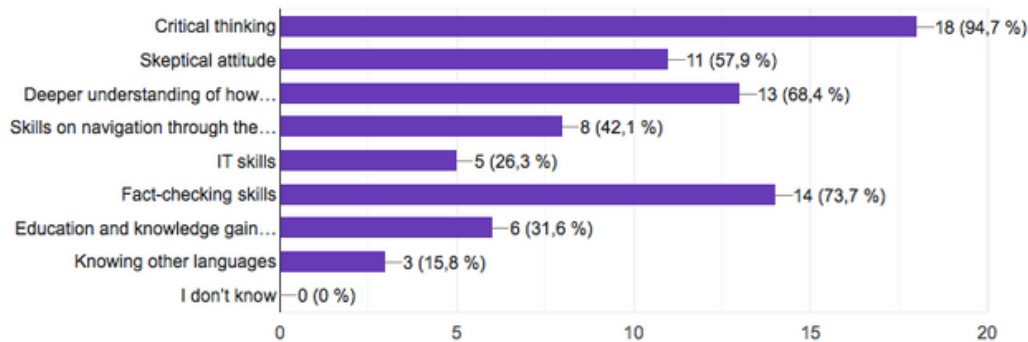
- None
- Unfamiliar
- With low numbers of followers
- On Facebook
- Unofficial news
- News which come from country where there is no freedom of speech
- CNN, Foxnews

**57 % OF STUDENTS IN AUSTRIA
ALWAYS CHECK THE NEWS, AND
THE OTHER - SOMETIMES.
HOWEVER, NOBODY ANSWERED
THEY THEY NEVER CHECK!**

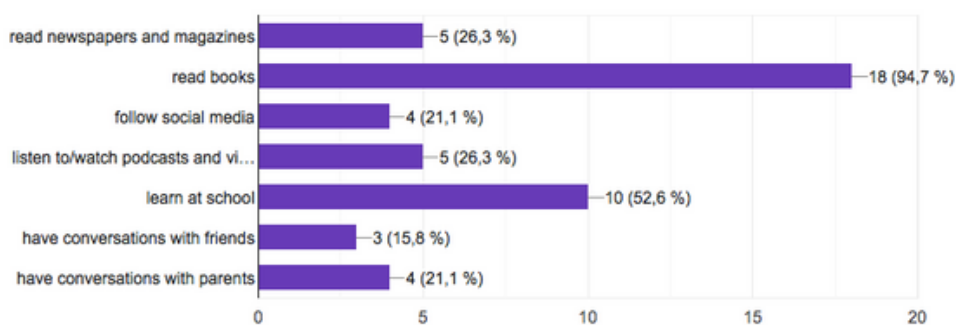
HOW THEY CHECK WHETHER THE
INFORMATION IS CORRECT OR NOT



What are the most important skills when detecting a piece of fake news? Critical thinking and learning at school win!



What to do in order to detect a biased/fake piece of news?





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BULGARIA

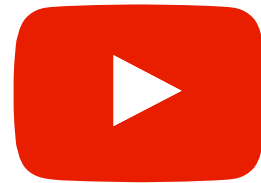
THE FOLLOWING REPORT PRESENTS THE RESULTS FROM A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY KNOW AND CAN ASSOCIATION IN BULGARIA, FOCUSING ON THE USAGE OF NEWS BY YOUNG PEOPLE.

The survey aimed to gather information regarding the frequency of news consumption, preferred platforms, trust in sources, reasons for using news, and the role of education in media literacy. The data collected provides insights into the habits and preferences of young Bulgarians when it comes to news consumption.



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The survey found that young people in Bulgaria use various platforms to access news. The most commonly used platforms are the internet, particularly social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.





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The frequency of news consumption varies among respondents, with some accessing news a couple of times a day, others once a day, and some depending on the nature of the news.



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When it comes to trust in news sources, the survey revealed that young Bulgarians tend to trust people they know personally and established media platforms. Conversely, they express distrust towards websites they have not interacted with before. This suggests that familiarity and personal connections play a significant role in determining the credibility of news sources for this demographic.



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Reasons for using news among young Bulgarians:

- Staying informed about current events
- Influencing politics
- Gathering background information

Usage of news for questionable purposes:

- Spreading gossip
- Promoting commercial interests

Importance of critical evaluation of news content





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The survey assessed the role of education in developing media literacy skills among young Bulgarians. The results suggest that while some participants reported learning about news at school, the majority mentioned that they had only heard about it in the public space but were not taught about it in a structured manner. Respondents expressed a desire for more knowledge and emphasized that the education received in schools is insufficient in terms of media literacy.





SKILLS AND ATTITUDES RELATED TO NEWS CONSUMPTION AMONG YOUNG BULGARIANS:

- Critical thinking
- Skeptical attitude towards news
- Desire for deeper understanding of how media works
- Navigation skills in the media landscape
- Fact-checking abilities
- Importance of education and knowledge gained from school

Know and Can Association's survey provides insights into news usage among young Bulgarians, highlighting social media's prominence and the need for critical evaluation of news sources. It emphasizes the demand for comprehensive education and media literacy skills. These findings can guide future initiatives promoting responsible news consumption and enhancing media literacy among Bulgarian youth.



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ROMANIA

**THE FAIR NEWS SURVEY ANALYZED THE
RESPONSES OF 347 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS,
PRIMARILY AGED BETWEEN 16 AND 17 YEARS OLD.
THE SURVEY EXPLORED THEIR NEWS
CONSUMPTION HABITS AND ATTITUDES
TOWARDS MEDIA LITERACY.**



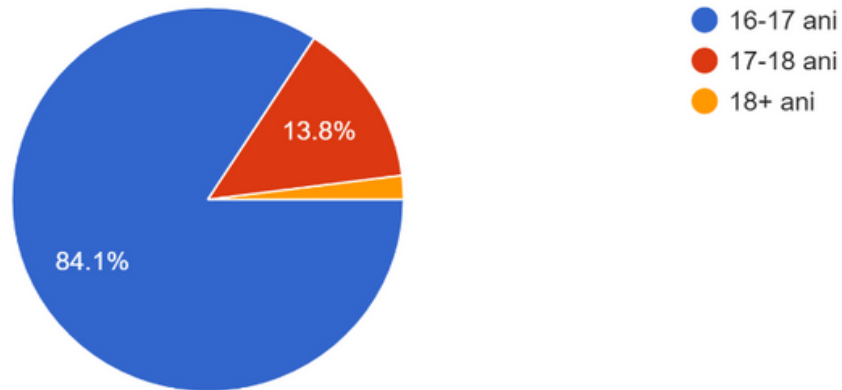
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KEY FINDINGS

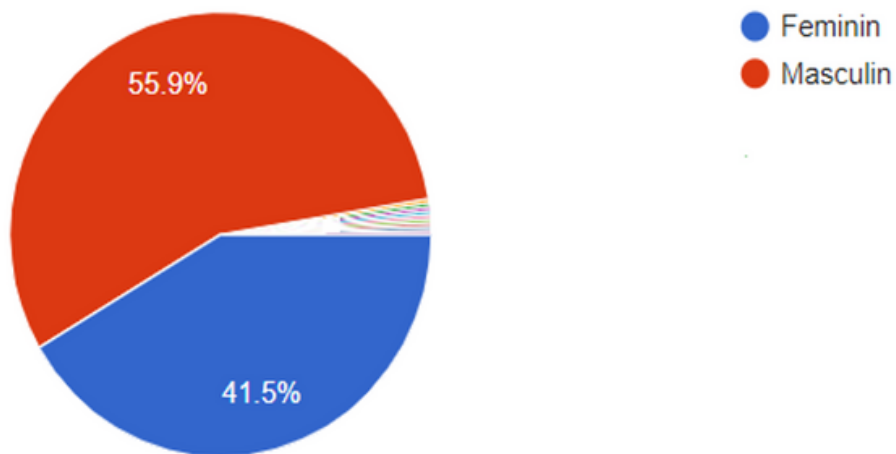
- Gender distribution slightly favors males.
- Instagram and TikTok are the most accessed platforms.
- 21% of respondents claim to not follow news, but only 0.3% show no interest or do not read news.
- Lack of trust in mass media, with over 90% encountering fake news.
- Despite awareness (almost 60%) that social media provides fake news, they continue to use it.
- 49% believe podcasts and videos can inform them, though lack of visual contact and awareness of speaker intentions can lead to misinformation.



