



IO4 - Recommendations for increasing civic and political engagement and participation of youth – European Paper



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1. Introduction

This policy recommendation paper is addressed to relevant stakeholders at international level and members of the European Parliament in order to recommend and support tailor-made solutions for the promotion of the civic and political engagement of young people including NEETs (people who are 'Not in Education, Employment or Training') in the area of fake news and social media.

Considering the present times, the COVID pandemic has spurred an upsurge in disinformation and fake news. The pandemic had given greater scope to hostile actors eager to use several instruments for manipulatory goals and to influence opinion. Thus, talking about fake news, how to identify and counter them and how to protect ourselves as users, from them is more imperative than ever.

The recommendations are based on the work of [KMOP – Social Action and Innovation Centre](#) (Greece), [CARDET - Center for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology](#) (Cyprus), [ISES Association](#) (Italy), [Youth Included](#) (Czech Republic) and [Cromo Foundation](#) (Hungary) in the framework of the Youth Myth Busters (YMB) project and are based on the key findings of its implementation.

Having analysed and evaluated the outcomes of the Youth Myth Buster project, the international partnership has developed this paper in order to recommend best practices, methodologies and activities to promote civic and political engagement of young vulnerable people (including NEETs).

The recommendations of the last chapter have been formulated to all the key actors involved in the communication world at different levels: authors and recipients of news, decision makers, educators and youth workers on how to improve digital literacy of young people and support society in fighting fake news and propaganda in media.

The paper also presents, as best example, an online campaign for countering fake news run by young people in order to inspire community leaders, teachers, educators and policymakers.

2. Summary of the YMB project

According to Eurofound, young people aged 15-20 or those Not in Education, Employment or Training are less interested in politics (only [28,7%](#)), or declare a disposition to vote and demonstrate a lower social participation (26,7%) than non-NEETs. At the same time, the increasing use of internet and social media creates new [routes](#) to political and civic engagement. On the one hand, social media platforms offer many democratic benefits such as more interaction with politicians, encouraging voter turnout, while they have given voice to people with diverse and minority viewpoints. On the other hand, they have facilitated the spread of political protests, misinformation, hate speech and propaganda.

Moreover, taking into consideration the fact that the [Covid-19 pandemic](#) has spurred an upsurge in disinformation and fake news, talking about fake news, how to identify and counter them and how people can protect themselves from them is more important than ever.

Within this context, by stimulating young influencers to assume the role of the Leader in order to empower their peers at risk of social exclusion (mainly NEETs), Youth Myth Busters aims to promote the civic and political engagement of the latter and to fight fake news, manipulation and propaganda.

To achieve its goal, the project developed a **capacity building programme for Young Influencers** aiming to prepare them to assume the role of youth leader. Moreover, partners developed an **e-learning platform** aiming to enhance the skills of young people who want to counter fake news, a **toolkit** which aims at guiding young people on how to organize and implement myth busting teams and actions, as well as **policy recommendation papers** at national and European levels on how policy makers can increase the civic and political engagement of the young and counter fake news at the same time.

As far as the e-learning platform is concerned, it is available at the link below: <https://elearning.youthmythbusters.eu/>. The platform is free and includes two sections: one for Young Influencers (already skilled people in countering fake news) and one for young people who want to improve their knowledge in countering fake news and being active citizens. Furthermore, the platform serves as an online space where young people can communicate with the young influencers in order to establish a strong network and to facilitate their cooperation.

The main training program is aimed at young people and includes the following online modules:

- Media Literacy
- Civic and Political Engagement
- Media Influencers Behaviour
- Break the Fake
- Hate Speech

By completing all the courses, participants have the opportunity to download the online certificate. So far, 268 young people have registered on the platform from Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Czech Republic and Hungary, from whom 141 people completed the course and received their certificates.

The content is available in English, Greek, Italian, Czech and Hungarian.

3. Civic and political engagement of youth in the partner countries

In this chapter, we want to give an insight into the civic and political engagement and media literacy of youth in the partner countries.

Greece

After the financial crisis of 2008, three major youth groups warmed to populist rhetoric because of their scant engagement with politics and their concerns about ways the EU works: the working poor, the young unemployed and the NEETs. These people are disappointed with political parties, they have no trust in institutions and they show a lack of interest in politics.

