

## EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Participant:	VIESOJI ISTAIGA "NEPRIKLAUSOMU KUREJU GILDIJA" (NKG)
PIC number:	PIC 903730280
Project name and acronym:	[An intergenerational active debate on how countering disinformation to empower citizens] — [MEDIWISE]

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	WP14		
Event name:	Local event 1 /Lithuania		
Type:	Training-discussion		
In situ/online:	In-situ		
Location:	Lithuania, Vilnius		
Date(s):	26/04/2024		
Website(s) (if any):	<a href="https://www.mediawise-project.eu/">https://www.mediawise-project.eu/</a>		
Participants			
Female:	15		
Male:	19		
Non-binary:	0		
From country 1 LIHUANIA	34		
...			
Total number of participants:	34	From total number of countries:	1
Description			
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>			
<p><b>Introduction and context</b></p> <p>Training "Laboratory of critical thinking: How to spot misinformation/Recipes for fact-checking". They were attended by young people aged 18+ and seniors aged 65+. The aim of the event was to reveal the viewpoints of different generations and find common solutions, supplementing them with different experiences and competences.</p> <p>The event and discussions were conducted by lecturers with extensive practical experience in the field of debunking disinformation.</p>			

According to the prepared practical tool for the development of critical thinking, training was held for a group of people of mixed generations - high school students and retirees who participate in lifelong learning programs (participants of third-age universities), other elderly and also seniors with experience as journalists.

### **Speakers and discussion moderators**

The event was led by speakers and discussion moderators with extensive practical experience in the field of debunking disinformation and have accumulated extensive experience in developing interactive discussions:

- Giedrius Sakalauskas – head of the civil resistance center "Res Publica", one of the leaders of the public "Elves" movement, which fights against trolls on social networks. Active citizens of other countries also join this movement, which appeared almost ten years ago, after the annexation of Crimea.
- Milda Matulaiytė-Feldhausen – writer, journalist who returned to Lithuania after 23 years of living in Switzerland. She hosts the "Hello, Milda" program of "Zinių radio" ("News radio") and regularly goes to war-torn Ukraine to collect testimonies about the barbaric reality and everyday heroes.
- Dainius Radzevičius – the chairman of the Union of Lithuanian Journalists, who implements several projects related to the development of critical thinking (the most famous project "I Live Freely" about the development of active citizenship).
- Daiva Grikšienė, coordinator of the "Mediawise" project in Lithuania (NGO "Neklausomų kūrėjų gildija" - NKG). She presented the international "Mediawise" project, its participants, completed surveys on fake news and online disinformation, reviewed the survey results.

### **Teaching methods and content**

In the first part of the event, journalists with extensive experience actively working in the media. Each topic had an introductory part, which was then transformed into a discussion and debate based on the facts and examples presented.

Discussion topics:

- the informal disinformation resistance movement on the Internet, which is carried out by the Lithuanian "Elves" community. This movement fights against anti-national propaganda from abroad and misinformation in the virtual space, shared tips on how to distinguish online trolls and how to fight against them. The participants were actively interested in how to become an "elf", what digital methods they use in the fight against propaganda;
- the reflection of the Ukrainian war in the media, various hybrid threats. Every month or two, a journalist who goes to work at the front in Ukraine invited to discuss how to distinguish real heroes, how to protect the public from misinformation, invited representatives of different generations to share their insights on how not to fall into the hostile information war intensified by Russia;
- disinformation and lies in social networks, election propaganda in the media. The axis of the discussion was how not to give lies an audience, how to recognize fake news, how to check sources, how to distinguish factual news from imaginary manipulations of the imagination.

In the second part of the training, all training participants took part in the group game "Hunting", designed to develop critical thinking. The participants, divided into mixed age groups, had the opportunity to discuss in groups, analyze and interpret information and argue choices, discuss different points of view and develop the ability to make joint decisions.

### **The event program included four important elements**

- The introductory speeches of the lecturers were intended to inspire the participants' discussions about disinformation, propaganda and truth disputes in the public space, the confrontation of media and social networks, the competition of entertainment and informational content, the habits and skills of media consumption, the role of fictional heroes and real persons in the public space and their influence on the audience;
- An interactive role-playing group game, the essence of which is simple - groups of participants of different ages have received the roles of different groups of society /groups of beasts/ and had to

prepare a joint presentation with personal insights or observations of each participant. The game simulates a forest situation where right or wrong choices are not always obvious. One of the main goals of the game - to encourage players to recognize and critically evaluate the possible behavior of heroes /beasts/ in a situation where the context is presented through different interpretations. There is no obvious truth in this game so that players can learn from their own decisions and understand that in real life there are rarely clear and unambiguous situations. The role-playing game allowed young people and seniors to associatively empathize with the needs of different groups in society, to test the stereotypical thinking and acting models of intergenerational communication and communication with the outside world. All this helped the participants better to understand the importance of careful and critical evaluation of information. Participant debate throughout the game was an important element of reflection. During the debate, participants of different generations received feedback and different experiences from each other while discussing with each other. Feedback is a valuable learning and skill reinforcement tool that helped participants improve their ability to recognize and respond to a variety of situations in real life and online;

- Cognitive presentation of digital skills formation and practical instruments of social networks and discussion and evaluation of practical situations (fraud in social networks, operating principles of fake accounts, manipulation of social network algorithms);
- The moderator's story about the war and its atrocities sparked active discussions about the impact of revealing conflict situations on society. The participants discussed how much truth and what kind of truth should be presented to the general audience so that it would not be harmed, also they analyzed the media stories and the objectivity of the news they spread (the experience of the Ukrainian war), the propaganda of political events, and the integration of humanist values;

In order to implement the training through interactivity and maximum involvement of participants, the selected methodology and team of experts allowed to maintain the maximum attention of the audience and one hundred percent involvement of the elderly and the youth.