How old are you?



What gender do you identify with?

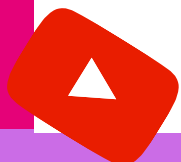
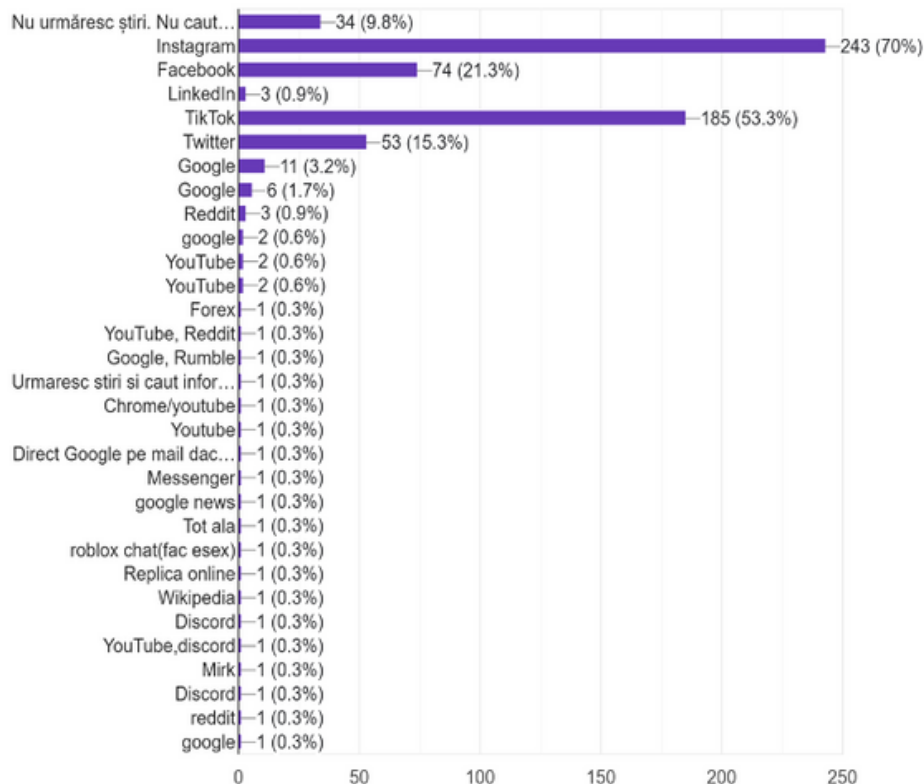


If you use social media for news and information, what platform do you use the most?

70% - Instagram
53.3% - TikTok
21.3% - Facebook

3. Dacă folosești rețelele sociale pentru știri și informații, ce platformă folosești cel mai mult?

347 responses



How often do you read the news? News can be any information that interests you.

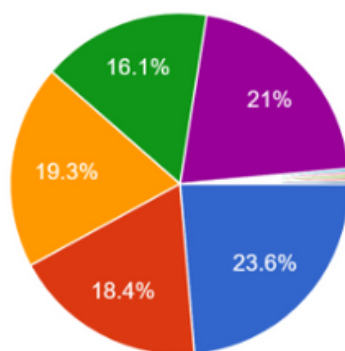
23.6% - A few times a day

21% - Never

19.3% - A few times a week

18.4% - Once a day

16.1% - A few times a month



- De câteva ori pe zi
- O dată pe zi
- De câteva ori pe săptămână
- De câteva ori pe lună
- Nu verific știrile
- Când am chef
- rar
- nu stiu eu apar in ele (sunt terorist)

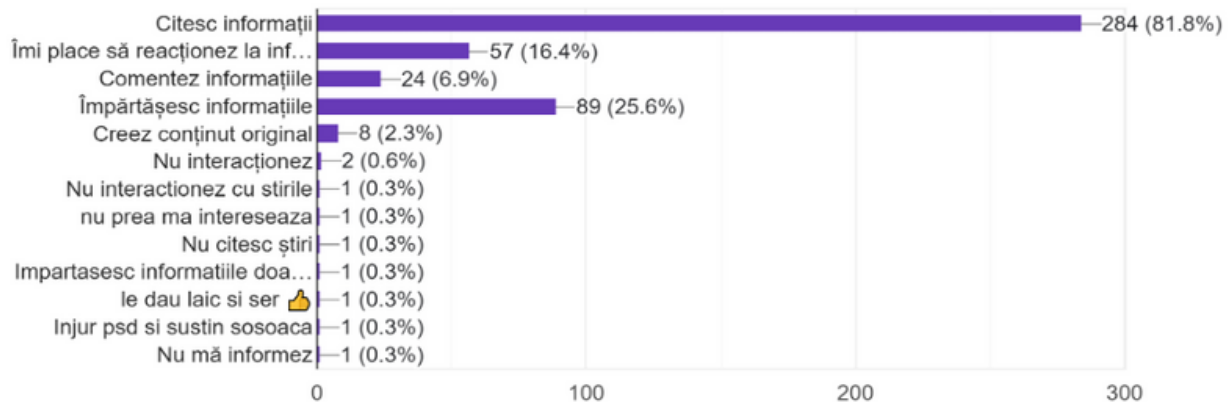
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How do you interact with the news and information on social media?

81.8% - Reading information

25.6% - Sharing information

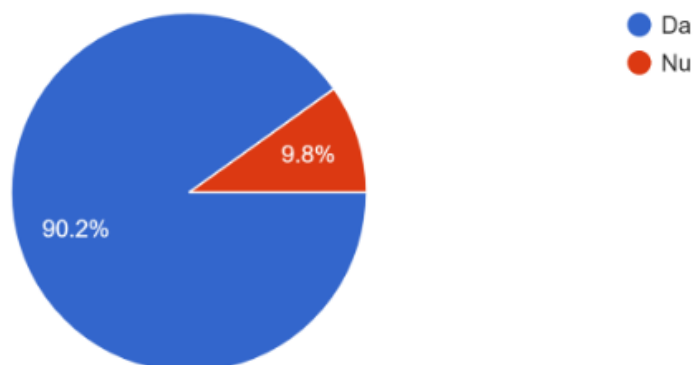
16.4% - Reacting to information



Have you ever discovered information that you recognized as being false?

