



The *MELIA Observatory* Project

Media Literacy Observatory for Active Citizenship and Sustainable Democracy

T3.1.1 Media literacy capacity building toolkit for pupils

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- Introduction

The WP3 will establish transnational training network for upgrading the level of media literacy and boosting civil participation. Its objective is to establish durable framework for continuous developments civil skills, especially among youth, that would enable them to play active role in democratic process.

Within this output was created Media literacy capacity building toolkit.

This capacity building toolkit is created by Edhance Plus in cooperation with all partners. Partners with expertise and experience in media, education and civic engagement (NGOs, HEIs) prepared capacity building tools. Public authorities dealt with a normative framework. Other all partners provided consultation and advice.

- **Summary of the Media literacy capacity building toolkit for pupils**

On the basis of detection of good practices from inside and outside the Region, we will develop the following innovative educational toolkit on the field of media literacy and active citizenship: **toolkit for training of pupils in higher years of elementary school (eighth, ninth year).**

Toolkit contain curriculum (D.T.3.1.1) of training program and following learning materials: handbook, brochure and interactive presentations with infographic (D.T.3.1.2). Curriculums include contents that provide knowledge, skills and competences to target group. It is crafted by accordance to special needs of particular target population. The curriculum is created based on implementation of training programs for capacity building, with the main purpose of developing skills and competences in the field of media literacy, in relation to active citizenship. The learning materials are designed in a culturally and socially adaptive manner so they can be adapted to different social, systemic or cultural circumstances in variety of national or local contexts. Also, presentations and handbooks are adaptable to digital format in order to stimulate interactive learning process (digital and interactive exercises). In this regard, we followed suggestions by European Commission which sees media literacy as “a stimulus and a pre-condition for pluralism and independence in the media”, leading to “a positive impact on the values of diversity, tolerance, transparency, equity and dialogue.” The toolkits will directly contribute to PSO2, since it will be instrumental for improving education programs in the field of media literacy with launching innovative training programs for both youth and their educators. With their wide applicability, they will also contribute to establishment of transnational training network (PSO1).

Curriculum's objectives

To apply to an individual in society, it is important to be able to process, evaluate and use stimuli that come from the outside world which requires an increasing ability to process, evaluate and use stimuli coming from the media. The media is becoming an important socializing factor. It has a significant influence on the behavior of the individual and society, on the formation of lifestyle and on the quality of life in general. At the same time, the messages offered to the media have a heterogeneous character. They are characterized by a distinctive relationship to natural and social reality and are created with various (often unacknowledged, and therefore potentially manipulative) intentions. The correct evaluation of these messages in terms of the intention to create them (inform, persuade, manipulate, entertain) and in terms of their relationship to reality (factual correctness, logical argumentative structure, value validity) requires considerable preparation.

Media education aims to equip the pupil with a basic level of media literacy. This includes both acquisition of some basic knowledge about the functioning and social role of contemporary media and its impact on active citizenship and sustainable democracy, as well as the acquisition of skills supporting informed, active and independent involvement of the individual in media communication. Above all, it is the ability to analyse the offered messages, assess their credibility and evaluate their communication intention, or associate them with other messages; then it is the orientation in the mediated contents and the ability to choose the appropriate medium as a means to meet various needs – from obtaining information through education to fulfilling free time.

The teaching of active citizenship focuses on the formation of positive civic attitudes, it develops an awareness of belonging to the European civilization and cultural circle and it promotes the acceptance of the values on which today's democratic Europe is built. Citizen's competence is of crucial importance for active political participation, which is one of the main components of good governance and sustainable democracy. Especially in the Eastern part of the Danube region, political participation is stagnating. Particularly worrisome are apathy and lack of political interest on the side of the younger population. Furthermore, in the last years,

we have witnessed political developments that result in the deterioration of democratic standards in many parts of the region. The core element of the citizen's competence is a high level of media literacy. It is necessary for citizens' reflection of social reality and their resilience to negative media phenomena, like hate speech and fake news. The European Union is aware of this issue and therefore this project is implemented and financed by the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme.

Capacity building tools

To strengthen civic competences and media literacy we have compiled Capacity building tools for enhancing media literacy skills, which includes: presentations, handbooks and brochures.

Development of the capacity building toolkit is the second specific objective of the MELIA Observatory project is development of training programs in the field of media literacy, to encourage active citizenship and participation in governance processes. These programmes will be freely available and disseminated on web platforms (specified in the objective 3 of the MELIA Observatory project). MELIA capacity building tools will enhance knowledge and skills required to efficiently build resilience against negative phenomena constructed by contemporary media, strengthen youths' ability for critical thinking and empower them for political participation. These tools will focus on youth. Among youth, the special attention will be paid to young individuals in their formative years, i.e. last years of elementary school.

