

TOOLKIT

FOR YOUTH WORKERS AND YOUTH LEADERS



Is it safe
TO SAY A WORD?



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Introduction

The digital world has become one of the primary environments where young people learn, communicate, express themselves, shape their opinions and participate in society. Social media, online platforms, digital communities and instant access to information create unprecedented opportunities for learning, creativity, civic engagement and international cooperation. At the same time, young people increasingly face challenges such as misinformation, media manipulation, online hate speech, cyberbullying, privacy risks and information overload.

For youth workers, these developments create both new opportunities and new areas of responsibility. Supporting young people today means not only creating opportunities for learning and participation but also helping them navigate complex digital environments in a safe, critical and responsible way.

The toolkit “Is It Safe to Say a Word?” was created to support youth workers, educators, youth leaders, trainers and facilitators working with young people, particularly those with fewer opportunities. It provides practical knowledge and non-formal education methods aimed at developing media literacy, critical thinking, digital safety skills and responsible participation in online environments.

The toolkit combines theoretical foundations with practical activities that can be adapted to various educational contexts, including youth exchanges, training courses, local youth initiatives, youth centres, schools, volunteering projects and community activities.

Chapter 1.

Understanding the Modern Media Environment

Modern people live in a world where information surrounds them almost constantly. News appears on smartphones immediately after publication, messages arrive through messengers around the clock, and social media allows everyone not only to consume information but also to create it. While only a few decades ago people learned about events through newspapers, radio and television, today a significant part of communication takes place in digital environments.

For young people, the internet has become a natural part of everyday life. Many teenagers and young adults spend several hours a day in digital spaces, communicating, learning, entertaining themselves, following the news and forming opinions about the world through online platforms.

However, the enormous amount of information available does not always guarantee its quality. Today, everyone faces important questions: whom can we trust, how can we distinguish reliable information from false information, why do different people see completely different versions of the same events, and how do digital technologies influence our perception of reality?

For youth workers, understanding the modern media environment is an essential professional competence. Youth workers need not only to navigate the information space themselves but also to support young people in developing critical thinking, media literacy and safe digital behaviour.

1. Information Society and Digital Communication

Information Society – a society in which the creation, distribution and use of information play a role as important as the production of goods and services.

Digital Communication – the exchange of information through digital technologies such as the internet, social media, messaging applications, online platforms and other electronic communication tools.

Communication – the process of transmitting information between people.

How Communication Has Changed in the Digital Era?

For most of human history, information spread slowly. News could take weeks or even months to travel from one place to another. The invention of the printing press, radio and television significantly accelerated this process, but the real revolution came with the development of the internet.

Today, anyone can send a message to people on the other side of the world within seconds. A young person can participate in an international youth project, run a blog, create videos or organise a social campaign using only a smartphone and an internet connection. Digital communication has created new opportunities for education, civic participation, human rights advocacy and democratic development. Through the internet, young people have gained access to vast amounts of knowledge and the possibility to engage directly in discussions on socially important issues.

However, the speed of information sharing also has a downside. Incorrect or false information spreads just as quickly as reliable information. For this reason, critical information analysis skills have become essential for every citizen.

Why It Matters for Young People?

Young people are among the most active users of digital technologies. Their opinions, attitudes and decisions are increasingly influenced by information received online. Understanding the principles of digital communication helps young people use digital tools more consciously and avoid manipulation.

1.2. Traditional Media and Social Media

Media– channels used to distribute information to a broad audience.

Traditional Media– newspapers, magazines, radio and television.

Social Media– digital platforms that allow users to create content, communicate and exchange information.

Content– any information published in digital environments, including text, images, videos, audio or a combination of these formats.



Characteristics of Traditional Media

Traditional media generally operate through professional editorial teams. Before publication, content usually undergoes verification, editing and approval processes.

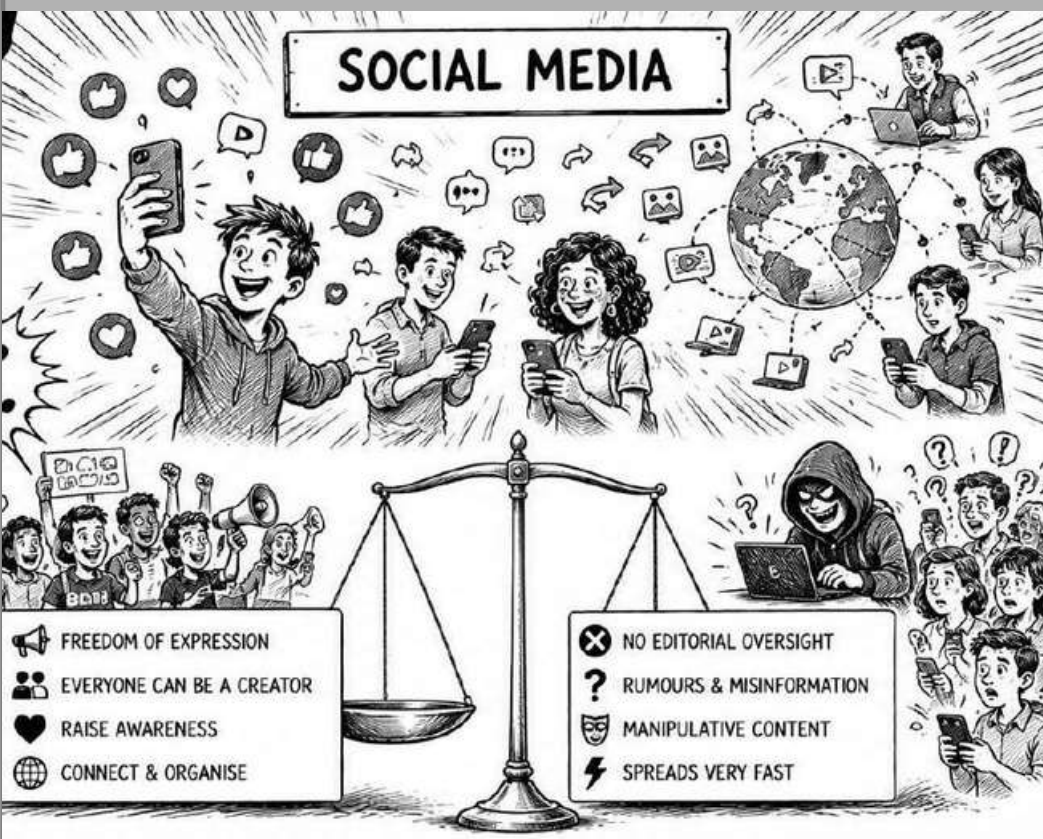
This approach helps reduce errors, although mistakes can never be completely eliminated. Journalists have professional responsibility for published information and are expected to follow established ethical and professional standards.

Characteristics of Social Media

Social media has significantly transformed the information landscape. Today, every user can become a creator and distributor of information.

This has created new opportunities for freedom of expression, one of the fundamental human rights in democratic societies. People can report events directly, organise social initiatives and draw attention to important issues.

At the same time, the absence of editorial oversight means that rumours, misinformation and manipulative content can spread alongside useful and reliable information.



Comparing Information Channels

Traditional media generally provide more structured information and rely on professional standards.

Social media offers speed, diversity of opinions and high levels of user engagement.

Most people today receive information from both sources simultaneously. Therefore, it is important to understand the characteristics of each and to use multiple information sources when forming personal opinions.

1.3. Algorithms and Information Consumption

Algorithm – a set of rules or instructions used by a computer system to make decisions and perform specific actions.

Recommendation Feed– an automatically generated list of content suggested to a user by a digital platform.

How Algorithms Work?

Millions of posts, photos and videos are published online every day. No person can see all of this content. Therefore, digital platforms rely on algorithms to select what information users see.

Algorithms analyse user behaviour, including:

- what users watch;
- what they like;
- what they comment on;
- which topics interest them;
- how much time they spend engaging with particular content.

Based on this data, the system attempts to present content that is most likely to attract the user's attention.

How This Influences People?

Most users believe they independently choose the information they consume. In reality, part of that choice is made automatically through algorithmic selection.

If a young person frequently watches videos on a specific topic, the platform will recommend increasingly similar content.

On one hand, this is convenient because users can find relevant information more quickly. On the other hand, people may begin to see only a limited portion of the information landscape.

Understanding the role of algorithms helps individuals become more aware of the information they consume and remember that digital platforms do not show the entire world, only a selected part of it.

1.4. Echo Chambers and Filter Bubbles

Echo Chamber— an information environment in which a person is regularly exposed primarily to opinions that reinforce their existing beliefs.

Filter Bubble— a situation in which algorithms automatically limit the diversity of information available to a user.

Why Filter Bubbles Appear?

People naturally seek information that confirms their existing views.

Psychologists refer to this tendency as confirmation bias.

Algorithms strengthen this effect. If someone is interested in a particular topic or holds certain views, the system begins suggesting increasingly similar content.

As a result, users may gradually find themselves in an information environment where most messages support their existing perspectives.

Why It Can Be Harmful?

Filter bubbles can create the illusion that everyone thinks the same way.

People become less exposed to alternative viewpoints, less able to understand the arguments of others and more vulnerable to manipulation. For democratic societies, it is especially important to maintain the ability to engage in dialogue with people who hold different opinions.

Democracy is not based on complete agreement but on the ability to discuss differences peacefully and search for common solutions.

How to Reduce the Impact of Filter Bubbles?

Although it is impossible to completely avoid algorithms, their influence can be reduced by:

- using different information sources;
- reading content from diverse authors;
- comparing different perspectives;
- verifying information before sharing it;
- consciously exploring information beyond one's usual digital environment.

1.5. Young People and Digital Information Consumption

Today's young people often receive news not through television or newspapers but through social media, bloggers, video platforms and messaging applications.

Many encounter news accidentally while consuming entertainment content. As a result, important social and political issues may be perceived through short videos, memes or emotionally charged posts.

This format makes information more accessible but also creates a risk of oversimplifying complex topics.