90.2% - Yes

9.8% - No

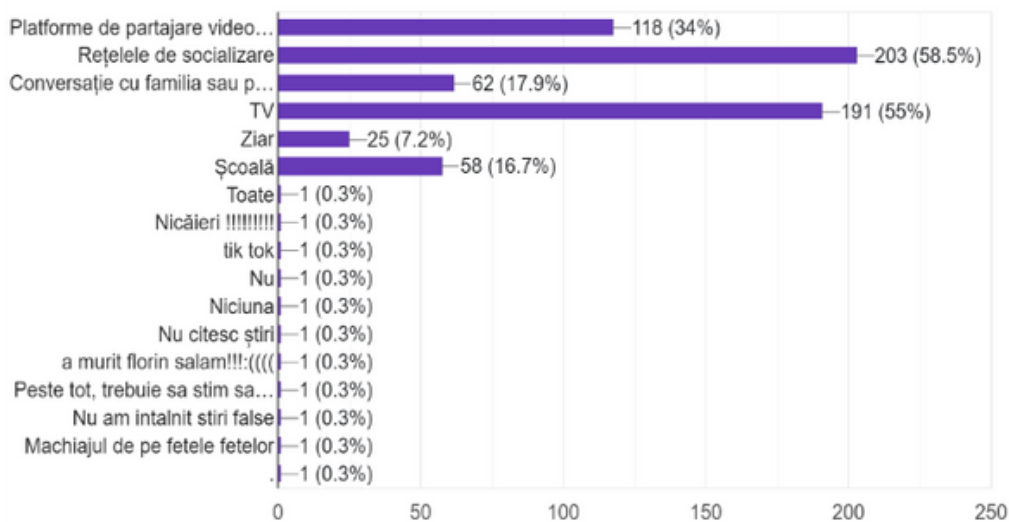


If yes, where have you encountered fake news?

58.5% - Social media

55% - TV

34% - Video sharing platforms (YouTube, Netflix, etc.)



Where did you learn about the existence of “fake news”?

62% - Came across this problem on the internet

36% - I informed myself

27.1% - Came across this problem on the news



KEY FINDINGS

- Critical thinking and a deeper understanding of media are crucial for detecting fake news, as stated by respondents.
- School plays a limited role in training these skills.
- Almost half of the students desire to develop their ability to identify fake news.
- The current school system lacks focus on personal development related to media literacy.
- Families do not significantly contribute to creating an educational environment for identifying and double-checking fake news.

What should people do to become more informed?

49% - Listen to podcasts and watch online videos

45% - Read

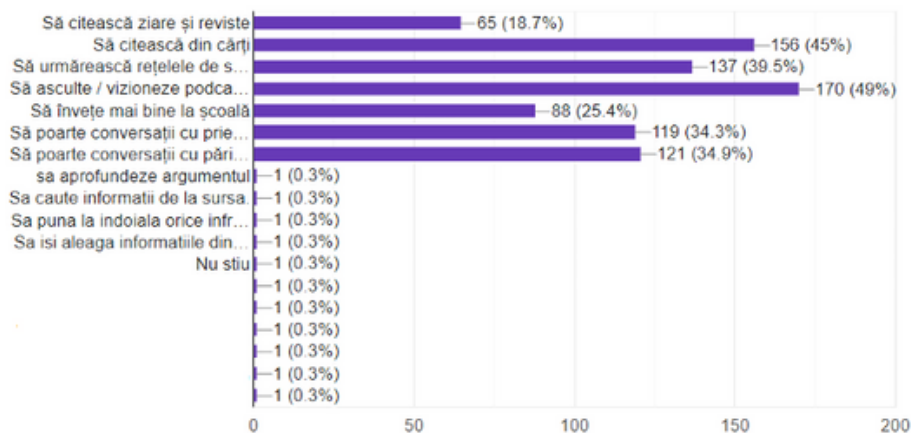
39.5% - Follow social media

34.9% - Talk to parents

34.3% - Talk to friends

25.4% - Learn better in school

18.7% - Read newspapers and magazines

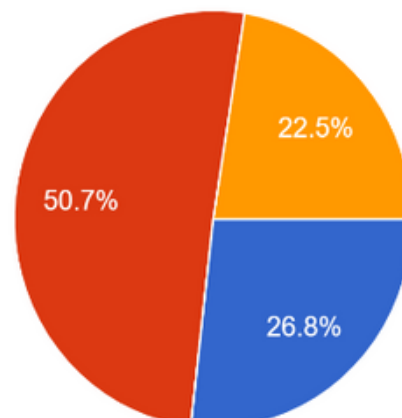


Do you think you are receiving enough information about media from school?

50.7% - No

26.8% - Yes

22.5% - I don't know





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The analysis of the applied questionnaire reveals a range of insights about news consumption and media literacy among Romanian high school students. It highlights the preference for social media platforms, the prevalence of fake news, and the need for critical thinking and media literacy skills.



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The findings emphasize the lack of attention to media literacy within the school system and the limited influence of families in fostering the ability to identify and verify fake news. These findings call for further efforts to enhance media literacy education and create a supportive environment for young Romanians to navigate the complexities of news consumption.

ITALY

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA LITERACY IN HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, media literacy plays a vital role in the education of high school students. With the proliferation of information and media platforms, it is crucial for students to possess the skills to navigate and interpret this vast sea of content. Media literacy empowers students to critically analyze messages, discern credible sources, and understand the influence of media on society. By integrating media literacy into high school education, we equip students with the tools they need to become informed, responsible, and engaged participants in the digital age.



In line with the need to foster media literacy and critical thinking skills among high school students, the "Fair News" project by Traces&Dreams incorporates Theory of Knowledge (TOK) as a valuable tool for equipping students with the necessary abilities to navigate the complex world of information and discern between reliable sources and misleading content.



Traces&Dreams' project aims to promote media literacy and critical thinking among high school students to address misinformation and disinformation challenges. By fostering a connected educational community, the project seeks to empower students as digital citizens, promote 'fair news,' and integrate Theory of Knowledge (TOK) with media and information literacy. This integration equips students with the ability to navigate the media landscape, understand knowledge discourses, and actively participate in democracy. The goal is to develop critical thinkers capable of discerning reliable information and making informed decisions in a complex media environment.



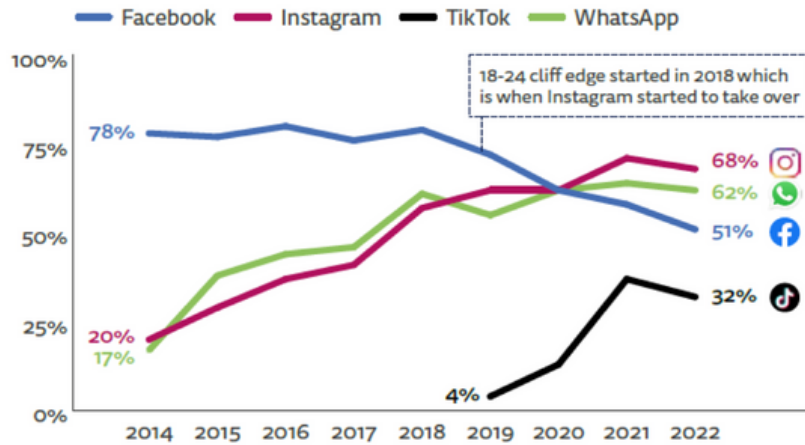
Media and young people in Europe

The following results are based on the analysis taken from the "Digital news report 2022" by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford. This annual report focuses on digital news consumption and is based on a YouGov survey of over 92,000 online news consumers in 46 markets worldwide, including 24 European countries. The report includes a section dedicated to "The Changing News Habits and Attitudes of Younger Audiences."