The learning and capacity building tools in the areas of media literacy and active citizenship will include innovative teaching approaches and methods, based on mutual interaction among those involved in the educational process as well as on the use of new technologies. They will be applicable in both formal and informal education. These tools will build up their skills, their real-life problem-solving capacities, as well as ability to understand and cope with media constructed reality. Competences in the field of media in terms of capability to understand and to critically assess media contents and produce and disseminate own

messages, will serve to empower young people to manage their own media and wider social activities. Media skills will be thus coupled with ability and motivation for democratic engagement in public life.

To strengthen competences, topics were selected that this target group may encounter most often in their daily lives.

These are:

- Behavior on social networks
- Critical thinking skills
- Marketing and advertising
- News and hoaxes
- Manipulation and propaganda
- Politics

Description of the individual lessons

i. Behavior on social networks

The current young generation spends most of their time online and is referred to as "digital natives". They master technology quite naturally and are used to attractive stimuli, dynamism and diversity of the "virtual world". They are able to search for information on their smartphone within a few seconds, they communicate with each other via social networks. In this environment, they come across not only the content they are looking for, but also political posts. These online platforms allow users to create a public profile and communicate with other users through it, and they also make it very easy for users to share their social networks with others and express their opinions, both personal and socially responsible.

Social networks have therefore become a tool of various organizations, such as political or various anti-political organizations.

Pupils therefore face the threat of influencing their opinion, without realizing how easily their judgement can be influenced by the influx of information. Cultivating critical thinking over ordinary content as a result leads to the strengthening of competencies within active citizenship and sustainable democracy. It is therefore of the utmost importance to equip them with the ability to understand and critically assess and classify media content. We point out disinformation messages that can spread rapidly through the online environment and social networks, as one of the negative aspects related to the online environment. They make it difficult for pupils to critically assess specific contextual messages in connection with active citizenship and sustainable democracy.

In this lesson, pupils will be introduced to the concepts of what are social networks, what social networks exist and what is their purpose

They will learn to recognize the risks on social networks and that they are addictive. A video sample has been included to demonstrate the pitfalls of sharing private data. The aim is for the pupil to realize how and why to behave safely. Thanks to selected video samples of content from Instagram, they can identify whether they have the character of "fact" or "fiction". With the help of practical samples, they will learn about the pitfalls of cyberstalking and cyberbullying. For a more playful form, two comics were included, which depict this issue. Pupils will learn the basic rules of safe behavior on the network and thus acquire the ability to critically evaluate risk factors. That is, the possibility of misuse of personal data.

ii. Critical thinking skills

The speed of changes creates the opportunity to manipulate the target group and problem situations arise. Young people perceive the online world as one of the main sources of information that significantly shapes their world view. Pupils simplify information, they tend to stereotypes and abbreviations, which often force them to interpret things in a way that confirms their own beliefs and world views. For this reason, we have included a lesson focused on practising critical thinking. Strengthening critical thinking is essential to

maintaining common sense in evaluating information, including politically related information.

They will learn what are cognitive distortions and logical fallacies, what is critical thinking and what is beneficial for it and what is not. In the second part of the presentation, pupils will practice the information obtained on specific examples. We have included interactive elements so that students can view the examples themselves and make them easier to remember. The aim of the lesson is to acquire the ability to critically evaluate information and then apply it in real life and in the media.

iii. Marketing and advertising

In this lesson, pupils will be introduced to concepts in the field of marketing and get acquainted with the meaning of marketing. They recognize where they can come across advertising and what the character of advertising is. They will also learn what an algorithm is and what it is used for in the online world. The content on social networks is offered to the user on the basis of algorithms (user interests, what pages he/she visits, what products he/she views ...) and at the same time two pupils sitting next to each other and browsing Social networks and watching the same content will never have the same content to display. It is based on the data that social networks know about them. All this user data is stored and used in such a way that the displayed content is as suitable as possible for the user. The target group of pupils is very vulnerable and does not know these facts. Using practical examples, we will teach pupils how to critically evaluate these facts and how to apply them to their daily lives. The aim is to teach them to apply this ability to any content (even with a political context) presented to them.

Following this, they can critically evaluate the content that is presented or they are looking for it themselves and how it affects their actions and judgement in public space.

The online (but also offline) world is full of so-called product placement, which influences consumer behavior. It is a modern marketing tool - a promotion of a product or service, which, in addition to the classic advertising presentation of the product, focuses on the social,

personal and societal features and characteristics of the consumer. Marketing strategies directly target the young generation through the internet and use areas that are close to this generation, such as music videos, online games and, above all, the power of influencers.

For the young generation, product placement is difficult to identify despite the fact that viewers or recipients of information must be informed about it in advance (according to the EU law).

However, since the legislature does not manage to fulfil the real picture of what is happening in society, it is of the utmost importance to strengthen the ability to critically evaluate the situation. This topic should teach pupils not only about the pitfalls of product placement and online advertising, but also about the impact on their daily lives. The young generation is exposed to influences that they cannot recognize and, as a result, they do not realize how it can influence their judgement and activity in everyday life.

iv. News and hoaxes

The online world, as well as the printed media, are a source of unsubstantiated information and hoaxes. The ability to detect fiction in the online environment is also hampered by the rapid development of technology and its sophisticated use in the online media environment.