Opportunities Created by Digital Environments

Digital environments provide young people with unique opportunities, including:

- participation in social initiatives;
- access to education;
- international cooperation;
- social activism;
- development of creative skills;
- sharing personal ideas and projects.

Many youth movements, charitable initiatives and social campaigns have become possible because of digital technologies.

Risks of Digital Environments

Alongside these opportunities, several risks exist:

- misinformation;
- manipulation;
- cyberbullying;
- privacy violations;
- information overload;
- emotional burnout.

For this reason, one of the most important tasks of contemporary youth work is to promote media literacy and critical thinking among young people.

Connection with Active Citizenship and Social Participation

Understanding the modern media environment is directly connected to participation in democratic society. Citizens make decisions based on the information they receive. When information is incomplete, false or manipulative, the quality of social and democratic decision-making is also affected.

Media literacy helps young people participate in society more consciously, protect their rights, respect the rights of others and make more informed decisions.

For youth workers, promoting media literacy is an important part of fostering active citizenship, social responsibility and a culture of democratic participation.



Conclusion

The modern media environment differs significantly from the information landscape of the past. Digital technologies have made communication faster, more accessible and more interactive. Alongside these new opportunities, new challenges have emerged, including algorithms, filter bubbles, misinformation and information overload.

For young people, understanding how the media environment operates has become an essential life skill. Youth workers play a key role in developing this competence by helping young people navigate complex information environments and become responsible participants in democratic society.

Non-Formal Education Activities

Activity 1. Information Diet

Aim: To explore the diversity of information sources used by participants.

Age: 13+

Group size: 8–30 participants

Duration: 30–40 minutes

Materials:

- Paper sheets
- Markers

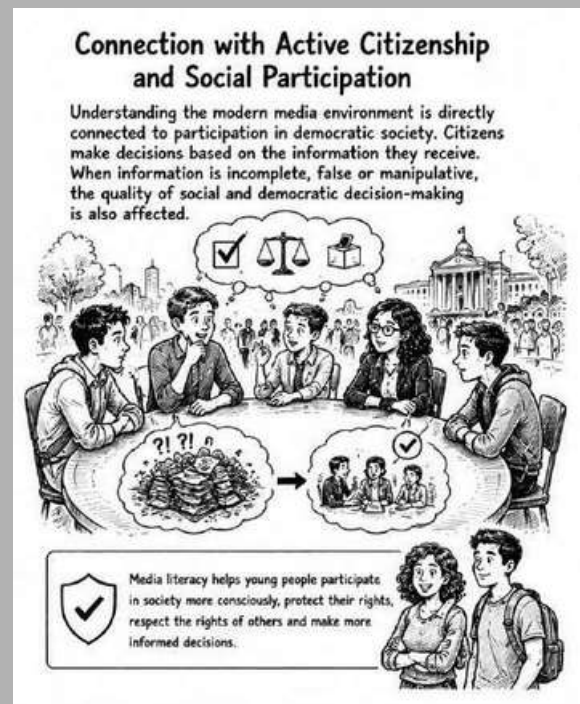
Instructions:

Participants write down all information sources they have used during the previous 24 hours. The group then discusses which sources dominate their information consumption and which perspectives may be missing.

Participants are then invited to create their own “news menu”. Afterwards, the group identifies the most diverse menu, the simplest menu, the most entertaining menu and other interesting examples.

Debriefing Questions:

- Where do you usually get your news?
- How diverse are your information sources?
- What risks arise when relying on only one source of information?



Activity 2. The Algorithm Chooses for Me



Aim: To understand how recommendation algorithms work.

Age: 14+

Group size: 10–25 participants

Duration: 40 minutes

Materials:

- Interest cards describing participants' preferences
- News cards containing short news items on different topics

Examples of news cards:

- A mathematics competition participant wins a prize.
- A school carnival starts tomorrow.
- An elephant's pregnancy lasts approximately 22 months.
- A new environmental campaign is launched.

Instructions:

The facilitator acts as an algorithm and recommends content to participants based on interests they selected earlier. After several rounds, participants begin to notice that they receive increasingly similar information.

At the end of the activity, participants share the news they received with one another and discuss the differences.

Debriefing Questions:

- How did you feel during the activity?
- Did the information become less diverse over time?
- Does this resemble the way social media platforms work?

Activity 3. Information Bubble

Aim: To demonstrate the echo chamber effect.

Age: 15+

Group size: 12–30 participants

Duration: 45 minutes

Materials: Cards presenting different opinions on the same topic

Instructions:

Participants are divided into groups. Each group receives only one perspective on a particular issue. After discussing the topic, groups compare their conclusions and discover how differently the same situation can be interpreted.

Debriefing Questions:

- Why did the groups reach different conclusions?
- How does this relate to social media and online information environments?

Activity 4. Fact, Opinion or Advertisement?

Aim: To develop content analysis skills.

Age: 13+

Group size: Any

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials: Examples of online publications, posts or articles.

Instructions:

Participants analyse different examples and identify whether the content represents:

- a fact;
- an opinion;
- an advertisement;
- fake news;
- an assumption or speculation.

After the analysis, the group discusses the characteristics of each type of information.

Debriefing Questions:

- Why did participants classify some examples differently?
- How can we distinguish facts from opinions?
- How does this relate to information encountered on social media?

Chapter 2.

Fake News and Disinformation

In today's world, information spreads faster than at any other time in human history. A news story published in one part of the world can become known to millions of people within minutes. Social media, messaging applications, video-sharing platforms and news websites have turned every individual into both a consumer and a distributor of information.

However, alongside these new opportunities, new challenges have emerged.

Not all information we encounter online is reliable. Some messages contain mistakes, others intentionally mislead audiences, while some use real facts in ways that create a false impression of events.

This issue is particularly important for young people. Many young people receive news primarily through social media, short-form videos and content creators.

At the same time, there is not always enough time or motivation to verify information before sharing it.

For youth workers, understanding the nature of fake news is an important part of media literacy.

Youth workers should not only be able to identify unreliable information themselves but also support young people in developing critical thinking skills and responsible digital behaviour.

2.1. What Are Fake News?

Fake News – information that is entirely or partially false while being presented as a genuine news story.

It is important to understand that the term “fake news” is often used very broadly. Sometimes people use it to describe any information they consider incorrect or disagree with. From a media literacy perspective, however, fake news refers specifically to false or misleading information presented as factual and trustworthy.

Disinformation – the deliberate creation and dissemination of false or misleading information intended to influence people's opinions, emotions or behaviour.

Information itself is not inherently dangerous. The danger arises when people make decisions based on inaccurate information. For example, when large numbers of people begin to believe false information, it can influence public discussions, social relationships and trust in institutions.

2.2. Types of Fake News and Information Disorders

In recent years, media literacy experts have increasingly used more precise terminology than simply “fake news”.

Misinformation – is false or inaccurate information shared without the intention to cause harm. The person sharing the information genuinely believes it to be true. For example, a user sees an emotional post, does not verify it and forwards it to friends because they believe they are sharing important news. In such situations, the problem arises not from malicious intent but from a lack of fact-checking.

Disinformation – is false information that is intentionally created and shared. The creator knows the information is inaccurate but publishes it anyway in order to achieve a specific objective. Possible goals include financial gain, attracting attention, influencing public opinion or damaging the reputation of individuals, groups or organisations. Disinformation is often associated with organised information campaigns.

Malinformation – refers to genuine information that is used in a way that causes harm, misleads audiences or creates a false impression. The facts themselves may be accurate, but they are taken out of context or presented selectively. For example, a real statement may be published without explaining the circumstances in which it was made, causing the audience to interpret it in a completely different way.

Why These Distinctions Matter?

For youth workers, it is important to understand that not all misleading information is created in the same way. Distinguishing between misinformation, disinformation and malinformation helps identify the causes of the problem and choose appropriate responses.

2.3. Why Are Fake News Created?

Political Reasons

Information has always been a tool of influence.

Throughout history, different groups have sought to spread ideas that benefit their interests and persuade people to support particular decisions or viewpoints.

In the digital era, opportunities for influence have expanded significantly due to the speed of information sharing and the global reach of digital communication.

Social Reasons

Sometimes people share unreliable information to strengthen their sense of belonging to a particular group.

The desire to be accepted by a community can encourage individuals to share information supported by their social circle, even when its reliability is questionable.

Emotions also play an important role. Fear, outrage, sympathy and anger often motivate people to click the "share" button without first verifying the information.



Economic Reasons - One of the most important drivers behind the spread of fake news is the attention economy

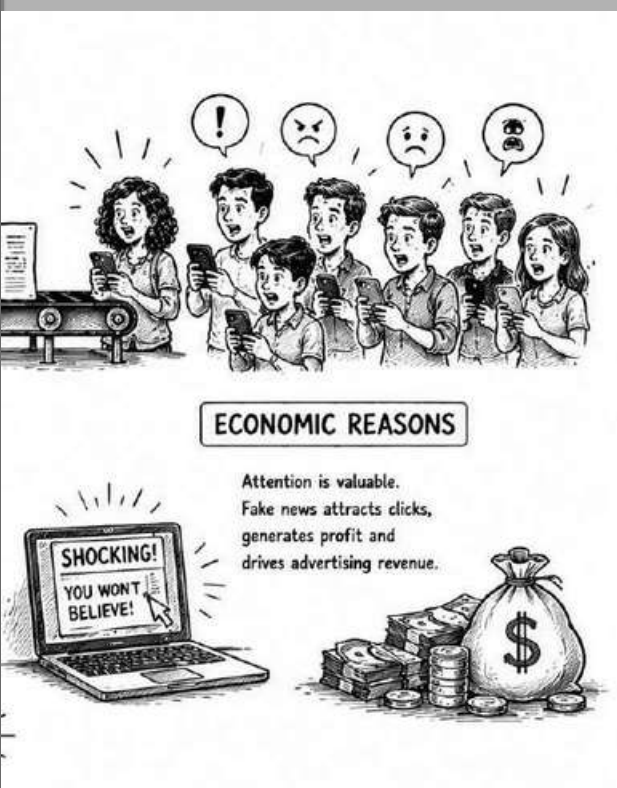
Attention Economy— A system in which people's attention becomes a valuable resource. Most digital platforms generate revenue through advertising. The more time users spend on a platform, the more advertisements they see and the greater the platform's income. As a result, many content creators compete for audience attention.