Moreover, poverty has affected youth population in Europe and in Greece in particular as 38,1% of young people live at the risk of poverty and social exclusion (Eurostat, 2019). This situation exacerbates significantly the active participation of young people in society, as they feel more isolated and excluded.

At the same time, in the most difficult position are the NEETs, who continue to be the most socially vulnerable group in Europe. In particular, they are more likely to be socially excluded, often facing a bleak future as they do not participate in employment, education or training. [In 2015, 12% of all young people were NEETs but in Italy and Greece, the percentage of NEETs exceeded 23%.](#)

Within this context, it should be noted that the participation of the youth population in Greece in the 2015 EU elections fell below the EU average. Actually, 66% of the youth population voted, while the EU average was 68% (EC, Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy, 2017).

However, according to a survey published by the European Youth in September 2017 (Flash Eurobarometer 455), responses from the Greek youth population have shown an increase in their participation in volunteering activities, activities or projects aimed at fostering cooperation with youths from other countries.

Despite the fact that Greek youth population is facing the aftermath of the recent financial crisis, they have been involved in numerous projects promoting civic participation but there is still a lot of work to be done.

One of the initiatives that has contributed to this effort and to the empowerment of youth in Greece is the [“Strategic Framework for the Empowerment of Youth”](#), which is a call to energize the local societies of the country in order to create an environment that provides better opportunities to all young people.

Fighting fake news is one of the most challenging issues the world is facing today. It is an issue that concerns us all. This has been made even more important after the Covid-19 pandemic and the increasing use of social media. Studies have shown that social media spread fake news more rapidly than true stories. Especially on Twitter it is [70%](#) more likely for fake news to be retweeted than a true story, according to a survey published by MIT.

At the same time, living in a digital era means that people spend a lot of their time online. According to Eurostat, [53%](#) of Greek population, aged from 16 to 74, has at least one social media account. This percentage in youth population (youth aged from 16 to 24) in Greece is 90%, exceeding the EU average of [87%](#).

Cyprus

The political establishment of Cyprus is characterised by a very well developed strong party system that permeates most of its society's institutions vis-à-vis the civic and political engagement of its people. This type of political organisation promotes hierarchical and filtered feedback from the bottom to the top. Over the last two decades, the proliferation of the internet and social media has provided a mixed bag of results as greater accountability and accessibility of the politicians through the immediacy of social media is counteracted with misinformation, disinformation, distraction, and sensationalisation.

According to the study 2020 Global Youth Development Index by the Commonwealth organisation, Cyprus ranks 18th out of 181 countries based on different indicators. However, according to the index Cyprus Youth [“...ranks 41st in education, 22nd in employment and opportunity, 28th in equality and inclusion, 16th in health and wellbeing, 41st in peace and security and 88th in Political and Civil participation...”](#). The gap can be explained in the traditional framework of political participation, mostly evident in [electoral abstention that has been achieving negative records](#) in all elections in the decade 2009 – 19. Voter turnout, especially for young people, is very troubling as [participation in the most basic of civic responsibilities, as well as awareness, engagement and trust with the political establishment, is very low](#).

Cyprus youths, defined as people from 18 to 29, certainly stand to gain from meaningful political participation as the issues like lack of job opportunities, inaction on climate change, inequality,

political division, corruption, diminishing government support, and problems challenging the freedom of speech have become major issues in the second decade of the 21st century.

As with more societies, the internet gave rise to online communities, which allowed them to rise up and protest, thus removing some of the power and control from political parties. Recently, many protests have been spontaneously organised in favour of measures to combat climate change, human rights (LGBTIQ, refugees), against politico-economical corruption and advocating uniting the island. On the other side, the rise of online hate and violent crimes has also pushed to the fore a more youthful extreme right-wing part of the population.

One of the major hurdles that impede the civic participation of youths is a lack of incremental participatory approach to building the necessary political skills (critical, digital, rhetorical literacies) needed in engaging a constructive political manner. That can be blamed on the lack of government interest in creating a democratic and informed populous through formal and informal education, practical involvement and seen impact in the local communities, and the general government's unwillingness to actually consult with its citizens in a fruitful and constructive manner. The approaches are usually formulaic, static and didactic within youth organisations rather than authentic, dynamic and dialectic. It can also be blamed on the culture of the family, where obedience is more valued than honesty, critical expression and debate in a safe space.

