



The MELIA Observatory Project

Media Literacy Observatory for Active Citizenship and Sustainable Democracy

T3.1.2 Media literacy capacity building toolkit for students

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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 students

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 high school students (with focus on vocational schools).**

Toolkit contain curriculum (D.T.3.1.3) of training program and following learning materials: handbook, brochure and interactive presentations with infographic (D.T.3.1.4). Curriculum 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 on the basis of 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).

Description of curriculums objectives

The key phenomenon of the present is the enrichment of life with the process of "media", i.e. the fact that the vast majority of information is mediated by the mass media, whose production has its own logic, its laws - and these need to be known and recognized. In the sum of all communication activities, the share of those who are stimulated, enforced and provided by modern mediating technologies is constantly increasing - in other words, the participation of individuals and groups in media communication is constantly increasing. Cognition of the world and decision-making in various life situations from intimate life to voting behavior takes place - among other things - under a certain influence of messages offered by the so-called mass media. However, these media are also part of a globalizing economy, the essential feature of which is the mass emphasis on consumption, experience and presence - features characteristic of the so-called mass society. This is a trend that brings with it a number of benefits and enrichments, but also a large number of risks (from the possible loss of orientation in society and its norms and values to isolation and the possibility of socio-pathological behavior). Today's society therefore requires that its members are able to orient themselves as independently as possible in the media offer (from the products of "traditional" mass media to the possibility of "new" network media). This requirement is so strong and significant that mastering the media offer becomes a competence of its kind. The position of the mass media and media communication in a person's life is clearly one of the factors of the quality of life. It is a factor so important that it is not possible to deal with the media only intuitively, but above all instructively - it is necessary to achieve "media literacy". Therefore, systematic preparation for "life with the media" - i.e. media education - is becoming a natural and common part of education in all developed societies. Contemporary man must be equipped with knowledge and skills that will enable him to orientate himself in mass media production, to use it, but not to succumb to it, to fulfil conscientious active citizenship in accordance with sustainable democracy.

Media education brings students primarily the idea of the functioning of decision-making processes in political communication (the importance of media and "medialisation", the function of public space, the risk of media manipulation), power and its democratic control.

It also offers them an idea of current trends in media production conditioned by the mass media output and its orientation to profit and consumption (depoliticisation of political issues, entertainment, nationalization).

Educational institutions have certain roles and responsibilities towards society depending on active citizenship. As part of this course, we want to strengthen their active citizenship through teaching. We will provide high school students with the knowledge and skills to understand, challenge and engage in a democratic society, including politics, the media and civil society.

Description of the 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, reading list and brochure.

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 the web platform (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

Students on social networks face the threat of influencing their opinion, without realizing how easily their judgement can be influenced by the influx of information. They should be able to interpret the relationship between media messages and reality.

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, which can spread quickly through the online environment and especially social networks, as one of the negative aspects. We try to teach students the ability to critically evaluate on the basis of examples

from their lives. As a result, they should learn to apply this skill subsequently to situations related to active citizenship. And because most of the time students spend on social networks, where they view various content, we have included this topic as a suitable means of acquiring skills. Students should learn to compare different interpretations of visually pictorial expressions on specific examples and explain their attitudes towards them.

We use examples of influencers' lives to demonstrate that not everything students see is real and true. If students acquire critical evaluation on content that is close to them, they can apply this skill to other media tools, different topics and other spheres of their lives.

The environment of social networks brings not only positives, but also negatives in terms of the impact on the mental health of this target group. Students are overwhelmed by the large amount of content about "false beauty".

At the beginning of the lesson, students will be briefly introduced to the concept of social network and their examples. A video sample of content that is close to this target group has been prepared. The student can think about the consequences and changes brought about by the development media to the society. It will be explained to students that using these platforms can be dangerous and addictive. The content is usually digitally edited or stylized, so we have included a sample that confirms these edits. To amplify this thesis, examples were prepared that relate to the editing of appearance, but also places. There may be a deeper analysis and the finding of stimuli and problems - students do not evaluate their behavior and their shortcomings, but the mistakes of someone else, with whom they can subsequently identify privately. This target group may be exposed to cyberstalking and cyberbullying, so a comic has been included that illustrates this situation.

It is useful for students to be aware of what a digital footprint is. It will help them to resolve and better understand the meaning of individual functions. The final slides deal with the excessive use of digital technologies and social networks and the associated (not only) physiological problems.

ii. Critical thinking skills

In order for students to actively participate in social life, they should be able to critically evaluate policy arguments, information from news and other media. It is necessary to think critically about this. This lesson is used to practice this skill.

Critical thinking is a combination of words that are used more and more often in the field of media and education in various cases. What can we imagine under this term and how to make us think critically? We make sure that critical thinking is not confused with criticism (this is a concept that students are familiar with, so they use its definition when hearing the concept of critical thinking).

In the following slides we focus on logical fallacies and cognitive distortions. We do not require knowledge of terminology from students, but it is desirable to be aware of unconscious mistakes in argumentation and drawing conclusions.

Great emphasis is placed on practical exercises. Students can click on interactive elements, under which there is an explanation of either a logical fallacy or a cognitive distortion with specific examples. This target group will practice even more demanding examples in order to master this skill of critical evaluation of a statement really well. The student should then be able to recognize the problem and clarify its nature and should be able to critically interpret the knowledge and findings. He/she verifies them, he/she finds arguments and evidence for his/her claim.

iii. Marketing and advertising

Advertising – everyone knows it, but we do not always recognize it. We don't see commercials just on TV, but all the time on the internet. Thanks to the data stored about users on the internet, advertisements are then served to our needs. Therefore, we will explain to students what are the basic principles of marketing, how they are interesting and also that advertising is targeted at specific users - the latest technologies using the principles of algorithmization.