In this environment, content that triggers strong emotions often performs particularly well:

- surprise;
- fear;
- outrage;
- shock;
- curiosity.

A sensational headline frequently attracts more attention than a balanced and carefully researched article.

This does not mean that all content creators intentionally produce fake news. However, the digital environment may encourage some users to publish unverified or exaggerated information in pursuit of views, followers, likes and advertising revenue.



2.4. How Fake News Spreads

Social Media

Social media enables information to spread almost instantly. Every repost increases the potential audience of a message. The more emotional a publication is, the more likely people are to share it with others.

Messaging Applications

Messaging applications create an additional layer of trust. People often perceive information received from friends, relatives and acquaintances as more reliable than information from unknown sources. As a result, unverified messages can spread rapidly within groups and communities.

Influencers and Opinion Leaders

Opinion Leader – a person whose views influence an audience. Many young people receive information through bloggers, streamers, influencers and content creators.

If a popular creator shares inaccurate information, it can quickly reach a large audience. It is important to remember that having many followers does not automatically make someone an expert on every topic.

Platform Algorithms

As discussed in the previous chapter, algorithms are designed to show users content that generates interest and engagement. When a post receives a large number of reactions, comments and shares, algorithms may recommend it to even more users. As a result, inaccurate information can achieve enormous visibility within a very short period of time.

2.5. The Impact of Fake News on Society

Impact on Individuals

Fake news can shape inaccurate perceptions of events, people and social issues. When individuals are regularly exposed to unreliable information, it becomes more difficult for them to make informed decisions. In addition, a constant flow of alarming or sensational content can increase stress and feelings of uncertainty.

Impact on Young People

Young people are active users of digital platforms and therefore regularly encounter different forms of misinformation and disinformation.

A lack of experience may sometimes make it more difficult to assess the reliability of information. For this reason, media literacy plays an important role in preparing young people for life in a digital society.

Impact on Society

Fake news can reduce trust between people.

When individuals are constantly exposed to contradictory information, they may begin to distrust all information sources. This creates a serious challenge for democratic societies. Democracy depends on informed participation. Citizens need access to reliable information and the ability to critically evaluate messages in order to make informed choices and contribute meaningfully to public life.

Responsible participation in society is impossible without the ability to work critically with information.

An active citizen should not only express opinions but also understand the information on which those opinions are based.

Media literacy helps young people:

- make more informed decisions;
- participate in public discussions;
- recognise manipulation;
- protect themselves and others from disinformation;
- use digital technologies responsibly.

For youth workers, developing these competencies is part of strengthening democratic culture, human rights awareness and active youth participation.

Conclusion

Fake news is one of the most visible challenges of the modern information environment. It can emerge for many reasons, including mistakes, the desire to attract attention, economic interests or deliberate attempts to influence audiences. Understanding the differences between misinformation, disinformation and malinformation helps people navigate digital environments more effectively and engage with information more critically.

For youth workers, it is important not only to possess this knowledge themselves but also to support young people in developing critical thinking, fact-checking skills and a responsible approach to digital communication.

Activity 1. Broken News

Aim: To demonstrate how information becomes distorted during transmission.

Age: 12+

Group size: 10–30 participants

Duration: 20–30 minutes

Instructions:

Participants pass a news story along a chain by whispering it from one person to another. The final participant announces the version they received. The group then compares it with the original message.

Debriefing Questions:

- What changed during the process?
- Why did distortions occur?
- Can similar distortions happen online?

PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES



Activity 2. Emotion versus Fact



Aim: To recognise emotional manipulation in media content.

Age: 14+

Group size: 8–25 participants

Duration: 30–40 minutes

Instructions:

Participants receive a set of headlines and identify which ones are primarily designed to trigger emotional reactions.

Debriefing Questions:

- Which emotions were most commonly used?
- Why does emotional content spread more quickly?
- How can emotional language affect our judgement?

Activity 3. Who Published This and Why?

Aim: To analyse the motivations behind media content.

Age: 15+

Group size: 10–25 participants

Duration: 40 minutes

Instructions:

Participants analyse different publications and discuss the possible motivations of their authors.

Debriefing Questions:

- Does the author benefit from publishing this content?
- Who might be interested in spreading this message?
- What goals could the publication serve?

Activity 4. The Attention Factory

Aim: To understand the principles of the attention economy.

Age: 14+

Group size: 12–30 participants

Duration: 45 minutes

Instructions:

Teams receive the same news story and are asked to create three different headlines:

- a neutral headline;
- an emotional headline;
- a sensational headline.

The group then compares the results.

Debriefing Questions:

- Which headlines attracted the most attention?
- Why?
- Where is the boundary between attracting attention and manipulating an audience?

Activity 5. Fact-Checking Detective

Aim: To introduce participants to the basic principles of fact-checking.

Age: 14+

Group size: 8–30 participants

Duration: 45 minutes

Instructions:

Participants receive several controversial or questionable publications. Their task is to identify which information should be verified before believing or sharing the content.

Debriefing Questions:

- Which elements raised doubts?
- What questions should be asked before sharing information?
- What changed after verification?
- How can fact-checking help prevent the spread of misinformation?

Chapter 3.

Media Manipulation and Persuasion Techniques

Every day, people are exposed to enormous amounts of information. News articles, social media posts, videos, advertisements, memes, comments and messages in messaging applications constantly compete for our attention. However, not all information aims simply to inform. Very often, its purpose is to influence our emotions, opinions or behaviour.

Influencing people's opinions is not inherently negative. Educational projects, charitable initiatives and even everyday communication often seek to persuade others about the importance of particular ideas. The problem arises when hidden methods of influence are used instead of transparent and honest persuasion, limiting a person's ability to independently evaluate a situation. Young people actively use digital platforms, where competition for audience attention has become one of the defining features of the modern media environment. Therefore, understanding the mechanisms of manipulation is an essential component of media literacy and digital citizenship.

For youth workers, the ability to recognise manipulative content is important not only for their own information safety but also for supporting young people in developing critical thinking skills.

3.1. What Is Media Manipulation?

Manipulation – a hidden form of influence on a person's thoughts, emotions or behaviour that encourages specific conclusions or actions without the person's full awareness of the influence.

Media Manipulation – the use of information, images, emotions or technologies to exert hidden influence on an audience.

It is important to distinguish manipulation from open persuasion.

For example, when a person presents arguments and openly explains their position, this is persuasion. When important information is concealed, emotions are deliberately exploited or facts are distorted to achieve a desired outcome, it may be considered manipulation.

Main Mechanisms of Manipulation

Most manipulative techniques rely on several common principles:

- appealing to emotions;
- oversimplifying complex issues;
- using stereotypes;
- selectively presenting information;
- creating a sense of urgency;
- applying pressure from a group or perceived majority.

Manipulation works because the human brain seeks to process information quickly and often relies on simplified decision-making shortcuts.

3.2. Emotional Manipulation

Why Emotions Matter

Emotions help people respond quickly to situations. For this reason, they are frequently used as tools of influence. When individuals experience strong emotions, it becomes more difficult for them to analyse information critically. As a result, manipulative content often seeks to provoke an emotional reaction before the audience has time to reflect on the actual message.

Fear

Fear is one of the strongest human emotions. Messages that create a sense of danger or threat often spread faster than others. The threat may be real, exaggerated or entirely fabricated. When people are afraid, they tend to make decisions more quickly and are less likely to verify information.

Anger

Anger encourages people to react and act immediately.

For this reason, content designed to provoke outrage often receives large numbers of comments and shares. Social media algorithms frequently interpret such engagement as a sign of popularity and continue promoting the content.

Anxiety

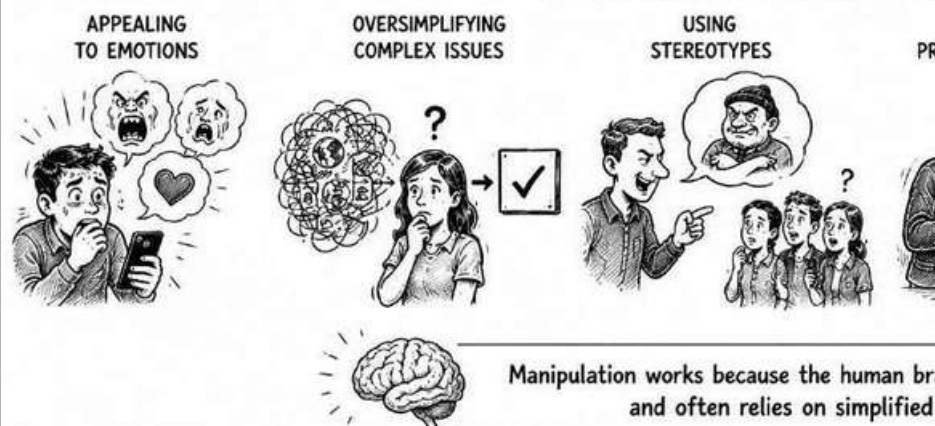
Anxiety differs from fear because it is often linked to uncertainty. Messages such as "Something terrible is about to happen" or "Serious consequences are coming" can create significant concern even when no evidence is provided.

Sense of Threat

Manipulators often attempt to create the impression that a person's values, lifestyle or safety are under threat. Such messages frequently divide the world into "us" and "them", increasing conflict and social polarisation.

MAIN MECHANISMS

Most manipulative techniques rely



3.3. Propaganda and Narrative Building

What Is Propaganda?

Propaganda is the systematic dissemination of ideas, beliefs or viewpoints intended to influence people's opinions and behaviour. Propaganda existed long before the internet. Throughout history, governments, movements and organisations have used information to promote their ideas and objectives.