Italy

In Italy, Law 145/2018 defined the National Youth Council (CNG) a "consultative and representative body" and established that "it is heard on the issues that the President of the Council of Ministers or the delegated political authority deems appropriate to submit to his exam".

Similarly, all the Ministers can request the opinion of the CNG on "matters and policies that have an impact on the younger generations".

In the last ten years, the National Youth Forum, representing a body of the most important Italian youth associations, has consistently carried out a consultation activity of the young generations on the most relevant issues that interested and invested in young people. This activity was also carried out thanks to the constant support of the Department of Youth Policy and Universal Civic Service, which, through specific agreements, has financed projects specifically aimed at detecting the orientation of young people.

At present, there is a wide international recognition that today's Italian young generations are less interested in politics compared to previous ones. Two compelling explanations have usually been provided: on the one hand, the lower interest in politics and political participation of younger generations have been explained as a consequence of a more general reduction in political engagement that is common across western countries and across generations (the so called decline thesis); on the other hand, according to the replacement thesis, what seems to be

an apparent reduction is instead a transformation of the way political participation is expressed by younger generations. Even if they are more reluctant to join political parties and to be involved in other forms of institutional participation, youth are always attracted by voluntary associations, social movements and other civic groups.

However, in what has been called the “paradox of youth participation”, along with the decline of formal (or conventional) modes of participation, there has been an increase in informal (or unconventional) forms of participation in the recent years.

Research in this area shows that young people in Italy express their political interest in many different ways, for example by supporting informally organised campaigns or participating in popular protests.

Unconventional participation also takes place in the digital environment and is expressed in many different ways, from participating in political discussions in communities, to signing petitions, to posting political comments on social networks.

In Italy, according to the data presented by the agency *We are social* in their annual report “Digital 2020”, there are almost 50 million users who surf the internet every day and 35 million who are active on social channels.

In particular, Internet use by young people is particularly high: data from the latest OECD report “Digital Economy Outlook 2020” show that the age of first internet access has decreased in almost all OECD countries in recent years.

This situation is also reflected in the annual report of ISTAT “Citizens and ICT 2019” (Cittadini e ICT 2019), in which a [situation of overall lack of preparation of girls and boys to move consciously in the world pervaded by technologies](#).

The percentages of internet users are very high for the 6-14 age group (75% use), and increase for the age groups 15-19 (94,1%) and 20-24 (94,2%).

ISTAT data also show that, regardless of the device used, a very few percentage use the web to read newspapers and online magazines, gather information (39,9% for 14-17 year olds and 52,8% for 18-19 year olds) with a prevalence of girls in both age groups.

We can, thus, conclude that the civic and political engagement of Italian young people in the recent years can be defined as “onlife”, an interpretation of reality that grasps the inseparability of the online and offline dimensions with a view to overcoming this dichotomy.

A continuous cross-reference between the two dimensions is confirmed by young people themselves who use media and platforms belonging to both dimensions, switching from one to the other in a fluid, combined manner, using them, often simultaneously, according to their needs and interests. They do this mainly to share experiences, expand their network, make new acquaintances, inform themselves on social issues, but also to organise themselves and take action. The infosphere is perceived by the Italian young people as a tool for information and participation, as a space of opportunity through which they can express their personal opinions,

disseminate them and thereby influence other people. In order to make the most of this attitude, however, it is essential to strengthen young people's skills, from soft skills to digital skills, so that they can also experiment with new forms of participation in life in a safe, aware and participatory manner.

Czech Republic

The matter of civic and political participation in the Czech Republic became one of the important topics during the last few years. The new generation of young Czechs has some advantageous basics that could help develop an active civil society. Among them there is relatively high level of education, relatively good standard of living and existence of the strong middle class. The most common way of participation of children and youth is to participate in one of the civic associations. Most often, it offers young people an active program for spending free time. This way of involving children and youth has a long tradition in the Czech Republic.

