



## **The *MELIA Observatory* Project**

### **Media Literacy Observatory for Active Citizenship and Sustainable Democracy**

#### **T4.3 Pilot 3 – Youth educators**

## Document Reference

<b>Project Acronym</b>	Melia Observatory			
<b>Project Code</b>	DTP3-657-4.1			
<b>Project URL</b>	<a href="http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/melia-observatory">http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/melia-observatory</a>			
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<b>Output Name</b>	Pilot 3 – Youth educators			
<b>Output Number</b>	T4.3			
<b>Type</b>	Report	<b>Distribution Level</b>		internal
<b>Responsible Author(s)</b>	Yantsislav Yanakiev & Nikolai Genov, RGLO, Matevz Tomsic & Janez Kolar (SASS)			
<b>Contractual Date of Delivery</b>	30.11.2022			
<b>Status</b>	Final version			
<b>Quality assurance reader</b>	Nicoleta Voicu CIP, Klaudia Keringer PBN			

## Change History

Version	Date	Status	Author (Unit)	Description
0.1	20.11.2022	Draft	Yantsislav Yanakiev & Nikolai Genov, RGLO	Draft document
0.2	25.11.2022	Draft	Matevz Tomsic (SASS) & Janez Kolar (FAM)	Reviewed draft document
0.3	30.11.2022	Final	Yantsislav Yanakiev & Nikolai Genov, REGLO	Final document

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## 1. Introduction

The goal of the present output report is to summarize the achievements and lessons learned of Pilot 3 as carried out in Bulgaria and Slovenia.

The tools for capacity building in the field of media literacy and active citizenship developed in WPT.3 have been tested with the target group of youth educators in order to support the building resilience against negative phenomena constructed by contemporary media, strengthen youths' ability for critical thinking and empower them for political participation.

The output report includes assessments of the Pilot's contents, managements and actions. The assessments rely on the results of the feedback surveys providing information about the acquired media literacy knowledge and skills by the educators as defined as target group in the Framework Methodology for pilot implementation, tool to monitor gained teaching skills on topic of medial literacy (deliverable D.T.4.3.1).

The Pilots 3 in Bulgaria and Slovenia consists of 2 workshop sessions per country.

The planning and organisation of the workshops was coordinated between the Research Centre Regional and Global Development (REGLO) and Faculty of Media (FAM).

The local preparation of the events and the internal evaluation were carried out by the members of the MELIA team from the REGLO and FAM. The evidence-based information contained in the outcomes of the Pilots were used as information source for the preparation of the Joint Evaluation Report (deliverable DT.4.4.2) and Policy Recommendations of the MELIA Project to the decision-makers in the Danube Region (deliverable D.T4.5.3) .

The evaluation process of the MELIA Project was outlined in the Evaluation Framework document (deliverable D.T4.5.1). It is the methodology for data collection for evaluating pilot testing and benchmark activities carried out in the framework of WPT.4 in September – October 2022.

The target group of Pilot 3 has been defined as consisting of 20 university teachers (10 in Bulgaria and 10 In Slovenia), researchers in the field of media studies, experts from state institutions, teachers, university professors, representatives of NGOs active in the field, etc.

The Evaluation Framework document contains instructions and tools for collecting data and recording relevant aspects of the Pilots. The participants had to provide feedback about the curricula of the two Pilot Sessions, the quality of the teaching materials and the quality of the organization and implementation of the sessions. The primary information for the evaluation was collected by semi-structured Questionnaire and by discussions with the participants in the pilots. All teaching materials were translated into Bulgarian and Slovenian languages (deliverable DT.4.3.2 for Bulgaria) and (deliverable DT.4.3.2 for Slovenia).

## **2. Planning and Implementation of the Piloting activities in Bulgaria**

The organizers of Pilot 3 in Bulgaria focused their Pilot testing on young educators. This was the main task in the responsibility of REGLO as the leader of WPT.4 and one of the partners organizing and implementing the pilots. The organisation and implementation of this pilot is a strong distinction with Pilot 1 dealing with elementary school pupils and Pilot 2 dedicated to the testing of education materials with secondary school students. The major question the researchers from the Research Centre “Regional and Global Development” REGLO had to answer concerned the comparatively different and broader aims of Pilot 3 in comparison with the Pilots 1 and 2.

### **Evaluation of pilot 3 activities management process and main actions undertaken in Bulgaria**

For the purpose of the efficient knowledge transmission and practical training the following preparation of the Pilot’s Sessions has been carried out:

- Short introductory lectures were prepared for every central topic;
- Power Point presentations have prepared for linking conceptual development with practical details;
- All teaching materials prepared in WPT.3 were translated into Bulgarian language.

