



Question what you get. Media education to fight Disinformation

Field research

Results of students surveys (Annex 4)

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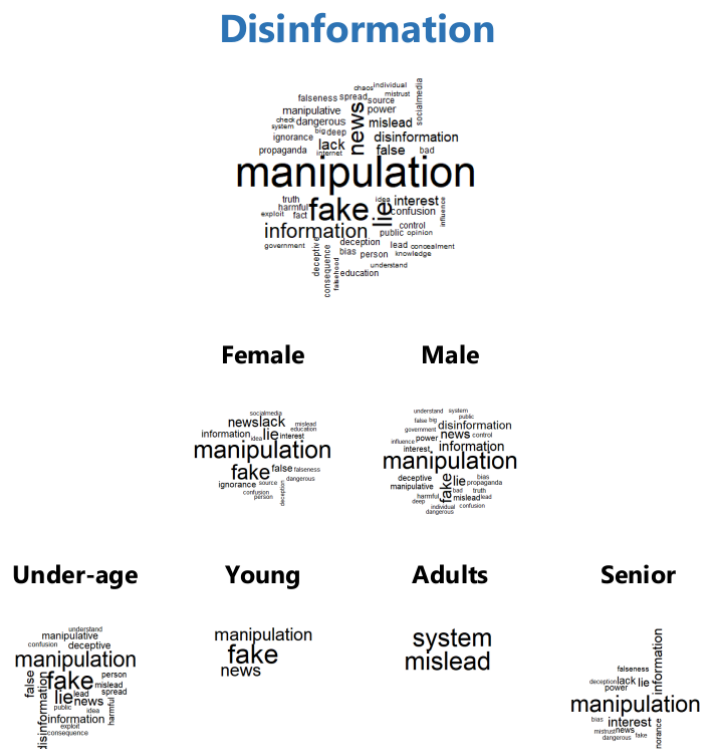
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Field research: What do we know about media literacy and disinformation?

1. What do our potential students think about disinformation and media literacy?

To explore the social representation of the terms **disinformation** and **media literacy**, students from five different countries (Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain) were asked to freely express in writing the first four words that came to mind to describe these terms¹. In the following graphs we analyse the results in a visual way to get a better idea of what the future users of the resources created in the project actually think.

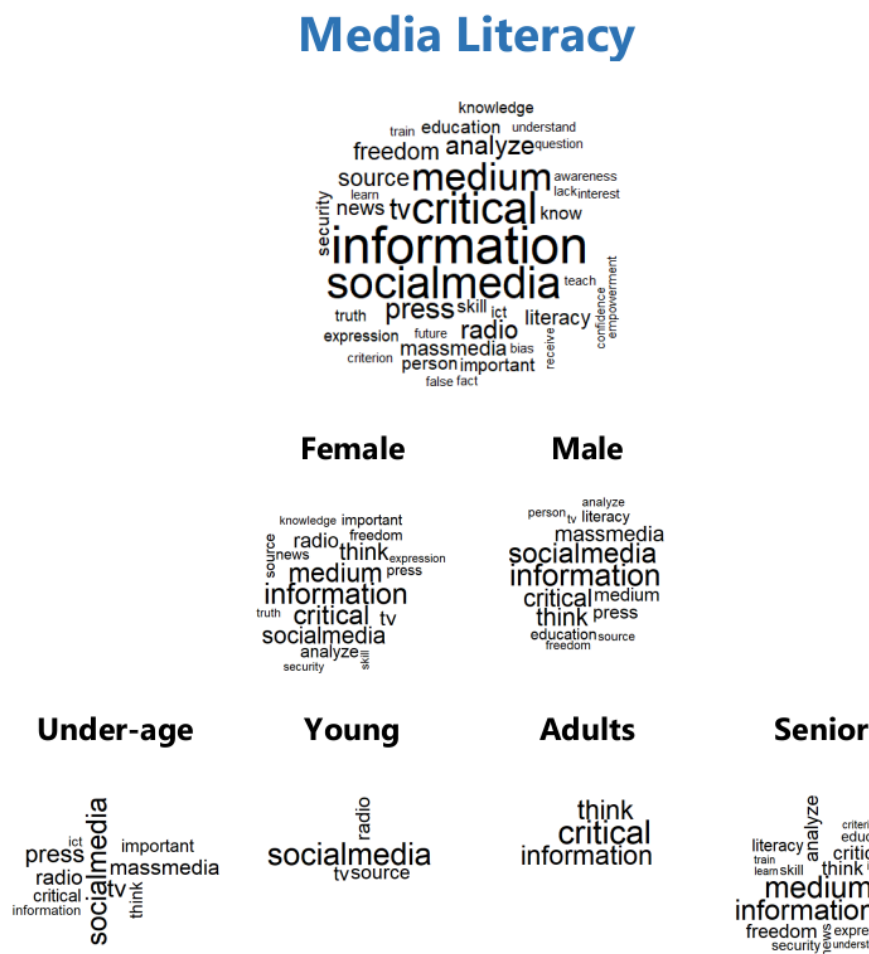
Figure 1. Social Representations of Disinformation (students).



