May 2025

YOUTH SHAPING EUROPE'S TOMORROW

WORKSHOP REPORT

Co-funded by
the European Union

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Introduction

On the 17th and 18th of May 2025, 51 young participants from across Europe gathered in Naples, Italy, for the Workshop on Media Literacy and Responsible Citizenship, part of the broader "U4EU 2.0: Youth Shaping Europe's Tomorrow" initiative.

Co-funded by the European Union through the CERV programme, the project aims to empower youth from nine EU countries with tools and spaces to engage in democratic life, foster critical thinking, and voice their perspectives on diversity, European identity, and the future of the EU.

This two-day workshop was designed as a dynamic and participatory learning experience. Through keynote speeches, collaborative activities, and peer-led sessions, participants explored the influence of media on public perception, developed strategies to identify and counter misinformation, and reflected on their roles as active citizens in an increasingly digital society.

Set against the vibrant backdrop of Naples, the event combined meaningful dialogue with practical tools to strengthen media literacy and promote informed civic engagement among Europe's youth.

The event engaged **51 participants from 9 countries and 12 nationalities.**

A. Workshop schedule

17th of May

Time	Name of the session
10:00 - 10:30	Arrival, registration, ice-breaker, programme presentation
10:30 - 11:00	Keynote speech: Media Literacy & Responsible Citizenship
11:00 - 12:00	Mapping our information system: from where we get our information
12:00 - 13:00	Sharing & discussion
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 - 14:15	Energiser
14:15 - 16:15	Games against disinformation
16:15 - 17:00	Final discussion

A. Workshop schedule

18th of May

Time	Name of the session
10:00 - 10:30	Welcome back & energiser
10:30 - 11:30	Panel debate
11:30 - 12:30	Brainstorming & Recommendations
12:30 - 13:00	Final round and feedback
13:00 - 15:00	Lunch

B. Why Media Literacy and Responsible Citizenship

In a digital era shaped by constant connectivity, media literacy has become a critical civic skill. The ability to access, analyse, and evaluate information empowers individuals to make informed choices, participate in democratic life, and resist manipulation. As social media platforms increasingly serve as primary sources of news, young people—despite being digital natives—are particularly vulnerable to disinformation, algorithmic bias, and the spread of harmful narratives.

Media literacy is not only about spotting fake news; it is about understanding how information shapes public opinion, reinforces stereotypes, and influences political decision-making.

It is tightly linked to the concept of responsible citizenship, which goes beyond legal status or voting rights to include active participation, social responsibility, and critical engagement with one's community—both online and offline.

At a time when democratic values are being challenged across Europe and beyond, equipping young people with tools to decode media content, question dominant narratives, and actively contribute to public discourse is more urgent than ever.

C. Workshop Methodology

The workshop followed a **non-formal education approach**, fostering a participatory and learner-centered environment. The goal was not only to provide knowledge but to stimulate reflection, critical thinking, and peer-to-peer learning. The structure of the two days combined theoretical input with practical application and group discussion.

Key methodological elements included:
 ▪ Interactive opening with ice-breakers and group-building activities to foster trust and collaboration among participants.
 ▪ Keynote input offering a theoretical overview of media literacy and its connection to democratic values.
 ▪ Self-reflection tools, such as the mapping of personal information sources, to encourage participants to analyse their own media consumption patterns.
 ▪ Collaborative activities and games, specifically designed to simulate how disinformation spreads, and to develop strategies to identify and counter it.
 ▪ Panel debate and recommendation session to deepen understanding, practice critical debate, and translate learning into actionable insights.
 ▪ Final reflection round to consolidate knowledge and gather feedback.

II. Youth Recommendations

Participants were divided in five groups, based on the discussions of the first day, and worked on recommendations on the following topics:

- How to improve citizen's participation
- How to improve media literacy education
- How to effectively combat disinformation
- What should we change in platforms?
- What tools we need to involve more people

A. How to improve citizens' participation

A. **To provide workshops and specific educational programmes in schools**, focused on democracy, civic rights and EU institutions. These workshops should be adapted to each grade, to students' needs and level of education (e.g. they should be provided also for elderly and night schools).