What Is a Narrative?

A narrative is a story or explanation of events that helps people interpret what is happening.

People understand the world not only through isolated facts but also through stories that connect those facts into a meaningful framework. The same event can therefore be described in different ways depending on the narrative surrounding it.

How Narratives Are Created?

Narratives are commonly constructed through:

- repeated presentation of specific ideas;
- emphasising certain facts while ignoring others;
- using emotional imagery;
- creating clear heroes and villains;
- simplifying complex processes.

Understanding narratives helps people analyse not only individual messages but also the broader picture that different information sources seek to construct.

3.4. Visual Manipulation

Why Images Are So Powerful?

The human brain processes images much faster than text.

As a result, photographs, videos and visual content can trigger strong emotional reactions almost instantly. Many people perceive images as evidence. However, visual materials can also be manipulated.

Manipulation Through Images

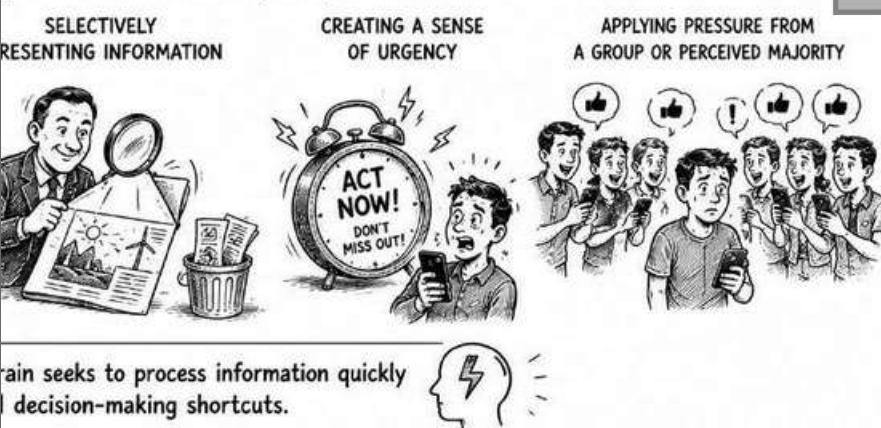
Even without altering a photograph, it can be used in a misleading way.

For example:

- showing only part of an event;
- changing the context;
- presenting an old photograph as a recent one;
- using a misleading caption.

OF MANIPULATION

by on several common principles:



Memes

A meme is a form of internet content that spreads rapidly and usually combines an image with a short text. Memes are often humorous, but they can also communicate political, social and cultural messages. Because of their simplicity, memes can influence attitudes toward people, groups and events without encouraging deeper analysis.

Editing and Alteration

Modern digital tools make it easy to modify photographs and videos. Changing even small details can significantly alter the audience's perception of an event. Therefore, the existence of visual evidence does not automatically guarantee the accuracy of information.

Deepfakes

A deepfake is an artificially generated or manipulated image, audio recording or video created using artificial intelligence technologies. Modern deepfakes can appear highly realistic. This creates new challenges for media literacy because it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish authentic materials from artificially generated ones.

3.5. Manipulation Through Algorithms

Algorithms Are Not Neutral Gatekeepers

Algorithms help users find content that matches their interests. However, they also influence which information people see more often and which information becomes less visible. Algorithms generally do not make decisions based on public benefit or objectivity. Their primary goal is often to maximise user engagement and attention.

The Attention Economy and Algorithms

Digital platforms are interested in keeping users online for as long as possible. As a result, algorithms frequently prioritise content that generates strong emotions and active engagement. This can lead to emotional, controversial or sensational content receiving greater visibility than balanced analytical content.

Strengthening Filter Bubbles

Algorithms gradually create personalised information environments. If a user regularly engages with a particular topic or viewpoint, the system begins recommending more similar content. Over time, individuals may start to perceive this limited portion of the information environment as a complete representation of reality.

3.6. How to Recognise Manipulation?



It is impossible to avoid manipulative content completely. However, there are several warning signs that may help identify attempts at manipulation.

Strong Emotional Pressure

If content immediately provokes fear, anger or panic, it is worth pausing and verifying the information before reacting.

Lack of Sources

Reliable publications usually provide references, sources or explanations regarding the origin of the information.

Artificial Sense of Urgency

Phrases such as:

- "Share immediately!"
- "Before they delete it!"
- "They are hiding this from everyone!"

are often used to reduce critical thinking and encourage impulsive behaviour.

Oversimplification

Complex social issues rarely have simple explanations.

If a publication claims that there is only one cause or one solution to a complicated problem, it should be approached critically.

Dividing People into "Us" and "Them"

Manipulative content often creates opposition between groups, increasing conflict and social polarisation.

Absence of Alternative Perspectives

If a publication completely ignores other possible explanations or viewpoints, this may be a sign of manipulation.

Connection with Active Citizenship and Social Participation

In democratic societies, citizens make decisions based on information. Therefore, the ability to recognise manipulation is directly connected to the quality of civic participation.

People who can critically analyse information are better protected against hidden influence and are more capable of making informed decisions.

This is particularly important for young people, as digital platforms have become key spaces for communication, public debate and civic engagement.

For youth workers, developing the ability to recognise manipulation is part of promoting media literacy, human rights awareness and democratic culture.

Conclusion

Media manipulation is an integral part of the contemporary information environment. It can use emotions, visual imagery, narratives and algorithms to influence audiences in subtle ways. Understanding the mechanisms of manipulation does not mean distrusting all information.

On the contrary, it helps individuals analyse messages more consciously, verify facts and make independent decisions.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

Activity 1. Analysing Emotions

Aim: To identify emotional triggers in media content.

Age: 14+

Group size: 8–30 participants

Duration: 30–40 minutes

Materials: A collection of headlines, posts and media publications.

Instructions:

Participants analyse each piece of content and identify the emotions it is designed to evoke.

Debriefing Questions:

- Which emotions appeared most frequently?
- Why are these emotions effective at attracting attention?
- How do emotions influence our judgement?

Activity 2. Narrative Builder

Aim: To demonstrate how different stories can be created from the same facts.

Age: 15+

Group size: 10–25 participants

Duration: 45 minutes

Materials: Cards containing the same set of factual information.

Instructions:

Teams create different versions of a story using the same facts. Afterwards, they compare the narratives they developed.

Debriefing Questions:

- Which elements changed the perception of the situation?
- Where is the boundary between interpretation and manipulation?
- How do narratives shape public understanding?

Activity 3. Manipulation Hunters

Aim: To recognise signs of manipulative content.

Age: 14+

Group size: 10–30 participants

Duration: 40 minutes

Instructions:

Participants receive various publications and identify indicators of manipulation, such as:

- emotional pressure;
- absence of sources;
- exaggeration;
- false urgency;
- oversimplification of complex issues.

Debriefing Questions:

- Which signs were easiest to identify?
- Which techniques appeared most frequently?
- How can we respond critically to manipulative content?

Activity 4. Meme Under the Microscope

Aim: To analyse visual messages and media influence.

Age: 13+

Group size: Any

Duration: 30 - 40 minutes

Materials: A selection of internet memes.

Instructions:

Participants analyse:

- the message communicated by the meme;
- the emotions it evokes;
- the stereotypes it may use;
- its potential influence on audience opinions.

Debriefing Questions:

- Why are memes so effective at spreading ideas?
- Can humour be used as a form of persuasion?
- How can memes contribute to stereotypes or social attitudes?

Chapter 4.

Media Literacy and Critical Thinking

Modern individuals encounter an enormous flow of information every day. News articles, social media posts, videos, advertisements, user comments and messages in messaging applications constantly compete for attention. At the same time, the amount of available information continues to grow faster than people's ability to analyse it.

In the previous chapters, we explored the characteristics of the modern media environment, fake news and mechanisms of media manipulation. This naturally leads to an important question: how can people navigate such a complex information landscape?

The answer lies in media literacy and critical thinking.

Media literacy helps individuals understand how information is created and distributed, while critical thinking enables them to evaluate its quality and reliability. For young people, these skills are essential not only for education and employment but also for meaningful participation in society. Young people make decisions, form opinions, engage in public discussions and build relationships based on the information they receive every day. For youth workers, promoting media literacy is one of the most important tools for supporting young people in a digital society.

4.1. What Is Media Literacy?

Media Literacy – the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, create and responsibly use information from a variety of media sources. In other words, a media-literate person does not simply consume information but understands how it is created, who it is intended for and what influence it may have.

It is important to understand that media literacy does not mean distrusting everything. Its purpose is not to question every publication but to encourage people to ask appropriate questions and make more informed decisions.

Key Media Literacy Competencies – Modern media literacy includes several essential competencies.

Access to Information – Individuals should be able to find information from diverse sources.

Information Analysis – It is important to understand the content of a message, its structure and the intentions of its author.

Information Evaluation – People should be able to assess the credibility and reliability of sources.

Content Creation – Modern users are not only consumers of information but also creators.

Therefore, it is important to understand the responsibilities associated with publishing content in digital environments.

Responsible Participation – Media literacy includes respect for the rights of others, ethical online behaviour and the responsible use of digital technologies.

4.2. Critical Thinking Skills

WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING?

Critical thinking is the ability to analyse information, evaluate arguments and draw conclusions based on evidence rather than emotions or assumptions.



Critical thinking does not mean constantly criticising others or searching for faults. Instead, it helps people make more informed decisions and avoid rushed conclusions.

4.3. Fact-Checking Methods

What Is Fact-Checking?

Fact-checking is the process of verifying the accuracy and reliability of information.

The purpose of fact-checking is not to confirm personal beliefs but to establish the most accurate understanding possible.

Basic Steps of Fact-Checking

Pause Before Sharing

The first reaction to an emotional post is often impulsive.

Before sharing information, it is useful to stop and examine the content carefully.

Check the Source

Identify who created or published the information.

4.3. Fact-Checking Methods

Check the Date

Old information can be recirculated as if it were recent, creating a misleading impression of current events.