## Event programme

### Local event in Vilnius /Lithuania/

#### Critical Thinking Lab: How to spot disinformation / recipes for fact-checking

09:30–10:00	<b>Registration. Morning coffee</b>
10:00–10:15	<b>Welcome speech. Presentation of „Mediawise“ project</b> <i>Speaker: „Mediawise“ project coordinator in Lithuania Daiva Grikšienė</i>
10:15–11:15	<b>Why is the lie sweeter than the truth? How to resist temptation?</b> Discussion about digital skills, critical thinking, concepts of truth <i>Speaker and moderator: Dainius Radzevičius, chairman of the Union of Lithuanian Journalists</i>
11:15–12:00	<b>About poisonous mushrooms and mushroom pickers in social networks. Verification of information sources</b> Discussion about information wars, international information manipulations, access to information data <i>Speaker and moderator: Giedrius Sakalauskas, head of the „Res Publica“ - Center for Civic Resistance</i>
12:00 – 12:15	<b>Coffee break</b>
12:15 – 13:00	<b>About real and fictional human stories and how not to be deceived?</b> Discussion about propaganda narratives and techniques of persuasion in the context of politics and war <i>Speaker and moderator: Milda Matulaiytė-Feldhausen, journalist</i>
13:00 – 14:00	<b>Group game „Hunting“ (in teams) – the critical thinking practice.</b> <i>It is a critical thinking game that develops awareness and resistance to information manipulation, helps to learn to distinguish misinformation and to search for arguments in a team.</i>

14:00 – 14:15	<b>Reflections and conclusions</b>
14:15 – 15:00	<b>Lunch</b>

## Conclusions

- Young people have very good digital skills in using mobile devices and digital instruments, and their main foreign language is English and their sources of information and entertainment content are in Lithuanian and English.
- Event participants, who fall into the 65+ age group, tend to lack deeper digital literacy, although many use smartphones and computers. The main foreign language of this audience is Russian. Therefore, their sources of information, contextual information, sources of entertainment and information are mostly Lithuanian and Russian language media and content platforms. A special highlight is the fact that the seminar in Vilnius was attended by older people who are either lifelong learners in various programs.
- During each group session, the elders could actively discuss various topics of social behavior in the media with the youth.
- The biggest difference between younger and older audiences was contextual information and different educational experiences. Young people are studying in the democratic education system of independent Lithuania, while elderly had to study during the Soviet occupation of Russia, when the content was strictly censored.
- The biggest difference between younger and older audiences also was life experience, knowledge of political systems, understanding of contexts, attitude towards stereotypes. Perhaps the most interesting discussions arose when talking about the causes of conflicts between states or nations, religions or other beliefs, about tendentious propaganda messages and the ability to independently assess the reliability of various sources and their ideological starting point, bearing in mind that the young and old generations interpret messages differently and live in different social in 'bubbles'.
- Regarding fact-checking, journalism and other related content, which is created for different audiences according to their identity (national, religious or otherwise), the participants of the event looked for the limits of tolerance for a different position (perhaps even illogically) and the methods and tools for separating opinions from facts, which would be readily available to both generations separated by half a century.
- The participants constantly questioned experienced journalists about how content is created and why some facts are selected and others ignored. The topic of the Ukrainian war was discussed in the military and geopolitical context, in the context of humanist ideas, etc.
- Seniors who survived the Soviet-era system could convey to the young participants the experience that during the Soviet-era propaganda period, the newspapers "Tiesa" ("Truth") and "Komjaunimo tiesa" ("Truth of the Komsomol") were published, although a large part of the content was only propaganda, and any facts about important things were generally ignored.
- The seniors shared their experience with the youth during the role-play, why even fictitious characters influence our attitudes and values. This discussion made it easier for audiences of both ages to understand why people can act like animals, not only in the game, but also in real life.
- Discussions with Milda Matulaityte Feldhausen highlighted society's behavior with information during long-term conflicts or wars. This made it possible to discuss with the audience why political decisions change, why human rights or democratic values often become secondary matters during war, why these matters are reflected in public in a tendentious manner and who is interested in that. It was important for the participants to

discuss this, because three political elections are taking place in Lithuania this year - for the President, the Parliament and the European Parliament.

- In the context of elections, the impact of propaganda and resistance to it were also touched. When one state tries to influence the awareness, attitudes, and values of the citizens of another state for its own benefit, without the latter realizing it, it means that an information war is taking place. Information war is when the statehood of another country is sought to be violated by demonstrating power not physically, but by consolidating it in the minds of the population, by manipulating information. For example, Lithuania constantly has to face hostile information attacks carried out by Russia, which are aimed at undermining Lithuania's history and pride in its state, as well as weakening citizens' trust in their government, reducing their alertness to incoming information. Therefore, the participants unanimously agreed that the most important weapon in the information war is a sufficiently large proportion of members of society capable of critical thinking.
- Giedrius Sakalauskas' discussion with the audience was about an important topic - (int)tolerance towards persons whose beliefs contradict national or even international law. This also allowed us to review the editorial policy of social networks and the principles of operation of algorithms. The audience was interested in asking what and how affects social network users, the content they produce or spread. The role of anonymity and information reliability in social networks was discussed separately, as well as the emerging informational challenges of belonging to social groups online and the need to verify information. Young people felt stronger in this area because they know more tools to find additional sources of information (although they don't always use it).
- The teacher of one college who participated in the event and the college leaders decided to invite the seniors who participated in the "Laboratory of critical thinking" training to their college for further communication with the youth after the event.