Czech educational system offers young people the opportunities for civil participation from a very early age. The project "National Parliament of Children and Youth" covers the structure of children's self-governments on school, municipal and regional level and is present at primary and secondary schools. The main idea of the project is implemented from the lowest structures through school parliaments / municipalities / councils. The civil participation at universities is represented by academic senates. This type of self-government has two chambers, one consists of teachers and the other of students. Elections take place according to the statutes of the academic senate. Students and teachers can elect their representatives to the Academic Senate by voting in elections. In this case participation is also the granting of a mandate to elected representatives who have the right to act on behalf of their group. The Senates discuss current issues at their meetings and try to find suitable solutions. In general, senates have relatively large powers, it always depends, of course, on the specific school and the regulation of individual powers.

Young people are also involved in various politically oriented organizations. These are usually civic associations that are politically oriented by example of political parties to which they are ideologically inclined. Members of these organizations usually become members of regular political parties and get involved at least in communal politics. Participation in a youth political association opens up opportunities for further career advancement in politics.

Even though the interest for civic and political participation in the Czech Republic is growing, it still remains low. Among the main problems and limitations are:

- Insufficient and limited information on the participation opportunities: according to the research more than half of young people think they are not sufficiently informed about opportunities for participation, although they would be interested in them.

- Lack of interest in initiatives and civic engagement: the majority of young people see civic engagement and political participation as useless and unimportant, things that are only “a waste of time” and therefore do not engage.
- Parenting, education and family members’ influence.
- Prejudice of the impossibility to influence and change something.
- Communist history of the country: it is not rooted in the history of the country that one should interfere in things that concern them directly.
- Negative influence of the media: Czech social media is not promoting civic and political participation enough, but there is hope that it might change in the future.

Hungary

Statistics show that Hungary scores above European average when it comes to early school leavers or NEETs (Eurostat 2019) and lower in the PISA tests (PISA 2018), pointing at problems in the education system. The risk of poverty, unemployment or social exclusion is higher among early school leavers, thus the EU has set the goal of reducing the share of early school leavers (aged 18-24 years) to 10.0 % by 2020. With 12% this number is above average in Hungary. Students in Hungary scored lower than the OECD average in reading, mathematics and science. PISA tests show that only one of ten 15-year-olds can distinguish facts from opinions in the OECD countries.

The above problems became even worse by the compulsory schooling reduced to age 16, resulting in the further backwardness of disadvantaged young people and the deepening of social disparities.

In the framework of the Act on the National Public Education as part of the compulsory curricula of the secondary education, there is a positive practice namely the school community service, whereby a precondition of receiving the secondary school leaving certificate is 50 hours of community service. Community Service is an organised individual or group activity in eight areas: education, environment, healthcare, cultural and community wellbeing, social and charity, disaster recovery, people with disabilities. It has to serve the community, it is not funded and it is pedagogically processed. This way pupils engage with Hungarian CSOs and become active in a chosen field. Hopefully this means a lifetime experience and fosters a more active youth engagement in the long term.

However, according to international research, [Hungarian youth has the greatest hostility and prejudice against all kinds of minorities](#). Unfortunately, communication against migration and various minority groups (e.g., LGBTQI+ communities, Roma minorities) is led by the media dominated by the central government propaganda, which strongly influences the views of those who are receptive to it and less informed.

Ongoing hateful government communication, the dismantling of democratic institutions, xenophobia and intimidation in many cases result in young people withdrawing into their own world or fleeing abroad which means even fewer young people becoming active citizens in Hungary.

Surveys show that university students everywhere in Europe, including Hungary, are much more active than their lower educated peers, and typically [the demand for civic participation remains higher among those with higher education](#). The need to gain experience abroad and to participate in international projects is also more common among university students.

[Most young people are aware of the dangers of fake news and online harassment In Hungary, yet they are not afraid that they may become victims themselves](#). It is important to emphasize, however, that such knowledge is usually not acquired at school or from their parents. Also there are very big differences in conscious internet use and media literacy depending on the level of education and social situation. Educators and parents have a great responsibility in helping young people develop these competencies.

Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, fake news has come to the forefront, including anti-vaccine news. This encouraged the government to take action, and an amendment to the criminal code has been passed to allow the authority to prosecute false news producers in justified cases. In the spring of 2020, in connection with the Covid-19 epidemic, when a lot of fake news was published, scaremongering was introduced into the criminal code. Whoever claims or spreads a false fact connected to public emergency can be punished by up to three years' imprisonment for the crime. (Section 337. of the Hungarian Criminal Code)

The spread of false news linked to the epidemic has thus also made young people more aware of the identification of false news, the importance of checking the facts behind the news, and thinking critically.