Compare Multiple Sources

If information is genuinely important, it will usually be reported by several independent sources.

Look for Evidence

Reliable publications generally provide references to documents, research, interviews or other forms of evidence.

Why Fact-Checking Matters?

Even a small mistake can contribute to the spread of misinformation among large numbers of people.

For youth workers, fact-checking is an important tool for promoting responsible engagement with information.

4.2. Critical Thinking Skills

KEY ELEMENTS OF CRITICAL THINKING



CURIOSITY

A willingness to ask questions and seek additional information.



ANALYSIS

The ability to break complex issues into smaller components.



LOGIC

Evaluating whether conclusions are supported by evidence.



REFLECTION

The ability to examine one's own beliefs and acknowledge the possibility of being mistaken.



OPEN-MINDEDNESS

A willingness to consider different perspectives, even when they differ from personal opinions.



4.4. Evaluating Information Sources

What Is a Source?

An information source is a person, organisation, document or platform from which information originates.

Primary and Secondary Sources

Primary Source

A primary source is the original source of information.

Examples include:

- official documents;
- original interviews;
- research studies;
- direct statements from individuals involved in events.

Secondary Source

A secondary source reports, analyses or interprets information obtained from primary sources.

Why Working with Primary Sources Matters?

Information can change each time it is retold or summarised.

For this reason, media-literate individuals try, whenever possible, to locate the original source. This helps reduce errors, misunderstandings and manipulation.

Questions for Evaluating Sources

Useful questions include:

- Who is the author?
- What expertise do they have regarding the topic?
- Do they have direct access to the information?
- What evidence supports their claims?
- Can the information be independently verified?

4.2. Critical Thinking Skills

WHY CRITICAL THINKING MATTERS

People frequently encounter information that appears convincing but is not necessarily reliable.



Critical thinking encourages individuals to ask important questions:

- ? Who created this message?
- ? Where does the information come from?
- ? What evidence is provided?
- ? Which facts may be missing?
- ? Are there alternative perspectives?



4.5. Assessing the Credibility of Content

What Does Credibility Mean?

Credibility refers to the extent to which information corresponds to reality and available evidence.

Although it is impossible to guarantee absolute certainty, several indicators can help assess reliability.

Indicators of Reliable Content

Transparency - The author explains where the information comes from.

Evidence - Claims are supported by facts, documents or research.

Balance - The content considers different perspectives and does not conceal important information.

Verifiability - Information can be checked through other reliable sources.

Accuracy - The content does not contain obvious mistakes or contradictions.

Indicators of Questionable Content

Extra caution is recommended when content:

- provokes strong emotions;
- demands immediate action;
- provides no sources;
- uses sensational headlines;
- claims to reveal a “secret hidden from everyone”;
- offers a single explanation for a complex issue.

Why Absolute Certainty Is Impossible?

Media literacy does not provide a perfect ability to determine the truth in every situation.

Its purpose is to reduce the risk of mistakes and improve the quality of decision-making.

Media-literate individuals do not seek complete certainty. Instead, they aim to use the most reliable information available at a given moment.

Connection with Active Citizenship and Social Participation

Modern democracy depends on informed citizens. Participation in public life requires the ability to understand social processes, analyse information and make evidence-based decisions.

Media literacy helps young people:

- participate consciously in public discussions;
- make informed decisions;
- resist disinformation;
- protect their rights;
- respect the rights of others;
- use freedom of expression responsibly.

For youth workers, developing media literacy is an important part of promoting active citizenship and democratic participation.

Conclusion

Media literacy and critical thinking are among the most important competencies of the 21st century. They help people navigate complex information environments, evaluate the reliability of information and make more informed decisions.

For young people, these skills provide the foundation for safe and responsible participation in digital environments. For youth workers, they are valuable tools for supporting young people in developing independence, responsibility and active citizenship.

Media literacy does not teach people what to think. It helps them learn how to think for themselves.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES



Activity 2. Fact-Checking Detective

Aim: To practise basic fact-checking methods.

Age: 14+

Group size: 10–25 participants

Duration: 45 - 60 minutes

Instructions:

Participants receive controversial or questionable claims and identify:

- what needs to be verified;
- which sources should be consulted;
- what information is missing.

Activity 1. The Five Journalist Questions

Aim: To develop information analysis skills.

Age: 13+

Group size: 8–30 participants

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials: News articles or media publications.

Instructions:

Participants analyse a publication using five questions:

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- How do we know this?

Debriefing Questions:

- What information is missing?
- Can this publication be trusted?

Optional Extension:

Participants select a news story from different sources and create their own version containing only verified facts. The results are then discussed as a group.

Activity 3. Find the Original Source

Aim: To develop source evaluation skills.

Age: 15+

Group size: 8–20 participants

Duration: 40 minutes

Instructions:

Participants receive an article containing references to other materials.

Their task is to follow the chain of references until they reach the primary source.

Discussion:

- What changed during the retelling of the information?
- Was the original meaning preserved accurately?



Activity 4. Trial of a Publication

Aim: To assess the credibility of content.

Age: 14+

Group size: 12–30 participants

Duration: 45 minutes

Instructions:

Participants are assigned different roles:

- Defence Lawyers;
- Prosecutors;
- Judges.

The Defence Lawyers and Prosecutors gather evidence, search for additional information and present arguments regarding the credibility of a publication.

The Judges evaluate the arguments and deliver a final verdict.

Discussion:

- Which arguments were most convincing?
- What evidence influenced the decision?
- How can we assess reliability fairly?

Activity 5. Highlight the Red Flags

Aim: To recognise warning signs of questionable content.

Age: 13+

Duration: 30 - 40 minutes

Instructions:

Participants receive various publications and use red markers to highlight warning signs, including:

- lack of sources;
- emotional headlines;
- urgency and pressure;
- anonymous authorship;
- absence of evidence;
- manipulative claims.

Afterwards, the group creates its own checklist of warning signs to consider when evaluating information.

Chapter 5.

Social Media Activism and Civic Participation

For most of history, participation in public life required physical presence. People needed to attend meetings, organise gatherings, distribute leaflets or participate in public events in order to express their views, support social causes or draw attention to important issues.

The development of the internet and social media has significantly changed this reality. Today, a single person can communicate an idea to thousands of people using only a smartphone and an internet connection. Young people can participate in public life, discuss important issues, organise initiatives and unite around common goals regardless of where they live.

At the same time, new opportunities have brought new challenges. Online activity does not always lead to real-world change, and digital platforms can be used not only for constructive dialogue but also for spreading conflict, disinformation and hate speech.

For youth workers, understanding social activism in digital environments is an important part of promoting active citizenship, youth participation and democratic culture.

5.1. What Is Social Media Activism?

Social Activism – activities aimed at creating positive social change, addressing community issues and protecting the interests of different groups of people.

Social Media Activism – the use of digital platforms and social media to inform, mobilise people, discuss public issues and promote social change.

Civic Participation – involvement in community and public life through various forms of social engagement.

How Activism Has Changed in the Digital Era?

Social media has significantly expanded opportunities for civic participation.

Today, young people can:

- raise awareness about social issues;
- share useful information;
- organise events;
- support charitable initiatives;
- participate in public discussions;
- find like-minded people;
- cooperate with organisations and communities across different countries.

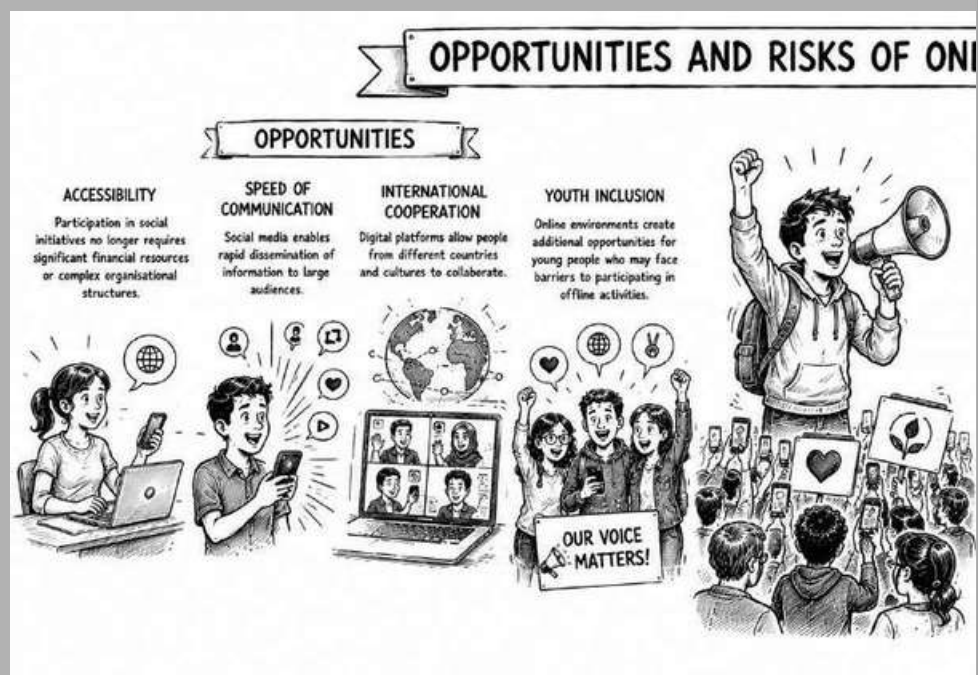
Social media has become an important digital space for civic participation.

Why This Matters for Young People?

Young people are often early adopters of new digital tools and platforms. As a result, they can actively engage in discussions about issues that directly affect their lives.

Participation in social initiatives helps young people develop leadership, communication skills, responsibility and understanding of democratic processes.

5.2. Opportunities and Risks of Online Activism



Emotional Burnout - Continuous exposure to social issues may lead to fatigue, anxiety and feelings of helplessness. Activists need to maintain a healthy balance between civic engagement and personal well-being.

5.3. Youth Participation in Digital Environments

Why Youth Participation Matters?

