

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] — [MEDIAWISE]

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	WP15		
Event name:	Local event 2 /Lithuania		
Type:	Training-discussion		
In situ/online:	In-situ		
Location:	Lithuania, Siauliai		
Date(s):	30/04/2024		
Website(s) (if any):	https://www.mediawise-project.eu/		
Participants			
Female:	23		
Male:	6		
Non-binary:	0		
From country 1 LIHUANIA	29		
...			
Total number of participants:	29	From total number of countries:	1
Description			
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>			
Introduction and context			
<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 training was to reveal the viewpoints of different generations and find common solutions, supplementing them with different experiences and competences.</p> <p>The training was conducted by lecturers with extensive practical experience in the field of debunking disinformation.</p>			

According to the prepared practical training for the development of critical thinking, training was held for a group of people of mixed ages - high school students and retirees who participate in lifelong learning programs (participants of third-age universities).

Šiauliai is a city in Northern Lithuania that has the status of a regional city and center, where regional media dominates and communities live much more compactly.

Speakers and discussion moderators

The training 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:

- Gintaras 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.

On the topic of disinformation (specific stories), there was a big debate about how to create recognition criteria, how to recognize the hidden goals of the spreaders. There was even more debate about effective methods and ways to stop the producers and spreaders of disinformation and propaganda. Therefore, throughout the workshop, more attention was paid not to the format of the presentation, but to the method of discussing statements and stereotypes.

The training program included four important elements:

- Introductory lecture and discussion with the participants about the controversies of lies and truth in public space, the relationship between media and journalism, competition between entertainment and informational content, media consumption habits and skills, the role of fictional heroes and real persons in 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.

The very beginning of the event was started with a discussion about the image shown on the first slide. The audience had to share quick and hasty impressions, as well as briefly think and evaluate the situation in a new way and try to analyze and discuss the meaning of the displayed image together in a group. Different responses were received about the same image and the phenomenon of truth and impression was discussed with the audience.

Local event in Siauliai /Lithuania

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

09:45–10:00	Registration. Morning coffee
10:00–10:15	Welcome speech. Presentation of „Mediawise“ project <i>Speaker: „Mediawise“ project coordinator in Lithuania Daiva Grikšienė</i>
10:15–11:15	Why is the lie sweeter than the truth? How to resist temptation? Discussion about digital skills, critical thinking, concepts of truth <i>Speaker and moderator: Dainius Radzevičius, chairman of the Union of Lithuanian Journalists</i>
11:15–11:30	Coffee break
11:30–12:15	About poisonous mushrooms and mushroom pickers in social networks. Verification of information sources 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>
12:15 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 13:45	About real and fictional human stories and how not to be deceived? Discussion about propaganda narratives and techniques of persuasion in the context of politics and war <i>Speaker and moderator: Milda Matulaitytė-Feldhausen, journalist</i>
13:45 – 14:45	Group game „Hunting“ (in teams) – the critical thinking practice. <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>
13:45 – 15:00	Reflections and conclusions

Conclusions

- Youth have better 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.
- Workshop participants, who fall into the 65+ age group, tended 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.
- These conclusions are confirmed by the methods used during training, when famous people were discussed. Participants of the older generation perfectly recognize the heroes of the 20th century, many of them are heroes of the Soviet period. Meanwhile, young people are well aware of foreign celebrities. Fundamental differences in the values held by the heroes of different periods and different systems (democratic and Soviet) also emerged in the discussions.
- What are the main reasons for the differences in attitudes, values and perceptions of girls and boys in their thirties and seniors who claim to be their grandparents? The biggest difference between younger and older audiences is contextual information and different educational experiences in schools. Some are still studying in the democratic education system of independent Lithuania, while others had to study during the Soviet occupation of Russia, when the content was strictly censored. The main difference between younger and older audiences also is life experience, knowledge of political systems, understanding of contexts, and attitude towards stereotypes.
- It is important to note that the gymnasium who participated in training discussed their teaching methods and content with the lecturers and established contacts and discussed further cooperation.
- It is important to note that the training was attended by seniors who are interested in innovation, receptive, sophisticated, seeking to learn more and participating in lifelong learning programs. Here are one of senior's insights after the event:
"These discussions touched on extremely interesting and relevant topics: why is the lie sweeter than the truth, about real and fictional people's stories and how not to be deceived. The discussions were very Informative, engaging. Also, the idea of including the audience that the lecturers called "youth" and „youth plus" was great and successful. We got to know each other's perspectives and worldviews during one task. It was great we spent time, met different people. I think that after this meeting I will be able to distinguish between misinformation, real and fictional experiences of people."
- Some of the comments from the older generation of audience members after the event revealed their confidence in their life experiences and non-critical attitude towards media

content. For example, the following comment:

„I realized that there is a lot of misinformation around me. I thought I was picking this up well enough, but alas I was wrong. What I take away from the lecture is that information needs to be more critical. I have gone to many lectures, I have listened to many "podcasts", but this event will definitely be one of those that I will remember. What I liked most was that we were included in that conversation, maybe that's why it stuck.“

- During assigned role play discussion, all groups discussed extensively about behavior in an application with a lot of uncertainty (for example, social networks). Young people and seniors each separately tried to justify their behavior with their own arguments, and also considered how to spot unclear, poorly understood threats in time and what measures should be taken.
- It should be noted that during the role play and presentations, it became clear that despite the different ages, many participants tend to behave in the same way as most members of their social surrounding. This showed once again that the decisions of the social group with which you are in contact often dominate over individual decisions, especially when it comes to public information, which sometimes requires a more global vision.
- However, it is important to note that due to the lack of information, well-disguised lies or spreading falsehood, professionally prepared propaganda many participants said that they would like to carefully assess dangerous situations related to the media, would like to delve deeper into the phenomena and only then make decisions. However, in the fast-paced era, there is often no time left for more detailed investigation and other actions that could protect against the snares (traps) of misinformation.
- Examples of propaganda, advertising and journalism were analyzed with the participants, which sparked various discussions. The audience analyzed election campaigns and their impact on people.