¹ A total of 96 students from those five different countries (59.4 % female, 40.6 % male; 30.2 % 14-17 year-old under-age, 9.4 % 18-25 year-old young, 11.6 % 26-45 year-old adults, 48.9 % 60-72 year-old senior) were asked about the **disinformation** and **media literacy** (Figure 1 and Figure 2). As the sample size is small, extrapolation of the results is limited, but the data can still be considered relevant thanks to the results obtained.

Among the group of people who described **disinformation**, words such as **manipulation**, **fake**, **lie**, **interest**, **mislead** and **news**, among others, stand out. These words reflect a social construction of **disinformation** as a dangerous phenomenon, deliberate and motivated by hidden interests, whose purpose is to confuse and manipulate through falsehoods presented as legitimate information. It is perceived as a threat to the veracity of news and thus to people's ability to access reliable information and make informed decisions. It is also seen as a phenomenon closely linked to power and interests, as people who spread **disinformation** do so for their own gain. Both women and men agree that manipulation is a key factor in understanding **disinformation**.

Figure 2. *Social Representation of Media Literacy.*



The description of **media literacy**, in which words such as **information**, **critical**, **medium**, **social media**, **analyze**, **freedom**, and **source** appear most frequently, reflects a complex and multifaceted social construct. **Media literacy** described by these words reflects a holistic understanding that combines practical skills (such as analysing and evaluating information and sources) with a social awareness of the role of media (press, radio and television) and freedom of expression. This suggests that **media literacy** is seen not only as an individual skill, but also as a key component for active and responsible participation in a democratic society. Again, women and men agree that media literacy is

not just about passively consuming information, but involves an active and analytical approach to evaluating information, questioning its veracity and understanding its implications, which is of particular interest in social media, where **media literacy** would involve sharing and creating content responsibly.

2. How do we inform ourselves? What are our sources of information and how do we understand them?

We have also asked the students who will benefit from the results of the project how and where they get their information². Do we really have the tools to tackle misinformation? Do we think we know how to deal with it?

Regarding the **frequency with which respondents access the Internet for any purpose**, 86.6% of respondents (86.9% of women and 88.1% of men) admit to using it more than once a day (18.5% between 2 and 5 times a day; 26.1% between 6 and 10 times a day; 42.0% more than 10 times a day), mainly between 6 and 10 times a day. Looking at the age of the respondents to this question, 92.3% of 18-25 year olds use it daily for any purpose, while this percentage reaches 100% among adults aged 26-45. A slightly lower but similar frequency of Internet use is shown by under-age (14-17 years) and older (60-72 years) people. This could be due to greater restrictions on use by the former and the technological leap by the latter. In other words, while the family and school environment of young people may limit their use of or access to the Internet, the lower frequency of Internet access among older people may be due to a lack of habit or knowledge of how to use it.