Young people are not only the future of society; they are active members of society today. For this reason, democratic societies seek to create opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making and discussions about issues that affect their lives.

Forms of Participation

Young people can engage through:

- online consultations;
- public discussions;
- digital campaigns;
- youth councils;
- volunteering initiatives;
- educational content creation;
- social projects;
- international youth programmes.

LINE ACTIVISM

RISKS AND LIMITATIONS

SUPERFICIAL PARTICIPATION

Sometimes participation is limited to likes, comments or shares without further action.

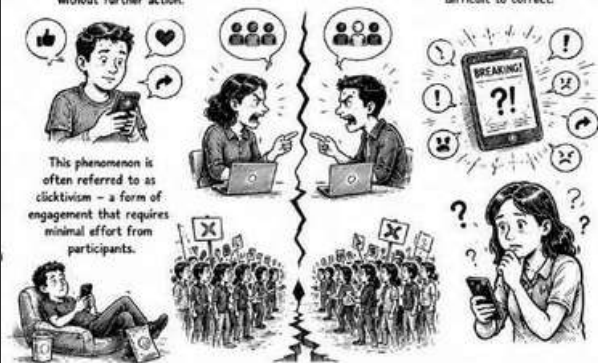
This phenomenon is often referred to as *clicktivism* – a form of engagement that requires minimal effort from participants.

POLARISATION

Online discussions can increase divisions and conflicts between groups.

SPREAD OF MISINFORMATION

False or misleading information can spread quickly, reach large audiences and be difficult to correct.



From Participation to Influence

Meaningful civic participation involves more than expressing opinions.

It includes:

- understanding problems;
- searching for solutions;
- collaborating with others;
- taking responsibility for actions.

Youth workers play an important role in supporting young people in moving from passive information consumption to active participation in society.

5.4. Ethical Communication Online

What Is Ethical Communication?

Ethical communication is communication based on respect, honesty, responsibility and respect for the rights of others.

These principles are especially important in digital environments, where messages can rapidly reach large audiences.

Key Principles

- Respect for others, even during disagreement.
- Responsibility for published content.
- Verification of information before sharing.
- Respect for human rights.
- Awareness of the impact of online communication.

Why It Matters for Activism?

Successful campaigns are built on trust.

Responsible communication helps strengthen trust among participants and contributes to more constructive public dialogue.

5.5. Creating Positive Social Campaigns

What Is a Social Campaign?

A social campaign is a series of coordinated actions designed to raise awareness about a specific issue and promote positive change.

Campaign goals may include:

- informing;
- educating;
- attracting participants;
- changing behaviour;
- supporting beneficial community initiatives.

Main Stages of Campaign Development

Identifying the Problem - Clearly define the issue that needs to be addressed.

Defining the Goal - The goal should be realistic, understandable and achievable.

Identifying the Target Audience - Understand who the campaign is designed for and how that audience receives information.

Selecting Communication Channels - Different groups of young people use different platforms and content formats.

Creating Positive Messages - Campaigns based exclusively on fear or negativity are often less effective in the long term. Messages that offer solutions and inspire participation tend to be more successful.

Evaluating Results - After completion, it is useful to assess effectiveness and identify lessons for future initiatives.

The Role of the Youth Worker

Youth workers may act as:

- facilitators;
- mentors;
- organisers;
- consultants;
- partners of young people.

The role of the youth worker is not to make decisions for young people but to support them in implementing their own ideas.

5.5. Creating Positive Social Campaigns



Connection with Active Citizenship and Democracy

Social activism and civic participation are essential elements of democratic societies.

Democracy involves not only voting but also participating in discussions, proposing solutions and influencing community development.

Digital technologies create new opportunities for such participation.

However, effective participation requires responsibility, media literacy and respect for the rights of others.

For young people, civic engagement helps develop leadership, responsibility and the understanding that even small actions can contribute to positive social change.

Conclusion

Social media has become an important part of contemporary public life. It enables people to unite around shared goals, spread information and participate in solving social problems.

For young people, digital platforms create new opportunities for civic engagement, volunteering and social activism. At the same time, making effective use of these opportunities requires media literacy, critical thinking and responsible communication.

Youth workers play an important role in supporting young people on this journey, helping them transform ideas into meaningful actions that contribute to democratic and inclusive societies.

Chapter 6.

Legal Aspects of Online Expression

6.2. Rights and Responsibilities Online

User Rights

In digital environments, individuals retain the same fundamental rights they possess offline.

These rights include:

- the right to freedom of expression;
- the right to access information;
- the right to privacy;
- the right to the protection of personal data;
- the right to protection from discrimination;
- the right to participate in public and community life.

User Responsibilities

Alongside rights come responsibilities.

Responsible online behaviour includes:

- respecting the rights of others;
- complying with applicable laws and regulations;
- sharing information responsibly;
- respecting copyright and intellectual property rights;
- following digital safety practices.

Why Balance Matters?

One of the key principles of democratic societies is the balance between freedom and responsibility. For example, individuals have the right to express their opinions, but this does not include the right to knowingly spread false information, threaten others or violate the rights of other people. Understanding this balance helps young people participate more responsibly in digital communication.

6.3. Hate Speech. What Is Hate Speech?

Hate speech refers to forms of expression that spread, justify or encourage hatred, discrimination or hostility towards individuals or groups based on specific characteristics

These characteristics may include:

- nationality;
- ethnic origin;
- religion;
- disability;
- gender;
- age;
- other protected characteristics.

.Why Hate Speech Is Harmful?

Hate speech can:

- reinforce prejudice;
- create hostile environments;
- provoke conflicts;
- contribute to discrimination;
- negatively affect the sense of safety and belonging of targeted groups.

The Difference Between Criticism and Hate Speech

It is important to understand that criticism or disagreement is not automatically hate speech. In democratic societies, people have the right to discuss difficult issues, criticise ideas and express different opinions.

The key distinction is whether a statement focuses on discussing ideas and actions or on degrading, excluding or discriminating against people because of their membership in a particular group.

The Role of the Youth Worker

Youth workers should help young people develop a culture of respectful dialogue and strengthen their skills in non-violent communication.

6.4. Privacy and Personal Data Protection

What Are Personal Data?

Personal data refers to any information that can directly or indirectly identify an individual.

Examples include:

- name and surname;
- email address;
- phone number;
- photographs;
- geolocation data;
- account information;
- IP address;
- other identifiable information.

Basic Digital Safety Principles

Young people are encouraged to:

- think carefully before sharing personal information;
- use strong passwords;
- enable two-factor authentication;
- review privacy settings regularly;
- be cautious when responding to requests for personal information.

The Right to Privacy

Even in public digital spaces, individuals retain the right to privacy.

This right is a fundamental element of the broader human rights framework.

Why Data Protection Matters?

Digital technologies allow organisations and individuals to collect and process vast amounts of information.

If personal data is used without a person's knowledge or consent, it may lead to:

- privacy violations;
- fraud;
- data theft;
- harassment;
- reputational risks.

6.5. Copyright and Content Sharing

Why It Matters in Digital Environments

Modern technologies make it easy to copy and distribute content. However, the ability to copy material does not automatically grant permission to use someone else's work without authorisation.

Responsible Use of Content

Before publishing or sharing content created by others, it is important to consider:

- whether authorship is clearly identified;
- whether use of the material is permitted;
- whether specific licences apply;
- whether permission from the creator is required.

What Are Creative Commons Licences?

Creative Commons is a licensing system that allows creators to specify in advance how their works may be used. These licences support the sharing of knowledge and educational resources while protecting authors' rights.

What Is Copyright?

Copyright is a legal framework that protects creative works produced by individuals.

Copyright applies to:

- written texts;
- photographs;
- music;
- videos;
- artwork and illustrations;
- software;
- other creative works.

6.6. National and European Legal Frameworks

Why Are Special Regulations Needed for Digital Environments?

The development of digital technologies has created new challenges that did not previously exist, including:

- protection of personal data;
- regulation of digital platforms;
- online user safety;
- transparency of algorithms;
- protection of consumer rights online.

As a result, many governments and international organisations have developed specific legal frameworks for digital environments.

The European Approach

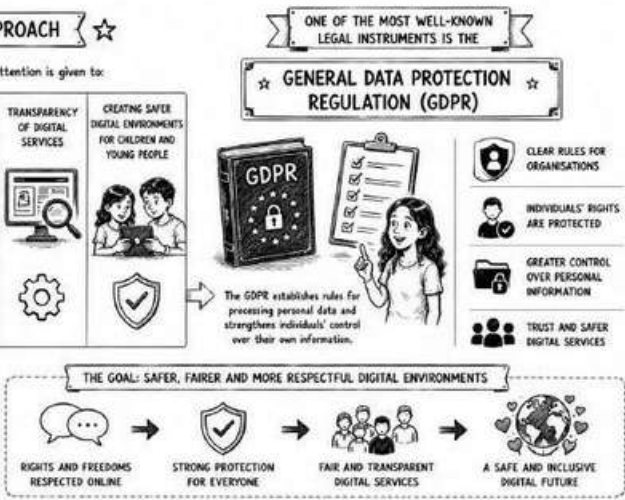
Within the European Union, particular attention is given to:

- protection of human rights online;
- protection of personal data;
- user safety;
- transparency of digital services;
- creating safer digital environments for children and young people.

One of the most well-known legal instruments is the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The GDPR establishes rules for processing personal data and strengthens individuals' control over their own information.



LEGAL FRAMEWORKS



Why Youth Workers Need to Understand Legal Frameworks?

Youth workers often organise events, manage project social media accounts, work with participants' photographs and collect various types of personal information. Basic knowledge of legal requirements helps ensure that these activities are conducted safely, ethically and responsibly.

Connection with Active Citizenship and Democracy



Freedom of expression is one of the foundations of democratic societies. It enables people to participate in public life, express their ideas and discuss important issues. At the same time, democracy requires both freedom and responsibility. Respecting the rights of others, protecting privacy, observing copyright rules and countering hate speech contribute to creating safe and inclusive digital environments. For young people, understanding their rights and responsibilities is an important step toward becoming active and responsible citizens.