In this lesson, we also focus on Product Placement not only on social networks, where they often meet it. 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).

The reason why we include this topic is that modern marketing is also widely used in politics and influencing opinion, and it is a threat that we must face in today's world. It is therefore necessary for students to learn the basic principles of the algorithm and its use in the online world. Many of them do not realize how the algorithm works and why the ads are displayed to them. For better clarity, a video was prepared that explains this issue. Thanks to the understanding of the issue in the example, which they often encounter in the digital environment, they can then more easily recognize the manipulation of the political intention.

The aim of this lesson is to reveal manipulations in the online world of marketing and advertising in order to acquire the skills of their critical evaluation.

iv. News and hoaxes

Students receive most of the information from the media and cannot clearly evaluate what is fact and what is fiction. We pay attention to hoaxes and disinformation, which are part of media messages. The online world, as well as the printed media, are a source of unsubstantiated information and hoaxes. It is therefore of the utmost importance to equip students with the ability to understand, critically (reflexively) assess and classify media content. Students must be able to critically approach media information (to distinguish between subjective and objective messages)

In the lesson, students will learn what the most important elements of media communication are and, with the help of a practical sample with a political topic, they will learn the difference between news and journalism. This aims to strengthen the ability to recognize and name areas of media influence on humans.

The next part of the lesson focuses on the possible influence of the content of media messages by the media owner. This part can be extended by individual or group work with the Internet within the search for other important and influential personalities owning important large media or by searching for other titles/stations.

Furthermore, with a practical example, they will learn what the term interpretation means. This aims to strengthen the ability to recognize stereotypes in the media message and gives examples of their simplistic and general approach to reality. In the next part of the lesson, they will learn about hoaxes and their purpose and, through suitable video samples, the use of hoaxes "in practice". That is, in an environment that is close to the students and thanks to which they can acquire these skills. In the next part of the lesson, they will learn to define and recognize disinformation and find out where they are used (propaganda, troll farms or conspiracy theories). Using these examples, they will learn to critically evaluate information from a media message.

v. Manipulation and propaganda

Students encounter manipulative behavior in their lives. They are often unable to distinguish or defend against it. However, manipulative communication is often used in the presentation of politicians. Given that students can already enter public life, we have included this topic for this target group as well.

The aim of this topic is to acquaint students with the intention and techniques of manipulation and to educate them in the field of recognition and work with such a message with regard to active citizenship and sustainable democracy. Manipulation techniques are also reflected in propaganda, so attention is also paid to this concept.

Students will get acquainted with the concept of manipulation and manipulative techniques that are used. Examples were selected that the target group can most often meet in their environment. In the next part of the lesson, we will introduce students to the types of manipulators. This is a pattern of behavior. In order to explain the problem to the students as well as possible, we prepared an animated video with voiceover and illustrative examples. The student will play an animated video in which this issue is explained and there will be several examples of types of manipulators. Thanks to this, the student will strengthen the ability to evaluate how manipulative techniques are used in practice and more easily identify with the example.

Manipulation is used in a political environment, so an audio sample was included, in which students get acquainted with the example of politician-led manipulation. We will strengthen the student's ability to perceive the relationship between the media and freedom of speech and the importance of the press for democratic societies, so that he/she understands the risk aspects of this relationship,

With the help of visual elements, students get acquainted with the interpretation in photographs and its distortion, as well as manipulation in photographs. In this lesson, we also deal with the concept of propaganda and introduce students to examples of occurrence. At the end of the lesson, we deal with the concepts of censorship and self-censorship.

vi. Politics

It is useful to find out what students think about politics, whether and to what extent they are interested in what is happening in the state in which they live and who are the people who decide for us. They will learn the role of politicians in their daily lives. Great emphasis is also placed on the concept of hate speech.

With the help of video examples of political speeches, students should learn different forms of political speech, one of the examples being hate speech. Using a video sample, we will show students the inappropriate behavior of politicians in public with an emphasis on pre-election manipulation with potential voters. This should help students formulate their moral

beliefs. Last but not least, through examples, the student will be motivated by visual examples and arguments to actively participate in political life and learn what are the potential risks 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. The aim of this lesson is to introduce students to politics, to realize the importance of municipal policy and motivate them to take an active interest in political events around them and, consequently, in the world.

Description of interactive presentations

According to the topics listed above, 6 presentations were made for students. 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, students will click on the arrow to the right. To return to the previous slide, students 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. (Students follow instructions with additional learning information within particula Handbook.) Some slides have interactive elements in addition to the "i" button. These elements are highlighted. By clicking on them, students will learn more information (there can be for example an audio sample, video or additional information). Students will also find an audio icon in the presentation. Some slides contain sound. If necessary, students can click on the sound icon to mute or reactivate the sound in the presentation. By clicking on the right arrow, the student will move to the next slide. If a student 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 students for the very beginning.

The presentations are available on the official website of the project:

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

Description of handbooks

Handbooks have been created to serve as a manual for the students. There are 6 separate handbooks relevant to each topic (mentioned above).

In each handbook, students 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 students 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-highschool-students>

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 are available on the official website of the project:

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

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".

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-highschool-students>