

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Participant:	University of Szczecin, Poland
PIC number:	999851460
Project name and acronym:	Media Literacy for Democracy (MLFD)

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	WP 6		
Event name:	MLFD FOCUS GROUP - POLAND		
Type:	3-day focus group		
In situ/online:	In-situ		
Location:	Szczecin, Poland		
Date(s):	8, 9 and 10 May, 2023		
Website(s) (if any):	https://fidu.it/language/en/media-literacy-for-democracy-cerv-programme/		
Participants			
Female:	17		
Male:	15		
Non-binary:	/		
From country 1 [Poland]:	32		
Total number of participants:	32	From total number of countries:	1
Description			
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>			
<p>The activities were held on 8, 9 and 10 May at the Institute of Political Science and Security, University of Szczecin in Szczecin, Poland.</p> <p>The aim of the event was to raise awareness among young people how disinformation and fake news affect democracy and human rights (including, in particular, the right to receive truthful, reliable and credible information), to hear their views on the issue and to gather information on how they perceive the problem, their awareness of the problem of disinformation and the spread of fake news and its impact on democracy and human rights.</p> <p>For this purpose, a 3-day focus group was organized with the intention of analyzing all these issues from different but complementary points of view. All research followed the same agenda. In the first part, three university lecturers specializing in these issues gave a key overview of the issue of disinformation and how to</p>			

recognise it, as well as the legal regulations to date and the tools used to combat it. In the second part, a debate was held with the participants in order to find out their views on the subject and record their input.

The researchers managed to gather answers not only to the questions identified in the project, but also to ask:

- How did university education influence their ability to critically assess political information in the media?
- Do they have suggestions for measures that could be implemented at an educational or societal level to counter disinformation and false political information, especially in the context of young citizens?
- Which information is credible and true for them? Do they check the reliability of this information and how?
- Do they further share information from other media? If so, which ones?

In order to increase the participants' involvement in the discussion - the facilitators enriched it with examples from the Polish socio-political scene, quoting fake news concerning the three hottest issues in the Polish socio-political landscape, namely: the covid-19 pandemic, the migration crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border, and the war in Ukraine.

Agenda:

Workshop 1 8 of May 2023 <u>Facilitator:</u> <i>Prof. Renata Podgórzeńska</i> <i>University of Szczecin, Szczecin</i> <u>Speakers:</u> <i>Dr Maria Ochwat</i> <i>Prof. Tomasz Czapiewski</i> <i>University of Szczecin, Szczecin</i>	Workshop 2 9 of May <u>Facilitator:</u> <i>Prof. Tomasz Czapiewski</i> <i>University of Szczecin,</i> <i>Szczecin</i> <u>Speakers:</u> <i>Prof. Renata Podgórzeńska</i> <i>Dr Maria Ochwat</i> <i>University of Szczecin,</i> <i>Szczecin</i>	Workshop 3 10 of May <u>Facilitator:</u> <i>Dr Maria Ochwat</i> <u>Speakers:</u> <i>Prof. Renata Podgórzeńska</i> <i>Prof. Tomasz Czapiewski</i> <i>University of Szczecin,</i> <i>Szczecin</i>
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Participants

Information about the focus group research was disseminated through the official website of the University of Szczecin, e-mails, as well as social networks and direct contacts with the full council for people with disabilities, media representatives and NGO representatives.

The event was attended by 32 Polish citizens between the ages of 18 and 35. The average age of participants was 24. 17 women and 15 men took part in the survey. People with disabilities were also encouraged to participate in the research (7 people with various disabilities took part in the study).

The majority of participants in the focus group research were students of the University of Szczecin, both undergraduate, master's and doctoral students. They were students of such majors as Management of Public Institutions and Public Relations, Political Science, Sociology, Law, Internal Security, National Security, Psychology and English Philology. Unfortunately, only one participant was already (at the time of the survey) employed (as a psychologist). Despite the encouragement of young representatives of the media and NGOs - no one was interested in taking part in the focus group research.

Objectives:

The aim of the event was to raise awareness among young people (18-35 years old, from a variety of backgrounds) of how disinformation and fake news affect democracy and human rights (including, in particular, the right to receive truthful, reliable and credible information), to hear their views on the issue and to gather information on how they perceive the problem, their awareness of the problem of disinformation and the spread of fake news and its impact on democracy and human rights.

Results:

The results have been very positive because many of the participants claimed to be unaware of the great extent of disinformation and fake news today, as well as threats it implies for democratic societies and human rights.

Participants primarily use the so-called new media, with only a few people mentioning the use of so-called traditional media (mainly radio, while driving). The so-called new media were mainly Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tik Tok and youtube. In the media, they mainly look for information that is useful from the point of view of specific classes at the university, in addition to information that corresponds to their interests (mainly sports, fashion, cooking). Participants in the study are aware that it is impossible to be completely sure that a given piece of information is reliable and credible. All information should be approached with caution. The participants of the study were very positive about the university education on checking the reliability of information. However, they were unanimous in stating that from primary school onwards, one should learn how to detect fake news and disinformation.

According to the survey participants, the topic of the European Union is not particularly popular in the Polish media. In their opinion, the EU has an ineffective information policy. Information about the EU appears in the political debate, and it is rather due to eurosceptics who talk about the functioning of the EU and limitations from the perspective of the sovereignty of states. In these discussions, the EU is treated as an entity controlling other Member States, requiring the resignation of parts entitlements .

Participants believe that the EU should communicate its activities in a simpler and shorter form. Unfortunately, the participants do not know how to counteract disinformation and fake news. They believe that schools should provide support in this area. On the other hand, they lack trust in the media and, interestingly, often also in non-governmental organizations .

All the participants agreed that media literacy is an essential tool to prevent misinformation, both because it is a measure that does not violate human rights, and because it is one of the few approaches that would be effective in the long term, because instead of preventing misinformation from reaching the individual (an objective whose full implementation is materially impossible), enables and trains the subject to critically evaluate the content received.

Feedback:

According to the final event evaluation questionnaire, all participants were very positive about the focus group. They all stated that they would be very interested in participating in this type of activity in the future.

They particularly appreciated the fact that the experts, in addition to their academic knowledge and experience, also had practical knowledge, gained inter alia in human rights organisations, the media or law firms, and therefore their perception of the issue is broader and takes into account both theoretical and practical aspects. In addition, participants appreciated the time devoted to active discussion between experts and participants.

They found it interesting to learn about different tools and strategies for detecting disinformation and fake news.

Many of them are ready to apply what they learned in the focus group in the future. Above all, they want to check and verify news more thoroughly. Participants would, however, like to see media coverage of, among other things, the European Union in a shorter, more accessible form with a brief explanation of the EU decision-making process itself. The current form, which is too long and shows this already complicated process in too much detail, makes it difficult for them to understand why and by whom certain decisions have been taken.