4. Youth Myth Busters methodology

This chapter gives a glimpse on how the Youth Myth Buster project methodology was structured and implemented in the partner countries. The practices tested during the implementation conclude in some best practice methods developed on how to create a youth project to fight against fake news, propaganda and hate speech.

The wide use of social media by youth and the fact that social media play an important role in spreading fake news were some of the reasons to activate youth in this undertaking to counter fake news and by this increase their civic engagement.

In all of the countries, partners cooperated with young influencers and young people (totally 25-30 people) in order to achieve a twofold goal:

- To counter fake news
- To increase the civic and political engagement of youth

All partners started the project with networking, online trainings and workshops on the platform (<https://elearning.youthmythbusters.eu/>), explaining expectations and opportunities, and how the Youth Myth Busting teams should work together to counter fake news.

The biggest challenge during the project implementation for all was to keep young people interested and involved in the online activities. Lack of personal communication and the digital overwhelm caused by the Covid-19 lockdowns made it even more difficult to maintain interest.

For fighting this challenge, the partners had different solutions.

KMOP in cooperation with the young influencers and the National Advisory Board organized online workshops and exchanged e-mails to keep the participants active, support them during the entire project implementation and provide any kind of support whenever needed. **KMOP** advised the participants to use online tools to create photos, videos and memes in order to raise awareness on the importance of fighting against fake news, propaganda and hate speech online. The general approach in this procedure set by young influencers and the National Advisory Board was the statement that “5G spreads Covid-19”. All the myth busting teams cooperated in order to create original content to address this statement. This topic kept the interest of the participants active as it was an ongoing issue, which affects us all.

Youth Included targeted micro bloggers from Instagram and Facebook, as they are closer to their audience, and communicate directly with their followers. They searched for bloggers whose sphere of interests touched topics such as politics, feminism, sustainable development, ecology,

education, media etc. The Covid-19 pandemic brought our influencers a lot of materials and topics in the field of Fake news, Propaganda etc.

In Hungary, by building a structure in which young people were guided by young influencers and leaders (university students), participants did not receive guidance from adults, but from their peers. The whole process lasted for 3 months, starting with preparing young leaders, continued by finding and organizing group members of young people, followed by the creative activity of the young people and finally ending with the presentation of the products created. Staff of **Cromo** met with the young leaders on a 2-week-basis, while young leaders were in a weekly contact with the young team members via social media. The whole process was implemented online due to the Covid situation. However, this allowed youngsters from the whole country to participate, and meant less privileged youth to be part of the project too.

Similarly, **in Italy** for the implementation of the project, the 5 Young Influencers were pivotal. Thanks to their different personalities, interests and online communities we have been able to activate NEETs and other young people both in the online platform training and in the contest against fake news, propaganda and online hate speech. Due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, all project's activities have been carried out online. The silver lining of this situation however has been that young people from different Italian cities could participate in the project. Young Influencers have been great in supporting the participants by giving ideas and personal touches in order to make them involved and willing to have more information.

In Cyprus, the two main subjects addressed by the Youth Myth Buster teams were the conspiratorial connection between the installations of 5G mobile internet antennas to the Covid-19 outbreak, and the popular hate myth of the lazy refugees that justifies nationalistic, xenophobic and misanthropic policy practices towards people who had their lives uprooted. **CARDET** provided influencers and youngsters with technical options such as video making, subtitling and making posters for social media. As a general rule subjecting the youth to indoctrination through abstract thinking is not a winning strategy for promoting engagement. Engagement requires the development and collaboration of many hands-on skills and competencies along with multiple rounds of trial and error with constructive support and facilitation.

In sum, all partners had found ways to involve and maintain interest of young people in collecting, identifying fake news and succeeding in their campaigns on countering fake news, propaganda and manipulation. However, opportunities also arose due to the lockdowns. Teachers used opportunities to approach us, searching for non-formal digital educational themes to enrich their distant digital school program. For this, the entering point was the [YMB eLearning platform](#) which is an online competence development tool created to promote the civic and political commitment and fighting false news, manipulation and propaganda. After completing the

online lessons, young people became more connected to the topics of media literacy and joined our programme more easily.