The translated handbooks and Power Point presentations were sent to the participants in advance and a link to the MELIA webpage was provided to be able to prepare for the pilot sessions.

The following activities were undertaken for the preparation of the evaluation procedures:

A detailed Questionnaire was elaborated to identify of the participants’ evaluation of the sessions with the special focus of each question on a central topic as follows (selection):

- Quality of defining the target groups;
- Quality of the selection of youth educators;

- Quality of the organization of the pilot testing;
- Quality of the collaboration between the partners responsible for the implementation of the Pilots and benchmarking activities, etc.
- In methodological terms the Questionnaire was organized according the model “Question and answers in 5-point scale from” Very low” (1) to “Very high” (5).

The specifics of the target group consisting of educators made it possible to enrich the information needed for evaluation by a focussed discussion in the end of the workshops with the participants in the first and the second sessions. The aims of the interviews were the following:

- General assessment of the initiative to carry out a regional Projects like MELIA;
- Links between hybrid wars, the related fake news and hate speech, and the national media;
- The practical relevance of Projects like MELIA.

### **Evaluation of the contents of the pilot 3 in Bulgaria**

The first session of Pilot 3 took place in the Conference Centre, Bul. Dondukov 11, Sofia on 21 September, 2022, while the second session was organized on 13 October 2022 in the same place. The attendance was of very good quality. Representatives of Sofia University, New Bulgarian University, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, University of Shumen, University of National and World Economy, Ministry of Culture, teachers in primary and secondary schools, representatives NGOs actively participated in the event. Two central topics were introduced and discussed in details.

The issues of Behaviour in Social Networks and Critical Thinking Skills were central in the debates during the first Session of the Pilot 3 with young educators. After the Power Point Presentation introduction to the topic references to the content of the teaching materials of Handbooks were made. The very raising of the issue concerning the cognitive and practical relevance of both topics a long series of questions, reactions and discussions came about. The most important issue which exploded the discussion was the status of fake news and hate speech in the current Bulgarian borders bridging the concerns about the links between problems of the networks. The issue mobilized the participants to raise questions and to search for answers in the spirit of the area of Critical Thinking Skills. What age would be the best for starting intensified education in skills of critical thinking? How to avoid the transition from constructive to destructive criticism? Some debates could be resolved with reference to the teaching materials. Several participants included information borrowed from the Handbook and the evaluation covered the quality of the training program on media literacy and active citizenship (Handbooks and Power Point Presentations).

The discussions during the second session for pilot testing of MELIA education and training materials was focused on issues of Manipulation, Propaganda and Politics. The session was very well attended by experts on the topic. Among them were representatives of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, University of National and World Economy, teachers in primary and secondary schools, etc.

The session started with efforts to clarify the concept by referring to the Handbooks. After having reached unity in the understanding of manipulation, propaganda and politics, the discussion focused on issues of media literacy in the context of inequality, later on inequality in education and in the context of the educational system. And all these topics in the context of media\areas of media literacy and present-day politics.

### **Tools for collecting data for evaluation of the pilot 3 in Bulgaria**

The partners, led by REGLO, developed and applied a Feedback Questionnaire responsible for recording pilots and benchmarking activities. The structure of the Questionnaire follows the pattern introduced by the Framework Methodology for pilot implementation (deliverables DT.4.1.1, DT.4.2.1, DT.4.3.1). This allowed all learning tools to be tested with the aim to receive feedback about their usability and applicability. The goal was to get feedback from the youth educators on the quality and applicability of educational materials in order to strengthen the capacity of media literacy and prepare proposals for improvement.



The questionnaire was designed in the form of assessment of the usability and applicability of educational material, as well as the quality of training held. In addition, it provides self-assessment of media literacy skills acquired through training. Finally, it measures a degree of educators' satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the learning materials, trainings held and media literacy skills gained.

Since the sample in the case of the Bulgarian pilot, is small and the answers are very much concentrated on the positive side 4 and 5 of the scale, we are not going to present in details the results. It is important to mention that throughout the survey the answers evaluating the Pilot 3 study in Bulgaria are concentrated in the highest positions and mostly in position 5 of the five-point scale, which shows high level of satisfaction of the participants.

Another qualitative method applied was a focused discussion with the participants. The discussions were conducted at the end of the first and the second sessions of the pilot testing. Through these focused discussions with youth educators, we gather their assessment of the quality, usability and applicability of the training materials, etc.