In the lesson, pupils will learn what the most important elements of media communication are and, with the help of a practical sample with a topic close to them, pupils will learn the difference between news and journalism. In the next part of the lesson, pupils will learn to define and recognize disinformation and find out where they are used (propaganda, troll farms or conspiracy theories). Disinformation is a big bait for a democratic society and therefore it is necessary to pay closer attention to this topic. How pupils can verify for themselves, recognizing disinformation or hoaxes is very difficult even for adults. We should discuss with them what is happening in the country and in the world, ask questions, take an interest and look for information. Let us try to reduce the spread of disinformation and hoaxes together.

v. Manipulation and propaganda

In this lecture pupils will be introduced to the concept of manipulation and manipulation techniques that are often used. Most people get their information mostly from the internet - and this environment has become a haven for manipulators. Manipulation is often disguised in forms that are difficult to detect. Pupils can encounter it on any website, including social media. Examples were selected that the target group can most often meet in their environment. They get acquainted with the types of manipulators through an animated video.

With the help of visual elements, pupils get acquainted with the interpretation in photographs and its distortion, as well as manipulation in photographs. In this lesson, we deal with the concept of propaganda, censorship and self-censorship.

vi. Politics

The world has largely moved to an online environment where hate speech and fake news, which negatively affect the democratic environment in the EU, are easily disseminated. An integral part of active citizenship is participation in the political environment. Political parties and organizations also operate in the online environment. Online platforms allow all users to create a public profile and use it to communicate with other users, spread ideas and express their opinions.

In this lesson, we will explain the role of politicians in everyday life and aim, within sustainable democracy, to show pupils, through practical examples, the reasons why it is important to take an active interest in politics and in what way. The pupil will acquire the ability to evaluate how ideas about the target (planned) recipient are reflected in the form of media messages. With the help of video samples of political speeches, pupils get acquainted with the elements of hate speech. With the help of a video sample, we will show pupils the inappropriate behavior of politicians in public (what is appropriate or also that politicians at different stages of the election period behave according to their needs with an interest in sympathy for their potential voters). Last but not least, through examples, the pupil will be motivated to take an

active part in political life and learn what the potential risks will be that will affect him if he neglects this activity. This fact is also reflected in the perception of politics and active citizenship, which is an important element of democracy. Political participation is stagnating, especially in the eastern part of the Danube region. The apathy and lack of political interest of the younger population is particularly disturbing. We want to guide and motivate pupils to active citizenship in society.

Description of interactive presentations

According to the topics listed above, 6 presentations were made for pupils. One presentation has been created for each topic.

Presentations are coded in HTML5 and run on any computer in a usual web browser. Each presentation is marked with the project's publicity on the first slide. To move to the next slide, the pupil will click on the arrow to the right. To return to the previous slide, the pupil will click left. Besides that, slides include an “info button” marked with visible “i” icon on the slide in the lower-left corner of the slide. Under it, there is additional information or example that will help better understand the issue. (Pupils follow instructions with additional learning information within particular Handbook.) Some slides have interactive elements in addition to the “i” button. These elements are highlighted. By clicking on them, pupils will learn more information (there can be for example an audio sample, video or additional information). Pupils will also find an audio icon in the presentation. Some slides contain sound. If necessary, pupils can click on the sound icon to mute or reactivate the sound in the presentation. By clicking on the right arrow pupil will move to the next slide. If a pupil wants to go back to the presentation, click on the left arrow. To go back to the very beginning of the presentation, click on the “house” icon which returns the pupil to the very beginning.

Those interactive presentations are available on the official website of the project:

<https://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/melia-observatory/section/materials-for-pupils>

Description of handbooks

Handbooks have been created to serve as a manual of the lectures for the pupils. There are 6 separate handbooks relevant to each topic (mentioned above). In each handbook, pupils will find copies of slides from the presentation and extension theoretical and didactical material. The learning is also supplemented with interesting facts and definitions. These Handbooks will help pupils work through the presentation while expanding their knowledge.

The handbooks are available in PDF files on the official website of the project:

<https://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/melia-observatory/section/materials-for-pupils>

Brochure

A brochure was created to promote the resulting learning toolkit. It is a one-page document that describes the content of the curriculum in a concise and factual manner. The information serves both the learners and the general public.

The brochure is available in PDF files on the official website of the project:

<https://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/melia-observatory/section/materials-for-pupils>

Reading List

We have prepared a list of recommended literature for this target group. As this is an international project and the target groups speak different languages, therefore the list of recommended literature and other resources is multilingual. A list has been compiled for each topic. This reading list is part of the Handbooks, i.e. it can be found in the Handbook by topic and at the end of the document in the part named "Reading List".

These documents are appended to this deliverable. The appendices are named:

The handbooks with reading list are available in PDF files on the official website of the project:

<https://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/melia-observatory/section/materials-for-pupils>