Another challenge common in all countries was that not many young people see themselves as influencers and shirk off that responsibility. People instinctively understand the responsibility implied in being an influencer, or the term influencer has been "stigmatised" by a particular segment of the visual internet, namely fashion, music and dancing vloggers. We then had to adapt into discussing how our personal and digital identities have merged and that unequivocally everyone who has a social circle larger than their family is by default an influencer via their shares, posts, likes and comments.

5. The best YMB best practice product

The best Youth Myth Busting team chosen by the international audience was the Hungarian Urban Legends Instagram campaign led by Csenge Hajszán young influencer. The team of 4 youngsters Patrícia Szalai, Marcell Szabó, Angelika Butty, Fanni Vida have decided to create an Instagram page and run a campaign on interesting urban legends from Hungary and abroad.

The reason for their choice was that it seemed exciting and interesting that so many stories could be associated with a particular city. With this Instagram campaign, they got to know their own and foreign cities better. They preferred Instagram to publish the campaign because Instagram is the most viewed / classed internet forum for youth.

The campaign can be viewed here: <https://www.instagram.com/varosi.legendak/>

The total of 8 posts that were shared in March 2021 were liked 361 times. The page has at the moment 94 followers. The posts are written in Hungarian and English languages. The team worked online on a weekly basis and became a real team with shared responsibilities.

The 5-member-jury (National advisory board and experts) has given 91/100 points, examining the following criteria:

- correspondence to the Myth Busting Action topics (5 points)
- communicative effectiveness (5 points)
- originality of the subject (5 points)
- quality of realization (5 points)

As the Hungarian winning campaign, they took part in the European Audience Award competition organised by the partnership.



6. Recommendations

The recommendations are addressed to different stakeholders and decision makers on an international level on how they can support countering fake news, how they can increase the civic and political engagement of youth, or how they can combine both activities.

To increase societal resilience to disinformation, as declared in the [Final report of the High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation](#), it is important to:

1. enhance transparency of online news, involving an adequate and privacy-compliant sharing of data about the systems that enable their circulation online;
2. promote media and information literacy to counter disinformation and help users navigate the digital media environment;
3. develop tools for empowering users and journalists to tackle disinformation and foster a positive engagement with fast-evolving information technologies;
4. safeguard the diversity and sustainability of the European news media ecosystem, and promote continued research on the impact of disinformation in Europe to evaluate the measures taken by different actors and constantly adjust the necessary responses.

Recommendations for the Relevant Governmental Authorities/ the European Parliament:

1. Encourage authorities to implement awareness raising campaigns on the importance of active citizenship.
2. Encourage and support school professionals, leaders of youth organizations, etc. to organize extracurricular activities aiming at fostering civic engagement and countering xenophobia and fake news.
3. Initiate campaigns on how to identify fake news, propaganda, manipulation, and how to check sources and report fake news. These campaigns have to be easy to understand and broadly accessible.
4. Information campaigns on how to secure our personal data should be launched frequently by the regarding authorities. These campaigns have to be easy to understand and broadly accessible.
5. Public authorities should provide an enabling environment for substantial media pluralism through a combination of de facto and de jure protection of basic rights to free expression and diverse information, including appropriate forms of support for private sector media, and support for demonstrably independent public service media who can help produce quality information, counter disinformation, and increase media and information literacy.
6. Funds for educating people on how to identify fake news, check sources and report fake news should be accessible for non-profit organisations active in the field.