B. To provide a **social media-like platform to connect citizens** across EU member states and allow them to exchange ideas, while discovering more about EU policies, initiatives and programmes.

C. **Create spaces of discussion and to influence policy making at a local level, to gather citizens' ideas.** These platforms should be inclusive, and represent the diversity of the population. Furthermore, they should include different tools, such as the arts, to further connect people.

B. **How to improve media literacy education**

A. Regulations should ensure the **transparency of algorithms and how they function.** Furthermore, terms and conditions of the platforms should be more transparent and easily understandable.

B. A more **gamified approach** should be used to teach about media literacy, at all educational levels.

C. There should be more discussions about the **social relevance of journalism,** and the need for media professionals to be balanced rather than objective.

C. **How to effectively combat disinformation**

A. Encourage youth to be **responsible** about their actions on media and social media, create discussion around the topic of media literacy and give inputs to their peers.

B. Network and i**nvite media professionals in social activities**, schools, youth centres and other spaces of aggregration to informally discuss the topic.

C. **Improve regulations** and create laws which can impact the media space and impose sanctions to companies who do not agree to implement the regulations.

D. What should we change in platforms?

A. Platforms should have more human-managed **moderation for hate speech** and other harmful content. Furthermore, they should provide **transparent tools for fact-checking.**
B. Material created with AI-powered tools should be **labelled and easily identifiable.**
C. **Content creators and influencers** should have regulations and fact-checking should also be provided for their content.

E. What tools we need to involve more people

From early to higher education, and in educational institutions from the elderly, there should be more media literacy programmes. Furthermore, existing different media should target people of backgrounds and promote media literacy, focusing on *media deserts.* Workshops and educational opportunities should focus on **rural communities,** where access to information is scarce.

Conclusions

In a context marked by the erosion of democratic values and the spread of online disinformation, enhancing media literacy and civic participation emerges as a priority. Discussions throughout the event confirmed that while young people are highly connected, they remain vulnerable to digital manipulation, algorithmic bias, and the polarisation of public discourse.

Participants proposed **actionable and cross-cutting recommendations** aimed at strengthening democratic resilience through inclusive and accessible education, responsible digital governance, and citizen empowerment.

Key conclusions include:
 1. Education as a cornerstone of civic engagement
Formal and non-formal education systems must be strengthened to include tailored programmes on democracy, EU institutions, and civic rights, not only for students but across all age groups, including the elderly. A gamified and discussion-based approach to media literacy can boost engagement and foster critical thinking.
 2. Transparency and accountability of digital platforms
There is a pressing need for clearer, more user-friendly terms and conditions and greater algorithmic transparency. Participants advocated for the regulation of AI-generated content, stronger moderation of harmful speech, and the labelling of content produced through AI tools.

Conclusions

3. Promoting inclusive and diverse citizen participation

Citizens need accessible and inclusive spaces—both online and offline—to debate ideas, shape local policy, and share diverse perspectives. This includes developing EU-wide platforms that mirror the engagement style of social media, as well as using arts and culture as tools for participation.

4. Fighting disinformation through community and collaboration

Empowering young people as active agents against disinformation is key. Peer-to-peer education, partnerships with journalists, and informal learning moments in youth centres and community spaces can build a resilient media-aware public.

5. Reaching the unreached

Specific tools and strategies are needed to ensure that media literacy is not an elite skill. Programmes must be adapted to rural areas, media deserts, and marginalised communities—ensuring no one is left behind in the digital transformation.

Ultimately, the recommendations highlight a shared responsibility between institutions, platforms, educators, and citizens.

By investing in critical thinking, digital responsibility, and meaningful participation, we can build stronger, more democratic societies prepared to meet today's information challenges.

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