### **Perception of the personal and social relevance of the issues dealt with in the Pilot study 3 in Bulgaria**

The Questionnaire prepared for the study of participants' evaluations of the quality of the preparation, organization and implementation of Pilot 3 Bulgaria, has a separate part dedicated to the study on the perceptions of the relevance of the work invested in the MELIA Project in general and into Pilot 3 in particular. The questions in the Questionnaire, and respectively the answers of the participants were focused on the concept of capacity (ability). The respondents declared unanimously that the media literacy has a relevant role in the development of personal capacities for building and maintaining democracy. This is the effect of the development of the personal abilities to explain and understand the reasons and mechanisms of the media literacy by individuals make the constructive interplay between knowledge, values and norms possible. The respondents firmly supported the position that individuals who are competent in media literacy get easier intellectual and emotional access to complex, complicated and ideologically one-sided media stories.

### **Involvement of the representatives from the Policy Impact Committee in the pilot 3 in Bulgaria**

A representative of the Policy Impact Committee (PIC) from Bulgaria representing the Ministry of Culture has been involved in the activities as independent body, especially in parts where the policy recommendations were discussed. Piloting actions have been closely monitored and observed from the policy point of view by the representative of the Ministry of Culture who is the Secretary of the National Committee of Medial Literacy in Bulgaria. This means that a PIC member has been involved from the beginning till the end in the evaluation process. The policy point of view has special emphasis, since additional recommendations for policy makers have been elaborated on the basis of the results of piloting and benchmarking activities.

### **3. Planning and Implementation of the Piloting Activities in Slovenia**

The organizers of Pilot 3 in Slovenia FAM, focused also their Pilot testing on young educators.

The content and the structure of the Pilot Report 3 in Slovenia was discussed and agreed with the REGLO team which is the WPT.4 leader.

#### **Evaluation of pilot 3 management, pilot contents and actions in Slovenia**

For the purpose of the pilot training the following preparation of the Pilot's Sessions has been carried out:

Short introductory lectures were prepared for each of four chosen central topics;

PPT presentations have prepared for linking conceptual development with practical details;

All teaching materials prepared in WPT.3 were translated into Slovenian language.

The translated handbooks and Power Point presentations in Slovenian language were presented to the participants during both events and a link to the MELIA webpage was provided to the invited participants in advance, in order for them to be able to be prepared for the efficient work at the pilot sessions.

The following activities were undertaken for the preparation of the evaluation procedures:

A detailed Questionnaire was elaborated to identify of the participants' evaluation of the sessions with the special focus of each question on a central topic as follows (selection):

- Quality of defining the target groups;
- Quality of the selection of youth educators;
- Quality of the organization of the pilot testing;
- Quality of the collaboration between the partners responsible for the implementation of the Pilots and benchmarking activities, etc.

In methodological terms the Questionnaire was organized according the model "Question and answers in 5-point scale from "Very low" (1) to "Very high" (5).

The specifics of the target group consisting of educators made it possible to enrich the information needed for evaluation by a focussed discussion in the end of the workshops with the participants in the first and the second sessions. The aims of the interviews were the following:

General assessment of the initiative to carry out a regional Projects like MELIA;

Links between hybrid wars, the related fake news and hate speech, and the national media;

The practical relevance of Projects like MELIA.

### **Evaluation of the contents of the pilot 3 in Slovenia**

As the first session, the follow-up session of Pilot 3 in Slovenia took place in the facilities of the Leading partner of the MELIA Consortium, School of advanced Social Studies (SASS), Leskoškova 9e, Ljubljana – Slovenia, on October 5th, 2022, while the second session was organized on October 26th, 2022, at the very same place.

The attendance consisted of various youth educator representatives, as also some policy making authority's representatives. Two central topics were introduced and discussed in details per each event.

The issues of Critical Thinking Skills and also Manipulation and Propaganda, were central in the debates during the first Session of the Pilot 3 with youth educators. After the Power Point Presentation introduction to the topic references to the content of the teaching materials of Handbooks were made. The very raising of the issue concerning the cognitive and practical relevance of both topics a long series of questions, reactions and discussions came about.

The most important issue which developed into the discussion was the status of fake news and hate speech in the Contemporary Slovenian situation, while also raising the concerns about the possible ways of raising awareness about these issues among young population.

The issue mobilized the participants to raise questions and to search for answers in the spirit of the area of Critical Thinking Skills. What age would be the best for starting intensified education in skills of critical thinking? How to avoid the transition from constructive to destructive criticism? Some debates could be resolved with reference to the teaching materials. Several participants included information borrowed from the Handbook and the evaluation covered the quality of the training program on media literacy and active citizenship (Handbooks and Power Point Presentations).

The discussions during the second session for Slovenian part of Pilot 3 testing of MELIA education and training materials was focused on issues of Politics and Behaviour on Social media.