Conclusion

The internet provides extensive opportunities for self-expression, communication and participation in public life. At the same time, the use of digital technologies involves specific rights and responsibilities.

Freedom of expression, protection of personal data, respect for copyright and responsible communication are important components of modern digital culture.

For youth workers, understanding these topics is essential not only for their own practice but also for supporting young people in developing safe, responsible and active participation in digital environments.

PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES



Activity 1. Where Is the Boundary?

Aim: To explore the balance between freedom of expression and responsibility.

Age: 15+

Group size: 10–30 participants

Duration: 40 minutes

Instructions:

Participants receive different scenarios from digital environments and discuss:

- which rights are involved;
- whether there is a risk of violating the rights of others;
- which responses would be the most responsible.

Debriefing Questions:

- Where should the boundaries of freedom of expression be placed?
- How can rights and responsibilities be balanced online?

Activity 2. Digital Footprint

Aim: To understand the consequences of sharing personal information online.

Age: 14+

Group size: 8–25 participants

Duration: 30 - 40 minutes

Instructions:

Participants create a list of information they commonly share online.

The group then discusses:

- which information qualifies as personal data;
- what risks may arise from sharing it;
- how digital safety can be improved.

Debriefing Questions:

- Which data is most sensitive?
- What information should be shared cautiously?

Activity 4. Who Is the Author?

Aim: To introduce participants to the principles of copyright.

Age: 14+

Group size: 8–20 participants

Duration: 30 minutes

Instructions:

Participants analyse different examples of content and determine:

- who the creator is;
- whether the material can be used;
- whether attribution is required.

Debriefing Questions:

- Why is acknowledging authorship important?
- What responsibilities come with sharing content online?

Activity 3. Freedom of Expression or Hate Speech?

Aim: To distinguish between criticism and discriminatory speech.

Age: 16+

Group size: 10–25 participants

Duration: 45 minutes

Instructions:

Participants analyse different statements and discuss:

- whether they represent legitimate expression of opinion;
- whether indicators of hate speech are present;
- what consequences such statements may have.

Debriefing Questions:

- How can respectful disagreement be expressed?
- When does criticism become harmful?

Activity 5. Creating a Digital Citizenship Code

Aim: To develop principles for responsible online behaviour.

Age: 13+

Group size: 10–30 participants

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Instructions:

Teams create their own “Responsible Digital Citizen Code”. After presentations, the group combines the strongest ideas into a shared document.

Debriefing Questions:

- Which rights are particularly important in digital environments?
- Which responsibilities accompany those rights?
- How can we create a safe and respectful online space for everyone?

Chapter 7.

Digital Safety and Online Protection

Digital technologies have become an integral part of modern life. We use the internet for communication, learning, work, entertainment, participation in community life and the implementation of various projects. For many young people, digital environments are as familiar as schools, homes or youth centres.

However, alongside opportunities, digital environments also present certain risks. Personal data breaches, account hacking, online fraud, cyberbullying, psychological pressure and excessive use of digital technologies can negatively affect the safety and well-being of young people.

It is important to understand that digital safety is not only relevant to information technology specialists.

Every internet user makes decisions every day that affect their security, privacy and well-being.

For youth workers, understanding the principles of digital safety is particularly important.

Youth workers regularly use digital platforms to organise activities, communicate with participants, store information and share content. They also play a key role in helping young people develop safe and responsible behaviour online.

7.1 Introduction to Digital Safety

What Is Digital Safety?

Digital Safety refers to the knowledge, skills and practices aimed at protecting individuals, their data, devices and accounts in digital environments.

Digital safety includes:

- protection of personal data;
- account security;
- safe communication;
- device protection;
- responsible use of digital technologies

Main Threats - Modern users may encounter various digital risks.

Data Theft - Unauthorised individuals may attempt to gain access to personal information.

Account Hacking - Unauthorised access to social media profiles, email accounts or other online services.

Online Fraud - Attempts to obtain money, passwords or personal information through deception.

Malicious Software - Programs designed to damage devices, steal information or disrupt systems.

Psychological Threats - Cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation and other forms of harmful

7.2. Protecting Accounts and Devices

Why Account Protection Matters?

Modern digital accounts often contain significant amounts of personal information, including:

- private messages;
- photographs;
- documents;
- contact information;
- banking details;
- access to other digital services.

For this reason, account protection is one of the most important elements of digital safety.

Strong Passwords

A password should be:

- sufficiently long;
- unique for each service;
- difficult to guess.

Using the same password across multiple platforms significantly increases security risks

Two-Factor Authentication

Two-factor authentication (2FA) provides an additional layer of protection by requiring both a password and a second form of verification.

Even if a password is compromised, access to the account remains significantly more difficult without the second authentication factor.

Keeping Devices Updated

Software updates often include security improvements and vulnerability fixes.

Regular updates help reduce security risks.

Being Careful with Applications

Before installing software or applications, users should:

- verify the source of the download;
- review requested permissions;
- avoid suspicious links and files.

Why Young People Are at Increased Risk?

Young people are often active users of new platforms and digital services. The desire to share information quickly or trust online interactions may sometimes lead to underestimating potential risks.

For this reason, digital safety is an important component of media literacy and digital citizenship.

7.3. Safe Communication Online

Why Online Communication Requires Attention?

The internet often creates a sense of fast and informal communication. However, digital messages can be saved, copied and distributed far beyond their intended audience.

7.3. Safe Communication Online

Be Cautious When Communicating with Strangers

Not all information presented online is accurate.

Young people should exercise caution when interacting with unfamiliar individuals and avoid sharing personal information too quickly.

Check Links and Attachments

Many online scams begin with links or file attachments.

Before opening them, users should verify that they come from trustworthy sources.

Communicate Respectfully

Digital safety is not only about technical protection but also about communication culture.

Respectful communication contributes to creating safer and more inclusive digital environments.



7.4. Cyberbullying and Online Harassment

What Is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is the repeated use of digital technologies to humiliate, intimidate, insult or harass another person. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can occur at any time and may follow a person even when they are at home.

Forms of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying may include:

- abusive messages;
- spreading rumours;
- sharing humiliating content;
- excluding individuals from online groups;
- threats;
- creating fake accounts.

7.4. Cyberbullying and Online Harassment

Consequences

Cyberbullying can contribute to:

- stress;
- anxiety;
- reduced self-esteem;
- social isolation;
- decreased psychological well-being.

How to Respond?

When experiencing cyberbullying, it is helpful to:

- avoid responding with aggression;
- save evidence;
- block offenders;
- report violations to platform administrators;
- seek support from trusted adults, mentors or professionals.

The Role of the Youth Worker

Youth workers should help create safe environments where young people can discuss such experiences and access appropriate support.

7.5. Digital Wellbeing

What Is Digital Wellbeing?

Digital Wellbeing is the ability to use digital technologies in ways that support personal development without harming physical, emotional or social well-being.

Why It Matters?

Digital technologies provide many opportunities, but excessive use may contribute to:

- fatigue;
- reduced concentration;
- sleep disturbances;
- stress;
- information overload.

Balancing Online and Offline Life

Completely avoiding digital technologies is neither realistic nor necessary.

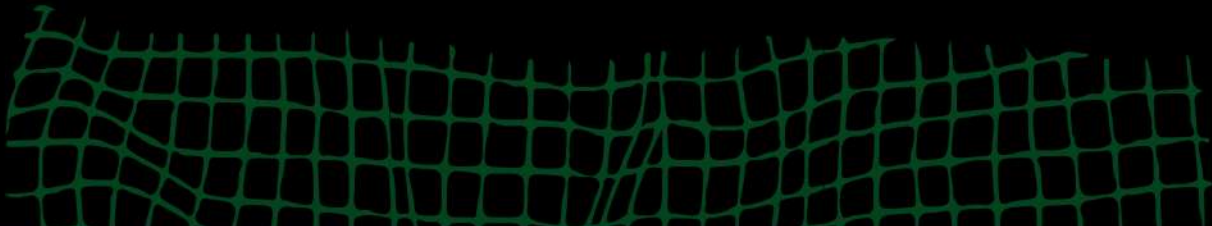
More important is learning how to maintain a healthy balance between different areas of life.

Helpful practices may include:

- conscious use of social media;
- regular breaks from screens;
- physical activity;
- face-to-face communication;
- participation in community activities;
- time for hobbies and creativity.

Digital Wellbeing and Young People

Developing healthy digital habits is particularly important for young people because many behavioural patterns are established during adolescence.



7.6. Risk Assessment in Youth Projects ✕

Why Risk Assessment Is Necessary?

Almost every youth project relies on digital tools such as:

- registration forms;
- messaging groups;
- social media platforms;
- cloud storage services;
- online meetings.

Therefore, digital safety considerations should be included when planning activities.

What Is Risk Assessment?

Risk assessment is the process of identifying potential threats and developing measures to prevent or minimise them.

Possible Digital Risks in Youth Projects

Personal Data Management

Collecting participant information requires responsible handling of personal data.

Use of Photographs

Participant consent should always be considered before publishing images.

Online Communication

Groups and chats should have clear rules regarding behaviour and communication.

Platform Security

Reliable digital tools should be used, and security settings should be reviewed regularly.

What Youth Workers Can Do?

When organising activities, it is useful to:

- discuss digital safety rules in advance;
- use secure services;
- explain privacy principles to participants;
- establish incident-response procedures;
- promote respectful communication.

7.7. Digital Safety for Activists and Participants in Civic Initiatives

Why This Topic Matters?

Conditions for civic participation vary significantly across different countries. In democratic societies, freedom of expression and civic engagement are protected by law. However, in some contexts, activists, journalists, human rights defenders and civil society representatives may face additional risks.

Even when activities are peaceful and lawful, digital engagement may attract attention from organisations, platforms or individuals. For this reason, digital safety is an important aspect of responsible civic participation.