Recommendations to Media Organizations/Tech Companies/Platforms

1. It is suggested for Media organisations and Tech companies to offer user-friendly reporting pages for reporting fake news, propaganda, hate speech and manipulation. When reporting fake news, a clear process and feedback is requested.
2. Tech companies/platforms need to take responsibility and be accountable for the information on their pages. They need to prevent and sanction the spread of fake news, hate speech on the social media they manage. They should, where appropriate, provide user-friendly tools to enable users to link up with trusted fact-checking sources and allow users to exercise their right to reply.
3. Additional campaigns on the importance and practical usage of reporting tools for reporting fake news, propaganda, hate speech and manipulation are needed which should be spread among young people.
4. Moderate comments on social networks and the removal and reporting of hate speech, fake news, manipulation.
5. They should adapt their advertising policies, including adhering to “follow-the-money” principle, whilst preventing incentives that lead to disinformation, such as to discourage the dissemination and amplification of disinformation for profit. These policies must be based on clear, transparent, and non-discriminatory criteria.
6. They should ensure transparency and public accountability with regard to the processing of users’ data for advertisement placements, with due respect to privacy, freedom of expression and media pluralism.
7. They should ensure that sponsored content, including political advertising, is appropriately distinguished from other content. No political campaigns should be run on children’s pages, video channels (e.g. YouTube).
8. Fostering influencers to represent socially, environmentally important issues (similarly to CSR strategies of multinational companies), so that it becomes part of the competition how green/social an influencer is.
9. Regularly attend trainings to enhance their skills in countering fake news, hate speech and manipulation online.
10. Educate at least one person within the newsroom to be responsible for reviewing articles before sharing online.
11. Multi-stakeholder collaborations should be developed in order to independently identify, monitor, document, and alert citizens to hostile “information operations” be it from foreign states or domestic groups (especially in advance of elections).
12. Platforms should allow access to data to do independent inquiries, audits and research into activities reliant on proprietary media and data infrastructures with a view to ensuring transparency and authenticity of information sources and better informed European citizens.
13. Independent news media, fact-checkers and verification specialists should continue to invest in and work with platforms to build technology to more effectively monitor social streams, undertake source-checking, establish content provenance, and forensically

analyse images and videos at scale and speed, to counter disinformation (including when published by news media) and to document and publicize outcomes.

14. Collaboration between news media, technology companies, civil society organizations, and researchers around the transparent development and deployment of standards of equally-applied machine-readable signals that help recognition of credible and trustworthy content, bearing in mind that individuals and organizations ultimately are responsible for how technological solutions are developed and run.
15. Educational institutions, news media, and public authorities should invest in independently run digital media and information literacy (MIL) efforts to increase awareness and understanding of media and information, digital technology, and data analytics. These efforts should be differentiated for different demographics, and able to counter inequalities in how well equipped different European citizens are to make full use of digital media. Online platforms should facilitate the deployment of such efforts by developing the appropriate tools, optimised for the specific characteristics of their services.
16. Investment should be made in European centres for interdisciplinary, practical, timely, and accessible independent evidence-based research on problems of disinformation and for rigorously evaluating the efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness of responses deployed.
17. Subject to funding, notably from outside sources, continue investing in quality journalism and equip newsrooms with professional automatic content verification tools for audio-visual and text-based reports spread online.
18. Ensure the highest levels of compliance with ethical and professional standards to sustain a pluralistic and trustworthy news media ecosystem.

Recommendations to Media Colleges/Universities/High schools/secondary schools

1. Civic and political engagement needs to be part of the compulsory curricula and designed with the involvement of young people, so that new generations are socialized to actively participate in their communities with regards to the fight against fake news, propaganda and hate speech.
2. As part of the compulsory curricula it is suggested to teach basic media literacy and critical thinking competencies.
3. In each school there should be a specialist in the field of online harassment, online bullying, e.g. school psychologist completing further training in these areas.
4. Media organisations should cooperate with CSOs and academia to formulate and implement skill and age-specific media and information literacy approaches, and for all ages, while pursuing their media literacy projects in cooperation with schools and other educational institutions that target younger generations.

Recommendations to Youth Organizations

1. Youth organisations should share knowledge on how to counter fake news and propaganda.
2. Youth organisations should cooperate and create an international watchdog and advisory platform for countering fake news.
3. They should step up efforts to build a community of practice, linking up different media literacy organisations and communities at European level.
4. They should reach out to underprivileged territories and implement special training in media literacy for educators and youth workers, to train them on how to teach media literacy competences to children and youth.
5. They should work with academia, educational psychology professionals and the media industry to formulate skill and age-specific media and information literacy approaches and monitor their effectiveness. In so doing, CSOs and academia should focus, where possible, on adapting language to target audiences and on developing analytical frameworks to understand different types of disinformation.
6. They are recommended in collaboration with industry, to facilitate the development of open source tools to tackle disinformation on an everyday basis.
7. They are advised to design specific actions for citizens of different age groups aimed at sensitizing voters to the importance of integrity of elections; promote literacy programmes to enhance the quality of information around elections; and support a fact-based and data-checked public debates.

7. References

References that are related to the YMB project are listed below:

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