The session was well attended by representatives of various relevant target groups of both experts on the topic and also teachers/professors, acting as youth educators every day.

The session started with efforts to clarify the concept by referring to the Handbooks. After having reached unity in the understanding of the topics presented, the discussion focused on issues of media literacy in the context of inequality, later on inequality in education and in the context of the educational system. And all these topics in the context of media\areas of media literacy and present-day politics.

### **Tools for collecting data for evaluation of the pilot 3 in Slovenia**

The tools were the same as the ones used in the Pilot 3 in Bulgaria. They were developed and applied a Feedback Questionnaire. The structure of the Questionnaire follows the pattern introduced by the Framework Methodology for pilot implementation (deliverables DT.4.1.1, DT.4.2.1, DT.4.3.1). This allowed all learning tools to be tested with the aim to receive feedback about their usability and applicability. The goal was to get feedback from the youth educators on the quality and applicability of educational materials in order to strengthen the capacity of media literacy and prepare proposals for improvement.

The questionnaire was designed in the form of assessment of the usability and applicability of educational material, as well as the quality of training held. In addition, it provides self-assessment of media literacy skills acquired through training. Finally, it measures a degree of educators' satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the learning materials, trainings held and media literacy skills gained.

Since the sample in the case of the Slovenian, is small and the answers are very much concentrated on the positive side 4 and 5 of the scale, there is no need to go in details.

Like the Pilot 3 in Bulgaria, the survey the answers evaluating the Pilot 3 study are concentrated in the highest positions and mostly in position 5 of the five-point scale, which shows high level of satisfaction of the participants.

Also, like in Bulgaria focused discussion with the participants were conducted at the end of the first and the second sessions of the pilot testing. Through these focused discussions with youth educators, we gather their assessment of the quality, usability and applicability of the training materials, etc.

### **Perception of the personal and social relevance of the issues dealt with in the Pilot study 3 in Slovenia**

The Questionnaire prepared for the study of participants' evaluations of the quality of the preparation, organization and implementation of Pilot 3, both in Slovenia, as also in Bulgaria, included a separate part dedicated to the study on the perceptions of the relevance of the work invested in the MELIA Project in general and into Pilot 3 (Slovenia and Bulgarian) in particular.

The questions in the Questionnaire, and respectively the answers of the participants, focused on the concept of capacity (ability). The respondents declared unanimously that the media literacy has a relevant role in the development of personal capacities for building and maintaining democracy. This is the effect of the development of the personal abilities to explain and understand the reasons and mechanisms of the media literacy by individuals make the constructive interplay between knowledge, values and norms possible. The respondents firmly supported the position that individuals who are competent in media literacy get easier intellectual and emotional access to complex, complicated and ideologically one-sided media stories.

### **Involvement of the representatives from the Policy Impact Committee in the pilot 3 in Slovenia**

A representative of AKOS (The Agency for Communication Networks and Services of the Republic of Slovenia) has been involved in the activities as independent body, especially in parts where the policy recommendations were discussed, naturally especially focused on their field of expertise and responsibility.

The Agency for Communication Networks and Services of the Republic of Slovenia is an independent body that regulates and supervises the electronic communications market, performs tasks related to radio and television, and regulates and supervises postal services and railway traffic in Slovenia and therefore serves as an active stakeholder on MEDIA issues in the Republic of Slovenia. The AKOS member has been involved from the beginning till the end in the evaluation process. The policy point of view has special emphasis, since additional recommendations for policy makers have been elaborated on the basis of the results of piloting and benchmarking activities.

## 4. Conclusions

The planning and organisation of the Pilot 3 in Bulgaria and Slovenia followed the general approach applied in the MELIA Project in the collection of data for evaluation of the pilots and benchmarking activities. The evaluation itself was carried out following the Evaluation Framework Document (deliverable DT.4.5.1).

The result from the Pilot testing in Slovenia are close to those of the Bulgarian case.

The developed in the framework of MELIA project education and training tools (handbooks and Power Point presentations were very well received by the participating in the workshops youth educators, both formal and representatives of state/local institutions, NGOs, media representatives, etc.).

The report emphasizes the importance of the Policy Impact Committee (PIC) involvement in the activities implemented to guarantee adequacy, usefulness and applicability of the tested education materials from the policy point of view.

Both in Bulgaria and in Slovenia PIC representatives participated in the piloting events and contributed significantly to the assessment of the education and training tools. Besides, they contributed to dissemination of the MELIA project results. A good example is the inclusion of a section on 2022 yearly report on media literacy in Bulgaria about the MELIA project. Finally, the PIC members contributed to policy recommendations formulation.