Social Media and News Consumption:

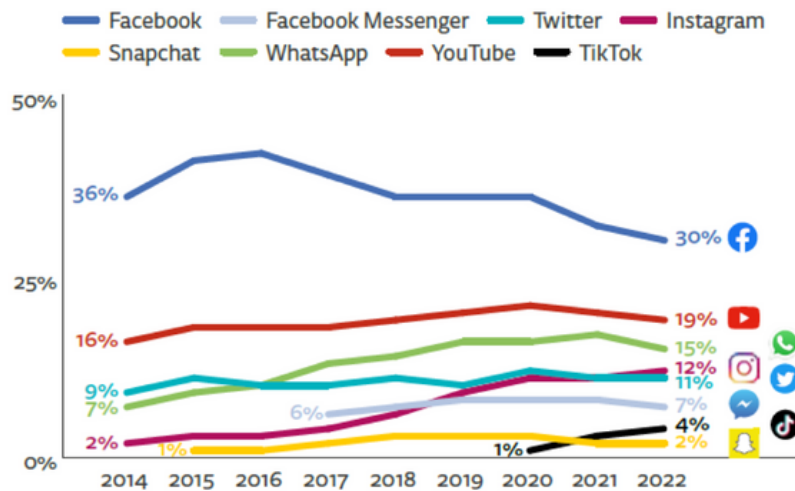
- Facebook remains the most-used social network for news, but younger generations have shifted their attention to more visual networks such as TikTok and Instagram.
- TikTok has become the fastest growing network, with 40% of 18-24-year-olds in Italy using the platform for news.
- Telegram has also seen significant growth in some markets, providing an alternative to WhatsApp.

PROPORTION OF 18-24s (SOCIAL NATIVES) WHO USED EACH SOCIAL NETWORK FOR ANY PURPOSE IN THE LAST WEEK (2014-22) - UK



Q12a. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week for any purpose? Base: 2014-22: 18-24s = 200.

PROPORTION THAT USED EACH SOCIAL NETWORK FOR NEWS IN THE LAST WEEK (2014-22) - AVERAGE OF 12 MARKETS

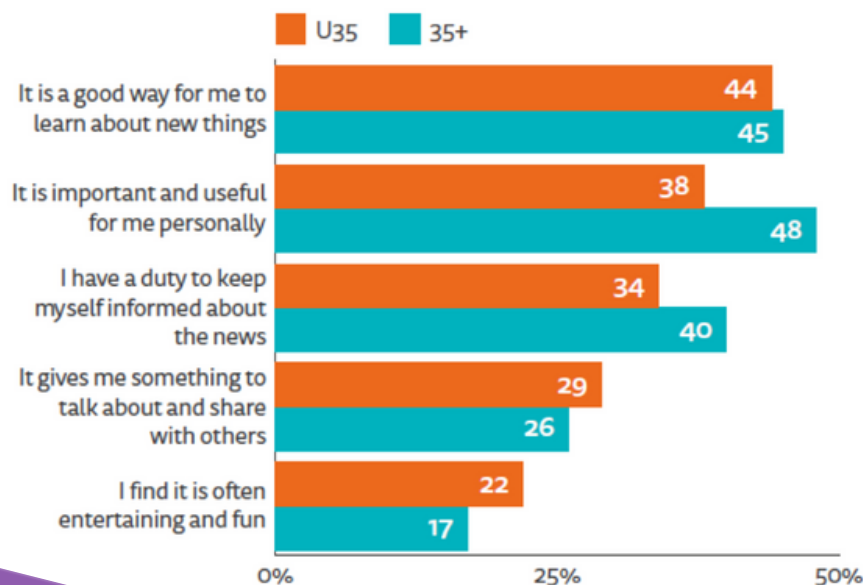


Q12b. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week for news? Base: Total 2014-22 sample in selected markets (most n = 2000). Note: From 2015-21 the 12 countries included are: UK, USA, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Australia, and Brazil. In 2014 we did not poll in Australia or Ireland.

Sources for Younger Audiences:

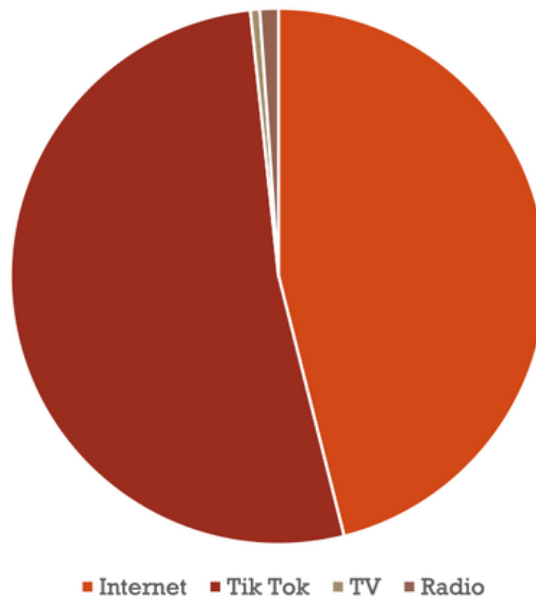
- Social networks have steadily replaced news websites as the primary source of news for younger audiences.
- 39% of social natives (18-24-year-olds) in 12 markets across Europe use social media as their main source of news.
- Social natives are more likely to access news through side-door sources such as social media, aggregator sites, and search engines.

PROPORTION WHO SAY EACH IS WHY THEY KEEP UP WITH THE NEWS - BY AGE - ALL MARKETS



Trust and Perception:

- Trust in news has declined among younger audiences.
- Younger groups (under 35) show a stronger preference for journalists expressing personal opinions freely on social media.
- Some younger journalists challenge social media guidelines, pushing the boundaries of journalistic norms.



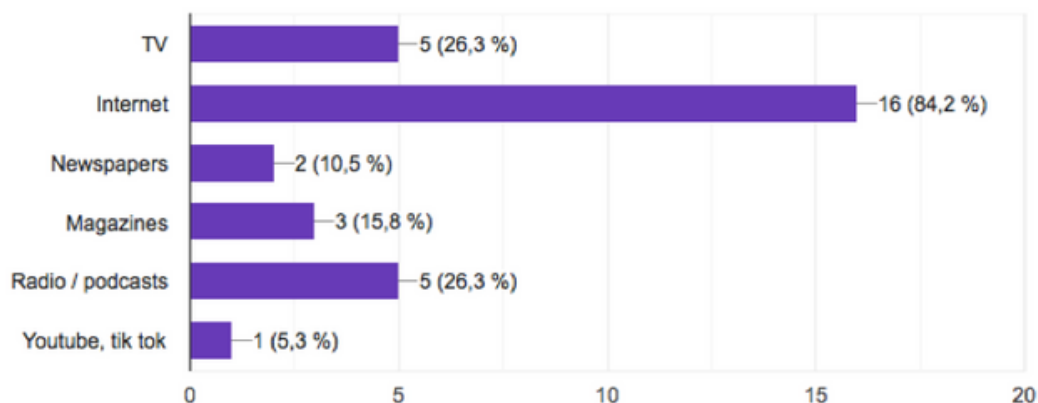
Which news sources do you trust? (More options are possible)

Avoidance and Negative Effects:

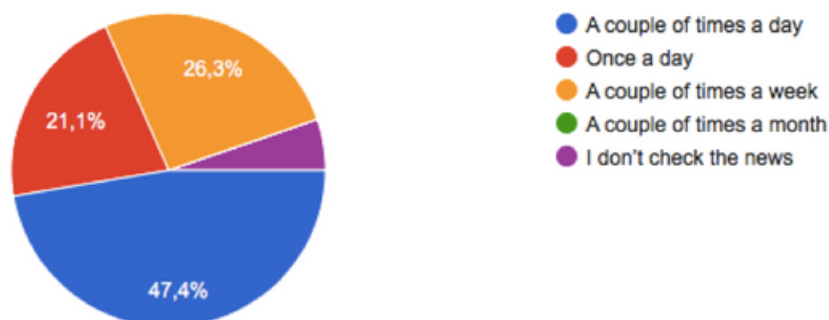
- The proportion of news consumers who avoid news due to its negative effects on mood has increased.
- Younger people avoid news because they find it hard to follow or understand, suggesting a need for simplified language and better contextualization.
- Younger audiences criticize news for being depressing or overwhelming, with two-thirds of UK news avoiders under 35 stating that news brings down their mood.

n

Where do students mostly interact with news?



