



Antibodies to MisInformation

Summary

Young Local Opinion Leaders: Antibodies to MisInformation

In this project we design, develop and pilot in schools a model experiential program for media education against misinformation. Its central learning goal is the metacognitive skill of critical dealing with digitally disseminated (mis)information. We use climate change as an exemplary case study for digital misinformation, since it is a (literally and figuratively) hot subject on which a lot of both information and misinformation is available. The educational program is being designed and applied by the participating students themselves, members of the [CyberSafety Youth Panel](#) in cooperation and guidance by journalists, educators and policy makers.

Misinformation goes through digital social networks in ways reminiscent of an epidemic in human society. Between organized misinformation centers and their millions of end-victims, those who can put a brake to misinformation are the **local opinion leaders**, -critical network nodes for the dissemination and more importantly for the acceptance or rejection of information or disinformation. Their 'vaccination' with skills and attitudes of critical thinking is pivotal.

An exemplary cooperation led by youth

High school students are the critical and hopeful target group of this project. More than 50 adolescents participate in the CyberSafety Youth Panel (CSYP); they have been selected by several organizations under a variety of criteria -but their common characteristic is that they are all local opinion leaders. In the project they are being helped to develop a model educational course for themselves and their colleagues, assisted by educators experienced in Internet and MisInformation issues, young journalists and faculty of the Open University of Cyprus experienced in developing such courses.

Media Education: for youth by youth

In school education teacher and textbook authority dominates and learning is understood as memorization; but to deal with misinformation, Critical thinking is required. Thus, the required media education calls for a change of attitude. The project will support the Youth Team to design an educational program that they will own.

Blended self-education through Internet and experiential educational activities

The CSYP team will determine in collaboration with the other groups the content of the educational program to be made available (creative commons) on the Open University platform; it will be implemented first for the project team itself. The collection of appropriate material will be based on the conference Combating Misinformation Through Media Literacy by developing appropriate experiential learning activities (role play, etc.) starting from workshops in schools & continuing online.

Climate change: a suitable theme

Although the project does not concern only one specific area of misinformation, the existence of a specific thematic focus will be more effective. Climate Change, for which there has been [a recent initiative of the Cypriot government](#), in which the [Cyprus Institute](#) participates, is offered as a lively hot topic, it is of interest to young people. Abundant (mis)information circulates about it; fake science it is not always evident.

Miniatures of the conference, a tool for schools

There was minimal school participation in the extremely interesting June 2019 conference. The project will develop a two-hour miniature to be utilized in schools together with the experiential educational activities.

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