Just as Internet use is widespread in our society, so is **access to news**. 77.4% of respondents (75.0% of women and 83.3% of men) say they access news at least once a day, regardless of the platform, with a third (30.3%) of all respondents accessing between two and five times a day. Just as daily access to news is widespread, the frequency with which news is accessed increases with the age of the respondent. While about half (52.4%) of minors say they access news at least once a day, 69.3% of 18-25 year olds, 71.4% of adults and 100.0% of the over 60s say they do so.

This **increase in frequency of access to news with age** could be influenced by factors such as interest in current affairs and social responsibility, consumption habits and access to technology, availability of time, consumption habits or preference for different information platforms. In this respect, it is common for older people to feel a greater responsibility to stay informed and therefore tend to use

² We asked people ($n = 119$) of different ages from Spain, Poland Greece Italy and Germany about the main sources of information and about disinformation itself. Although the size and composition of this sample does not allow us to consider their responses as representative of the entire population to which they belong, they do give us an accurate picture of their beliefs, habits and preconceptions on these issues.

the internet in a functional way, prioritising current affairs and showing a greater preference for more traditional information platforms than younger people. They also have more free time to consult news and value its relevance to issues such as politics, health, security and the economy. Younger people, on the other hand, despite having ample access to technology, tend to prefer entertainment content and social networking, access news less frequently and in a more dispersed way, and in many cases use entertainment sources as their primary information source for news.

FIGURE 1. *Commonly Used News Sources.*



An example of this is the preference shown by respondents in terms of their regular use of certain platforms as sources of information (FIGURE 1). Both under-age respondents and 18-25 year olds agree in citing entertainment-oriented sources such as Tik Tok (20.95% of minors and 17.39% of young people) and Instagram (20.27% of minors and 15.22% of young people) as their preferred news sources used in the last week, closely followed by other platforms such as YouTube (16.22% of minors and 8.70% of young people) and Facebook (12.84% of minors and 15.22% of young people). Although to a lesser extent, this section of the population tends to use more traditional sources of information such as television (10.14% of under-age and 8.70% of young people), radio (6.08% of minors) or online newspapers (6.52% of young people).

For the adult population aged 26-45, the main source of news they used in the last week was online newspapers (22.5 %), followed by other entertainment sources related to new technologies such as YouTube and Instagram (17.5 %) or blogs (12.5 %). Further behind are TV and Facebook (10 %) as sources used by adults to keep up with the news.

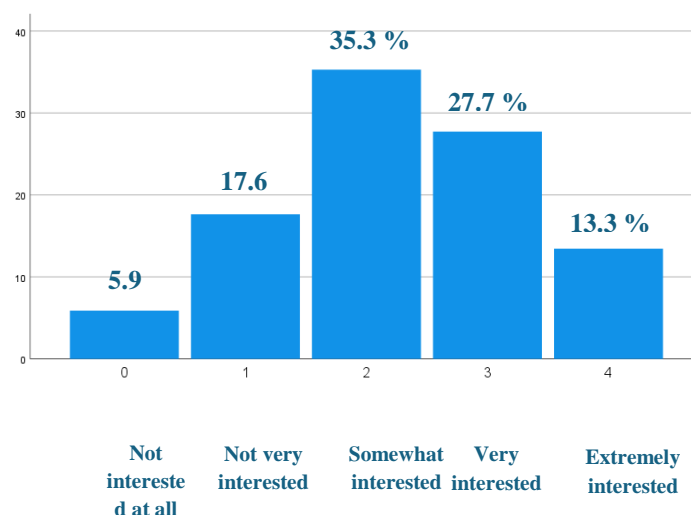
People over 60 still prefer to use more traditional information platforms such as TV (24.05 %; news bulletins and 24-hour news channels), printed newspapers (20.13 %) and radio (18.18 %) as their primary source of information, along with other platforms related to new technologies such as online newspapers (20.13 %), YouTube (7.79 %) or Facebook (4.54 %).

Other news sources that are beginning to emerge as platforms commonly used by people of all ages are X and Telegram, with Whatsapp, Twitch, Snapchat and Spotify standing out among the youngest.