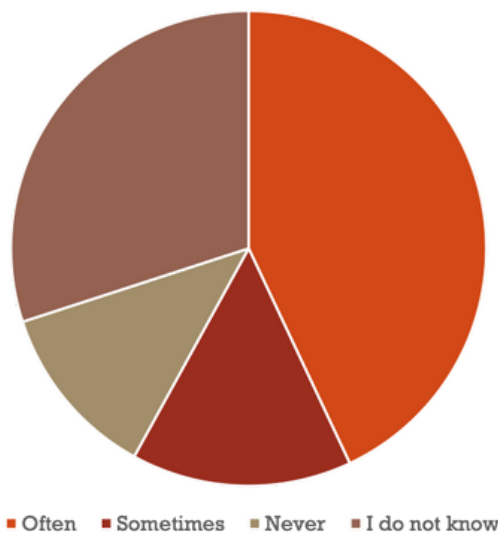
How often they check news?



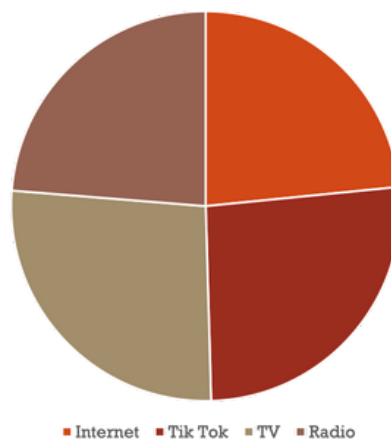
Fake News and Trust:

- 46% of respondents have encountered fake news.
- Younger audiences are more skeptical and critical of information, as they have been socialized to be critical consumers.
- Trust in news is lower among younger age groups, with only 37% of 18-24-year-olds and 25-34-year-olds saying they trust news most of the time.

Do you ever get confused or unsure about what to trust on media while reading/watching/listening to information? If yes, how often?



Which news sources do you not trust? (More options are possible)





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FAIR NEWS

Fake news poses a serious challenge for Europe, especially among schools and youth. Misinformation impacts their ability to critically analyze information and make informed decisions. To address this, educational institutions should prioritize media literacy programs, empowering students to discern reliable sources and develop a healthy skepticism towards misleading content.



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**FAIR
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EDUCATIONAL CONNECTION AND MEDIA LITERACY IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



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“A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes”

This quote is usually attributed to Mark Twain, but it is not actually by him. The Yale Book of Quotations has the following entry: “A lie will go round the world while truth is pulling its boots on.” C. H. Spurgeon, *Gems from Spurgeon* (1859). An earlier version appears in the *Portland (Me.) Gazette*, Sept. 5, 1820: “Falsehood will fly from Maine to Georgia, while truth is pulling her boots on.” Still earlier, Jonathan Swift wrote in *The Examiner*, Nov. 9, 1710: “Falsehood flies, and the truth comes limping after it.”

Definition

Media literacy’s simplest definition is “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in a variety of forms.” But the real-life challenges of media literacy go beyond that.

Media literacy is an expanded conceptualization of literacy that includes the ability to access and analyze media messages as well as create, reflect and take action, using the power of information and communication to make a difference in the world.

Defined by UNESCO as “a set of competencies that empowers citizens to access, retrieve, understand, evaluate and use, to create as well as share information and media content in all formats, using various tools, in a critical, ethical and effective way, in order to participate and engage in personal, professional and societal activities.” Competencies in MIL are closely aligned with those laid out in the May 2018 EU Council Recommendations for Lifelong Learning.



Media and mass media include a wide variety of content that people spend their time reading, watching and experiencing. They include:

- **News programs on television, radio, online and in print**
- **Opinions, often on websites, that are based on the news**
- **Advertisements**
- **Marketing messages**
- **Video games**
- **Music streaming apps**
- **Online video streaming companies**
- **Social media posts**

And those are just the major media sources. The billboard on your drive to school is media. So is the sign in the storefront offering something for sale. With the internet, anyone with an idea and an online connection can become a producer of media through a website or via social media.

MIL can be defined as the capacity to exert critical thinking as to the productions, representations, languages (visuals, texts, sounds), audiences and communities characteristic of mainstream and social media.

Media literacy's simplest definition is "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in a variety of forms." But the real-life challenges of media literacy go beyond that.

A functioning democracy depends on an informed public. The good news is that information is easier to come by than ever before—many students, even at an elementary age, have access to smartphones, the Internet, and a pervasive, never-ending flow of social media. But the big question is: of what quality is that information?

In the context of the contemporary information age, media and information literacy (MIL)(40) is acquiring a strategic importance for digital citizenship as basic educational competences were for citizens of the industrial age. Media and information literacy has become an essential competence as it is the starting point for developing critical thinking and good personal practices for discourse online, and consequently also in the offline world.

Media and information literacy helps to ensure that the digital information ecosystem is trustworthy.

Media literacy is an important action line as a response to disinformation because it can empower individual users as suggested above and mass empowerment of users will lead to greater social resilience against disinformation and perhaps other disorders of the information age.

Key competence

Digital competence involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competences related to cybersecurity), intellectual property related questions, problem solving and critical thinking. (Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Life-long Learning, 22 May 2018).

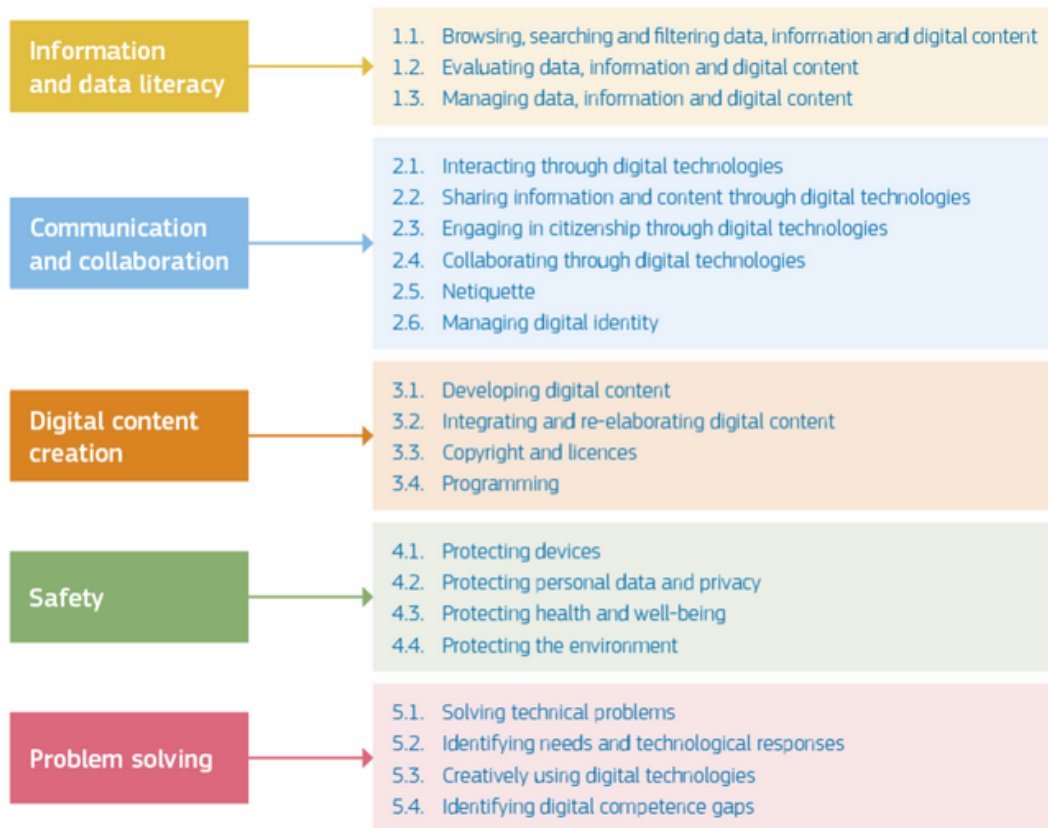
The competences are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes, composed of concepts and facts (i.e. knowledge), descriptions of skills (e.g. the ability to carry out processes) and attitudes (e.g. a disposition, a mindset to act). Key competences are developed throughout life.