Preference for news platforms by age would reflect generational differences in consumption habits and technological access. Children and teenagers prefer networks such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube because of their dynamic, visual format and easy access from mobile devices, in line with their digital lifestyle and their search for entertainment and immediacy. Adults aged 26-45, more balanced between traditional and digital, prefer online newspapers for their more structured content, but also use social networks such as Instagram and YouTube to keep up with current trends. In contrast, older people, who are less accustomed to new technologies, opt for traditional sources such as TV, radio and print newspapers, which are perceived as reliable and familiar. The emergence of new platforms such as X, Telegram or WhatsApp can be explained by their increasing accessibility and ability to integrate multimedia formats and direct messaging.

Another aspect to highlight is the level of interest in news reported by respondents (CHART 1). In general, respondents report an average level (from zero to four, $M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.08$; $M = 2.17$, $SD = 1.06$ women; $M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.06$ men) of interest in the news, showing between some and a lot of active willingness to be informed.

CHART 1. *Level Of Interest In News.*

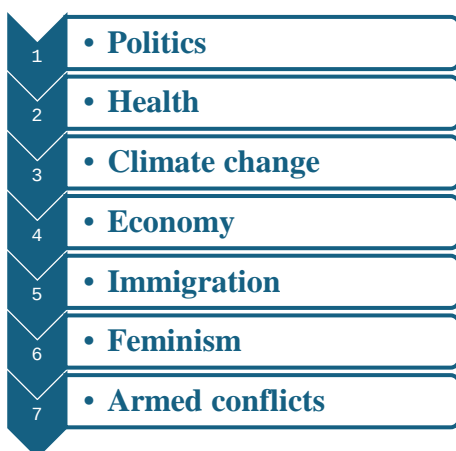


This interest seems to vary in intensity and form according to age, as the data show. For example, only among minors (15.9%) is there a complete lack of interest in staying informed. This section of the population shows the least interest ($M = 1.41$, $SD = 0.90$) in the news in general and is mainly not very interested (36.4 %) or somewhat interested (40.9 %) in being informed. These data are similar for 18–25-year-olds ($M = 1.85$, $SD = 0.80$), although more young people are somewhat interested in the news (61.5%). It is in the adult years (between 26 and 45) that this interest increases ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.77$; 35.7 % somewhat interested; 42.9 % very interested), and this tendency is even more pronounced in the over-60s ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.74$; 52.1 % very interested; 35.7 % somewhat interested; 35.7 % very interested).

The variation in interest in news according to age could be due to factors related to personal development and the responsibilities associated with each stage of life. For example, children and young people tend to prioritise entertainment and social interaction, reflecting a lower level of engagement with current affairs. In adulthood, interest increases, possibly because of the need to make informed decisions about work, finances and family. In older age, interest in news may increase because of more time available and the desire to stay connected to the world.

When it comes to **topics about which respondents believe they have identified false or misleading information** (FIGURE 2), politics, health and climate change stand out, closely followed by financial and economic issues. Although to a lesser extent, they also identify immigration, feminism or armed conflict as issues where inaccurate, manipulated or outright false information is disseminated to confuse, influence public opinion or reinforce prejudices. Despite identifying key issues in our current affairs that are susceptible to manipulation by the media and vested interests, rather than relying on objective evidence, respondents of all ages agree that they rely mainly on their own judgement (as implausible) or that of others (opinions of family members, notes from acquaintances, even written comments from strangers) to give validity to the arguments they use to decide whether a news item is false, misleading or accurate. Other strategies used by all respondents to check the accuracy of a news story are internet searches and, to a lesser extent, the use of a disclaimer. Difficulties in distinguishing between false, misleading and accurate information can have serious consequences, such as perpetuating stereotypes, creating social polarisation, legitimising hate speech or making decisions based on incorrect information. These issues are often sensitive and complex, and misinformation about them can exacerbate ideological or emotional divisions, hinder understanding of reality and divert attention from the real causes and solutions to the problems being addressed.

FIGURE 2. *Issues Where False Or Misleading Information Is Identified.*





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Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Project Number: 2023-1-ES01-KA220-ADU-000153626