Digital competence is a combination of 21 competences grouped in five main areas





FAIR NEWS



EU Policy

The European Commission set up a high-level group of experts (the HLEG) to advise on policy initiatives to counter fake news and disinformation spread online. Disinformation includes all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit.

HLEG recommends the following for improving media literacy within the European Union:

- **Actions promoting a reassessment and adjustment of educational policies. Key competencies and school rankings across EU.** “Media and information literacies” are acknowledged by HLEG as crucial for resisting digital disinformation and should be included explicitly to the list of “EU key competences for lifelong learning”. European institutions and national governments should recognize media and information literacy as core literacy, adding it into school curricula and adding this to the measurements that determine all school rankings. The EU should make this a stated priority with the aim of integrating critical media literacy into the core literacies guaranteed to all schoolchildren in Europe, with formal status in national school curricula. **Training for Teachers.** European institutions and national governments should mandate teacher training colleges to include critical media literacy modules and encourage critical media literacy to become an integral part of all subject-learning, lifelong learning for teachers.

- **Actions in support of media and information literacy programmes for citizens of all ages. Efficiency, Best Practice and Evaluation.** For media and information literacy efforts to be effective in a rapidly changing field, best practices and evaluation are critical. All organisations currently engaged in developing media literacy practices must work to abandon silos, collaborating across civil society, academia, educational authorities, European institutions and e.g. health professionals. **Regional and networked approaches.** The European Commission should encourage and support initiatives that promote media and information literacy to tackle the specific needs of a sub-region

Digital skills for work and for life are at the top of the European Policy Agenda. The EU digital skills strategy and related policy initiatives have the objective of enhancing digital skills and competences for the digital transformation. The European Skills Agenda, of 1 July 2020, supports digital skills for all, including by supporting the objectives of the Digital Education Action Plan (<https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/digital-education-action-plan>), which has the objectives of i) enhancing digital skills and competences for the digital transformation while ii) fostering the development of a high-performing digital education system.

The recently revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2018/1808/oj>) strengthens the role of media literacy. It requires Member States to promote measures that develop media literacy skills (Article 33a).

The revised AVMSD also obliges video-sharing platforms to provide effective media literacy measures and tools. This is a crucial requirement due to the central role such platforms play in giving access to audiovisual content. Platforms are also required to raise users' awareness of these measures and tools (Article 28b).

DATA

A recent OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) Report, *Developing Literacy Skills in a Digital World (2021)* has highlighted the need for new skills in media literacy given the “massive information flow of the digital era.” The report shows that less than 50% of 15-year-olds in OECD countries were able to distinguish fact from opinion, with students in Italy and Austria below the OECD average. The report makes clear that schools are not, currently, fulfilling the role of teaching the skills necessary to navigate ambiguity and manage complexity in the digital world. New approaches are needed to develop these skills among high school students by creating broader educational communities beyond formal education and including a range of stakeholders. This necessity has been foregrounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has not only led to increased social isolation, but has also highlighted the importance of the ability to navigate and participate in digital media.

As recognised in the 2021 OECD report, schools do not currently possess sufficient capacity and competencies in these areas.



NEEDS

The rise of the internet and social media has exponentially expanded our access to information – and that includes information that’s false or misleading.

Within the past generation, the news ecosystem was well-established. Cities and even the smallest of towns had newspapers delivering local information, from zoning boards to youth sports up to national happenings, right to people’s front steps. Meanwhile, state, national, and world news organizations were the primary sources of information.

But with the rise of the Internet, that ecosystem grew unstable. Digital advertising revenues for news operations increased slightly, but print ad revenue crashed.

Today, social media plays an outsized role in how people get their information. In this landscape, unfounded conspiracy theories, outright false news, or shoddy third-hand accounts can spread just as easily as a legitimately reported story. Sometimes easier.

That’s why it’s critical to teach children how to think critically about the media they consume and how to evaluate their sources of information.

In this context, new forms of media literacy and critical thinking are of central importance for a new generation of digital citizens.

For media and information literacy to be effective, it must be implemented on a massive scale in school curricula and in teacher training curricula, with clear methods of evaluation and cross-country comparison and with reflection in educational rankings gauges. This is currently missing.



The benefits of media literacy for students are multiple. First and foremost, media literacy helps students become wiser consumers of media as well as responsible producers of their own media. Along those same lines, teaching media literacy helps to foster critical thinking in students.

It helps to navigate a media-saturated world when you have learned to always ask (and hopefully answer) two questions: What is the intent of the message and who created it?

These two questions form the basis of media literacy.

Teachers can play a significant role in helping students understand the differences in media outlets, the messages they receive and ethical methods for producing their own media.

It's becoming increasingly important for teachers to understand how to teach media literacy.

Good practices

Easy Ways to Integrate Media Literacy in the Classroom
https://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/integrate-media-literacy.shtml



- **Teach students to question what ads tell them.** Share "The Photoshop Effect" with students. Did they know that almost every photo in magazines and ads has been digitally altered? How do these impossible ideals influence how students perceive their own appearance and success?
- **Explain how students can recognize false representations of reality.** Ask students to examine different popular TV shows and discuss how different groups of people are portrayed. How do the shows stereotype certain people? What groups are marginalized or entirely absent?
- **Show students how the media influences behavior.** Recognizing the often illogical subtexts of advertisements deprives them of power. Encourage students to "spell out" the promises, threats, or pleas made in commercials (e.g., "If you buy this sports drink, you will win the basketball game," "If you don't have this phone, your friends will shun you").
- **Give students the means to reveal the "truth" behind advertising.** For a fun activity, invite students to create their own "ad-busting" or "subvertising" artwork to reveal the "truth" behind, for example, cereal mascots.

Addressing social media misinformation is one way to empower children to fight back against fake news. Here are some online resources devoted to social media misinformation.

Discover the Reasons Behind Your Dissatisfying News Feed

This 12-minute video from Smarter Every Day (TV show) is appropriate for middle-to high-school-aged students. It does an elegant job of pointing out why social media news feeds are terrible for gathering unbiased, accurate news. Students can learn how to determine if a post in their social media feed is "share-worthy" as presenters track down the accuracy of a viral photograph with tools and information students can use themselves.

Sanitize Before Your Share

"Sanitize Before You Share" uses something all students are familiar with—using good hygiene to stop COVID-19—and relates that to using good information hygiene to stop the spread of fake news. This project is suitable for elementary through high school students.

More Online Resources for Teaching Media Literacy Skills in the Classroom

In addition to the above resources, there are plenty of quality online activities and curriculum for combating misinformation and teaching media literacy:

- **NewseumED's Media Literacy Booster Pack.** The Media Literacy Booster Pack is a free resource and a good starting point for teaching media literacy to grade 6-12 students. Free exercises and activities include evaluating information, recognizing bias, and filtering out fake news, along with several other important media and digital literacy skills.
- **National Association for Media Literacy Education.** NAMLE's website includes resources for the classroom, as well as for parents and families at home. Particularly useful is their material dedicated to teaching how to spot and fight COVID-19 misinformation.
- **Media Literacy Week.** The website dedicated to Media Literacy Week has resources for classrooms ranging from elementary school to high school and higher-education level.
- **InfoZones.** The News Literacy Project has educator resources for use in elementary through high school. Resources include "InfoZones," which helps students understand not all information is equal, and credibility is often correlated with purpose. Students will learn to categorize information by its purpose, and how to use that to determine the credibility.
- **Challenging Confirmation Bias.** Confirmation Bias is when our brain looks for information that confirms what we already think we know. It's one reason people are more likely to share news that confirms what they already think. Common Sense Education offers an activity for helping high school students understand confirmation bias, why it occurs, and how to confront their own biases.
- **Stanford's Civic Online Reasoning.** Stanford University hosts the Civic Online Reasoning website, dedicated to helping students evaluate online information. The COR curriculum is available for free online, and it includes skills such as Teaching Lateral Reading—helping students go beyond what's posted online by seeing what other information is available about the source. Other topics include how to find better sources of online information, "click restraint," and more.
- **From the Newsroom to the Classroom.** The News Literacy Project coordinates with educators to bring journalists into middle or high school classrooms to share what they do in their job. The program allows students to hear from actual reporters and enhance their media literacy.
- **Student Newspaper.** Visit the American Press Institute's Student Journalism Resources.

Tuscan good practice

Digital license - Media education in Tuscan schools

<https://www.corecom.toscana.it/-/patentino-digitale-la-toscana-per-le-competenze-digitali-nella-scuola>

The "digital license" is a project aimed at transmitting to students the minimum skills necessary to surf the web and social networks with awareness and responsibility: the students participate in a training course at the end of which a "conscious navigator" license is issued. The project is aimed at students of middle classes, since it is believed that they represent the crucial age group in defining personal and autonomous consumption of the network.

In 2019, an experimentation of the project was carried out in presence mode in three schools in Tuscany (Figline Valdarno, Scarperia, San Casciano Val di Pesa). In 2020 a second experimentation was carried out in three other schools (Chianciano Terme, Follonica, Cavriglia) of the revised and implemented path, for needs related to the pandemic, in remote mode.

Starting from the 2021/2022 school year, it is proposed to implement the project in remote mode and its widespread diffusion in the high schools (currently there are 425 schools of this type in Tuscany) over a three-year period.





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THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE AND MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

THE FAIR NEWS APPROACH



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Critical thinking is key to Media and Information Literacy (MIL). As discussed elsewhere in this document, the development of MIL and Digital Competence is vital for young people to navigate the modern media landscape, understand discourses of knowledge and information, and participate fully in democracy as digital citizens.

The central principle of the Fair News project is that Theory of Knowledge (TOK) offers an innovative and productive approach to the development of MIL among high school students, as well as a method to address problems of social isolation and educational disconnection. By developing greater understanding of how knowledge is constructed, communicated and interpreted, our approach aims to enable students to navigate complexity and manage ambiguity. Through our programme, we hope to create broader connections between young people, enhance their understanding of their reality, and offer them a space where they can not only reflect on their situation but can experiment with and experience a knowledge community.



What is Theory of Knowledge?

Theory of Knowledge is an academic discipline which forms a key and unique part of the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme. The IB began in 1968, based upon modern educational theory which prioritises students' natural curiosity, their freedom to explore, and the importance of learning by doing.[1] The IB Learner Profile describes the attributes which the programme seeks to develop in its students, many of which speak directly to the aims of Fair News.[2]

IB learners aim to be...	
Inquirers	Open minded
Knowledgeable	Caring
Thinkers	Communicators
Risk takers	Balanced
Principled	Reflective

[1] Granada Preparatory School, 'History of the IB Program' (2022)
<<https://chaschool.org/international-baccalaureate/history-ib-program/>>

[2] International Baccalaureate Organization, 'IB Learner Profile' (2013)
<<https://www.ibo.org/contentassets/fd82f70643ef4086b7d3f292cc214962/learner-profile-en.pdf>>

Theory of Knowledge has been a key part of the IB from its beginning, designed as a discipline which crossed disciplinary boundaries, encouraged students to think about the relationship between different types of knowledge, and invited them to explore not just what we know, but how we know it.[1] TOK plays a “special role” in the programme, “by providing an opportunity for students to reflect on the nature of knowledge, and on how we know what we claim to know.”[2]

In studying TOK, students are invited to ask questions, the most important of which is “how do we know?” Within this context, students are asked to explore ‘knowledge questions’ - open and debatable questions about the nature of knowledge. Through these questions, they may consider how we create, use and evaluate knowledge and the assumptions that shape our thinking. An understanding of different viewpoints is essential to enable students to understand how, and why, perspectives might vary.

Theory of Knowledge for Media and Information Literacy

How do we encourage students to evaluate sources and consider evidence when readily accessible channels of sharing knowledge have multiplied massively, when accurate information is often swamped by hasty misinformation, heavily biased accounts or deliberate lies, and when people following their own media streams tend to reject any contrary information offered by others?
[3]

[1] Bryan Nixon, ‘What is the International Baccalaureate?’ (2022) <<https://www.whitbyschool.org/passionforlearning/the-history-of-the-international-baccalaureate-program>>

[2] International Baccalaureate Organization, ‘What is Theory of Knowledge?’ (2022) <<https://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/curriculum/theory-of-knowledge/what-is-tok/>>

[3] Eileen Dombrowski, ‘Theory of Knowledge’, Oxford Education Blog (2017) <<http://educationblog.oup.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2017-TOK-blog-posts-Dombrowski.pdf>>

Considering types of knowledge in this way, and exploring the various ways in which we might test the reliability of knowledge and recognise cognitive biases, is an important element of TOK that can help students to understand the knowledge and information they find in the media. TOK courses are also usually structured around eight 'areas of knowledge' - academic disciplines such as mathematics and history, and broader areas such as ethics, religious knowledge systems, and indigenous knowledge systems. While through Fair News we hope to enable students to think about how knowledge is constructed in different fields, an approach based on AOKs was not considered the most relevant for our students. Instead, we adapted a structure developed by theoryofknowledge.net and based on six Big Questions.

1. Foundations: What is TOK and why do we study it?

2. Values: How does our knowledge about the world inform the way we construct our values?

3. Spin: How is our understanding of the world influenced by the way that knowledge is communicated?

4. Perspectives: How do our perspectives and biases shape our knowledge about the world?

5. Language: How do methods of communication affect the formation of knowledge?

6. Experts: How do we become discerning knowers?

FAIR NEWS

This framework was designed to guide students through the principles of Theory of Knowledge, first introducing its principles and engaging them in the importance of critical thinking for them as digital citizens. As the programme progresses, students will consider the importance of context in understanding information, the way that value judgements are formed, and how we might 'test for truth' when we encounter something new. Understanding the difference between first-order information (direct knowledge about the world) and second-order information (understanding how we find out about the world) is central to both TOK and MIL; the programme prioritises second order information, encouraging students to ask not just 'what do we know...?' but also 'how do we know...?'.

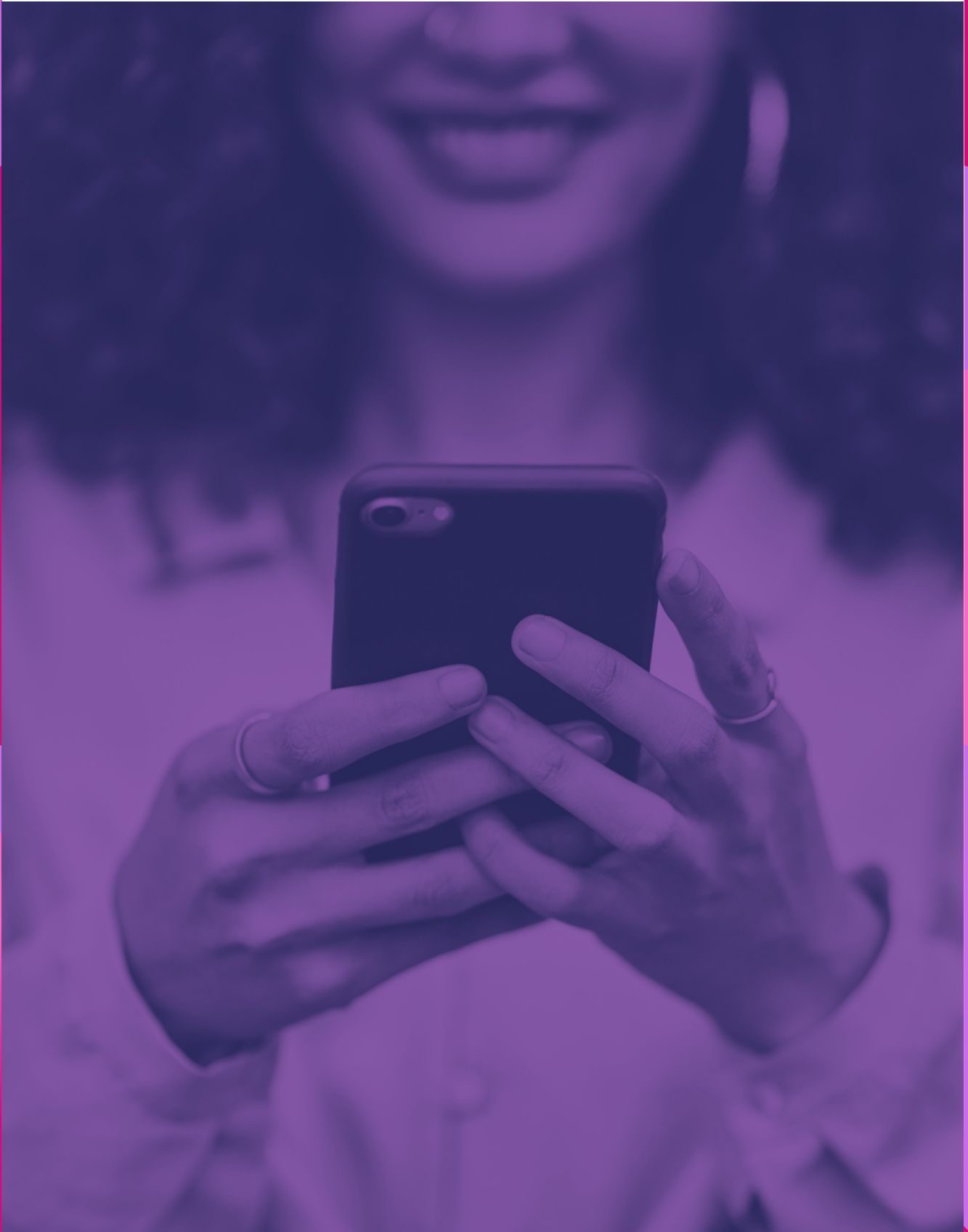
Given the project's focus on the media, especially digital media, particular emphasis is given to communication, spin, and the framing of news. Students will explore aspects of communication which may, deliberately or through the algorithm-driven nature of digital media, manipulate the perspectives and opinions they encounter online. Effects such as the confusion of correlation and causation, cognitive biases such as confirmation bias selection bias, and the presentation of antagonistic perspectives will be encountered and analysed by students, seeking to raise their awareness of the complexity of media creation and consumption. The final stage of the course encourages them to reflect on the importance of managing uncertainty as part of a process of becoming 'discerning knowers', preparing them to deepen their analysis of media information and become co-creators of knowledge themselves through the MIL workshops to come.

The course framework, suggested topics and questions, and indicative materials were provided to educational organisations and schools. They were designed to offer guidance and inspiration rather than a prescriptive approach, with the intention that they would be adapted and developed by educators based on the needs of their students and the context of the project. This responsive, flexible approach is key to our methodology, as developed in the next phase of the project - a series of TOK labs for high school students held in each country.



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Fair News TOK Labs

An innovative aspect of the Fair News project is our use of labs, rather than formal classes, and intended as spaces where students could experiment with and test ideas. These labs are designed as informal, student-led education in which the needs of students are prioritised and the theoretically-informed approach adapted for their specific interests and situations. The goal is not only to increase their awareness and understanding of the principles of TOK in relation to discourses of knowledge and information, but also to provide a space for them to make their voices heard and share their perspectives and experiences of the media. The labs thus aim to nurture inclusive educational communities alongside enhancing understanding of media information and disinformation.

Through the principles developed in the first phase of the project and guided by the experience of educators, the labs are designed to offer space to ask questions and experiment freely, with the support of facilitators and encouraging a collaborative approach. They are flexible in design, with group work, open discussion, and independent research encouraged alongside more traditional teacher-led education. Activities encourage problem-solving and creative learning; students might be asked, for example, to analysis the difference assumptions and values underlying two opposing perspectives, and then imagine a conversation between representatives of each, connecting the issues at stake to real-world concerns. Throughout, the priority is to empower students as navigators of the complex media and information landscape, and to prepare them to experiment with co-creation and distribution of knowledge through the subsequent MIL workshops.

The following chapter presents the structure of the labs as innovation pathways for the use of TOK with high school students.



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STRUCTURE OF THE INNOVATION PATHWAYS FOR THE USE OF THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE IN WORK WITH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



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For the joint implementation at a high-quality standard of Theory of Knowledge workshops in schools, the Centre for Resources and Consultancy in Education (CRCE) proposed a number of tools and a methodology for using these tools - which were discussed in joint meetings and agreed to be part of our joint work.

Thus, the following steps were proposed:

1. The realization of the collaboration contract with each educational institution involved in the project (contract by which each High School and each partner institution assumed the tasks and responsibilities necessary for a good development of the Theory of Knowledge workshops);
2. Collaboration/volunteer contract with each teacher involved in the project (whereby each teacher and partner institution has assumed the tasks and responsibilities in the project);
3. Agreement of the parent/guardian of each high school student that they (the guardians) agree that the students are part of the project & GDPR agreement - whereby each high school student agrees to the use of personal image in the project;
4. Framework methodology that was the basis for the realization of each workshop consisting of:
 - a. documentation of each workshop with an individual teacher report on the workshop topics;
 - b. list of the students participating;
 - c. a minimum of 3 pictures from the work with the high school students to document the Theory of Knowledge workshops carried out in the high schools.
5. Short report in English produced by the national coordinator
6. Fair News: Theory of Knowledge Modules

After a joint analysis of the tools proposed by the CRCE, a rubric on the "innovation" that the workshop identified while working directly with high school students was attached to the individual Teacher Report (Instrument 4.a). This degree of innovation (new method / detail of organisation or presentation of content) was analysed in the CRCE experts' team and in the "Theory of Knowledge" experts' team of the project and the discussions, innovative solutions were the basis (fundament) for the realisation of the project result PR2: "Innovative pathways for the use of Theory of Knowledge".

PR 2 "Innovative ways in Theory of Knowledge" will consist of a number of 6 Modules.

Each module will be a practical concept of class work that will propose a duration, a maximum number of participating students, specific objectives, theoretical parts of "Theory of Knowledge" with applicability in practical exercises (worksheets).





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SOURCES



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2022_EU_Digital_Competencies_Framework_for_Citizens

FAIR NEWS

PROJECT:

Fair News: Learning to navigate knowledge

Formative report on the creation and
development of educational
communities using methodologies of
Theory of Knowledge and Media and
Information Literacy



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