Possible Risks

Participants in social initiatives may encounter:

- attempts to access their accounts;
- personal data breaches;
- publication of personal information without consent;
- online harassment;
- cyberbullying;
- fake accounts and identity impersonation;
- targeted information attacks.

These risks may affect not only activists but also journalists, volunteers, youth leaders and community organisers.

Core Principles of Digital Safety

Minimising Data Exposure

Individuals should regularly review what personal information is publicly available about them. Not all personal information needs to be public.

Protecting Accounts

Using unique passwords and two-factor authentication significantly improves account security.

Separating Personal and Public Activities

In many situations, it is beneficial to separate personal and project-related digital communication channels. For example, different communication tools may be used for private conversations and public initiatives.

Being Careful with Unknown Contacts

Requests for information from unfamiliar users should always be approached cautiously.

Safe Data Storage

Participant documents, registration forms, photographs and contact information should be stored securely and only to the extent necessary for project implementation.

Youth workers can support young people in:

- understanding digital risks;
- developing safe habits;
- protecting personal data;
- respecting participant confidentiality;
- using digital technologies responsibly.

Strengthening digital safety contributes to creating safer and more sustainable conditions for youth participation regardless of country or context.

Connection with Human Rights

Digital safety is closely connected to human rights.

The rights to privacy, freedom of expression, freedom of association and participation in public life remain relevant both offline and online.

Therefore, digital safety should be understood not only as a technical issue but also as an element of protecting human dignity, autonomy and fundamental rights in contemporary digital societies.

Connection with Active Citizenship and Youth Participation

Safety is an important condition for meaningful participation in public life.

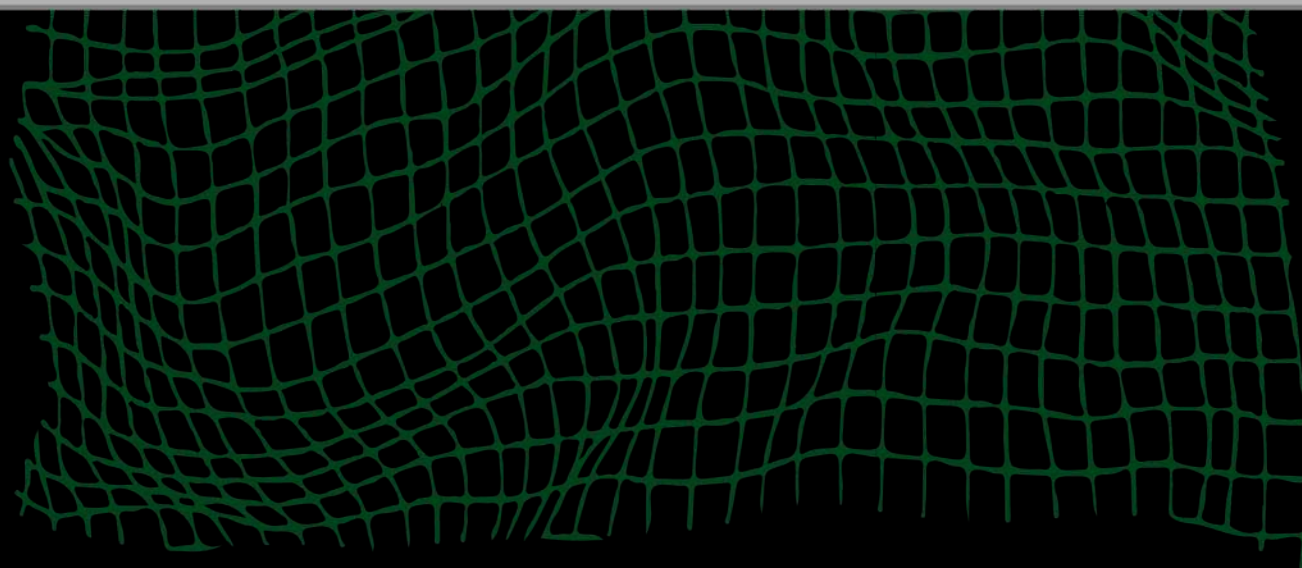
If young people feel unsafe in digital environments, they may avoid participating in discussions, projects and civic initiatives. Developing digital safety skills helps young people use digital technologies with

Conclusion

Digital safety is an essential competence in modern society. It includes data protection, safe communication, prevention of cyberbullying, promotion of digital wellbeing and responsible use of technology.

For young people, these competencies increase confidence and resilience in digital environments. For youth workers, they provide valuable tools for creating safe and supportive conditions for learning, communication and participation.

Digital safety is not only about protection from risks. It is also about creating conditions in which technologies help people learn, develop and interact with others safely, responsibly and meaningfully.



PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES



Activity 2. Create a Strong Password

Aim: To introduce principles of account protection.

Age: 12+

Group Size: Any

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Instructions:

Participants analyse examples of passwords and identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Following the discussion, the group creates a list of principles for developing strong passwords.

Discussion Questions:

- What makes a password secure?
- Why should passwords be unique?

Activity 1. Digital Safety Detective

Aim: To identify potential digital risks and threats.

Age: 13+

Group Size: 8-30 participants

Duration: 30-40 minutes

Materials: Cards describing various online situations.

Instructions:

Participants identify potential risks in each scenario and propose ways to improve safety.

Discussion Questions:

- Which threats appear most frequently?
- Which safety measures are most effective?
- How can risks be prevented?

Activity 3. How Should We Respond to Cyberbullying?

Aim: To practise safe and constructive responses to cyberbullying.

Age: 14+

Group Size: 10-30 participants

Duration: 45 minutes

Instructions:

Teams receive different cyberbullying scenarios and develop action plans for responding safely and effectively.

Example scenarios may include:

- receiving offensive messages;
- being excluded from an online group;
- discovering a fake account impersonating a participant;
- witnessing cyberbullying directed at another person.

Discussion Questions:

- Which responses were most effective?
- Where can support be found?
- How can bystanders help create safer digital environments?

Chapter 8. Creative Methods for Working with Young People with Fewer Opportunities

Young people come from diverse backgrounds and experiencedifferentlevelsofsupport, educational opportunities and social conditions. Some face additionalbarriersthatmaylimit their participation in education, community life, volunteering,youthprojectsandother opportunities for personal development. In European youth work,suchparticipantsareoften referred to as Young People with Fewer Opportunities(FOYouth).

It is important to understand that this term does not describedeficiencieswithintheindividual.

Rather, it refers to external circumstances and barriersthatmaycreateunequalstarting conditions. For youth workers, one of the key responsibilitiesiscreatingenvironmentswhere every young person can participate, learn, develop andfeelincludedwithinthegroup.

Non-formal education methods play a particularly importantroleinthisprocess.Theymakeit possible to adapt learning to participants' needs, recognisediverseexperiencesandcreate safe spaces for growth and development.

8.1. Understanding Young People with Fewer Opportunities

Who Are Young People with Fewer Opportunities?

In European youth work, young people with fewer opportunities may include participants experiencing:

- economic difficulties;
- social exclusion;
- limited educational opportunities;
- living in rural or remote areas;
- migration backgrounds;
- language barriers;
- disabilities;
- health-related challenges;
- discrimination;
- family-related difficulties;
- NEET status (young people not in education, employment or training).

It is important to remember that one person may experience several barriers simultaneously.

The Core Principle

An effective youth worker does not ask:

“What is wrong with this young person?”

Instead, they ask:

“What barriers prevent this young person from participating on equal terms?”

This approach shifts the focus from identifying deficits to finding solutions.

Why Participation Matters?

Every young person has the right to participate in society, access learning opportunities, develop their abilities and have their voice heard.

Inclusion is not about providing privileges to certain individuals. It is about creating conditions where opportunities become accessible to everyone.

8.2. Non-Formal Education Approaches

What Is Non-Formal Education?

Non-formal education is a voluntary learning process based on practical experience, participation, interaction and reflection.

Unlike formal education, the emphasis is placed on active involvement by participants.

Why This Approach Is Effective?

Young people learn more effectively when they:

- actively participate in the process;
- can express their opinions;
- learn through experience;
- are allowed to make mistakes

Principles of Inclusive Learning

Voluntary Participation -Participants should feel that they have genuine choice.

Safety -Everyone should feel protected from ridicule, exclusion and discrimination.

Participation -All participants should have opportunities to contribute and be heard.

Flexibility -Methods should be adapted to the needs of the group.

Practical Relevance -Learning should connect with participants' real-life experiences.

8.3. Creative Media Literacy Methods

Many media literacy topics may seem complex or abstract to young people. For this reason, youth workers often use creative and game-based methods.

Simulations

Participants recreate real-life situations such as:

- the spread of fake news;
- the operation of algorithms;
- media manipulation;
- social campaigns.

Simulations allow participants to learn through direct experience.

Media Quests

Groups receive tasks involving information searches, fact-checking or content analysis. This format is particularly effective with teenagers and young adults.

Investigative Challenges

Participants take on the roles of journalists or fact-checkers and analyse different information materials.

8.5. Storytelling and Digital Narratives

What Is Storytelling?

Storytelling is the use of stories to communicate ideas, experiences and knowledge.

People generally remember stories more effectively than isolated facts.

Why Stories Work?

Stories help to:

- create emotional connections;
- explain complex topics;
- develop empathy;
- stimulate discussion.

Digital Storytelling

Modern technologies allow stories to be created through various formats:

- videos;
- podcasts;
- blogs;
- comics;
- photo projects;
- digital presentations.

The approach is particularly powerful when young people create and share their own stories and experiences.

Using Stories in Youth Work

Stories can be used to explore topics such as:

- human rights;
- discrimination;
- media literacy;
- digital safety;
- youth participation.

8.6. Theatre and Forum Theatre

What Is Forum Theatre?

Forum Theatre is an interactive theatre method developed by the Brazilian educator and theatre director Augusto Boal.

Participants observe a scene presenting a problem or conflict.

Audience members can then stop the performance and propose alternative actions for the characters.

Why This Method Is Effective?

Forum Theatre allows participants to:

- explore difficult situations safely;
- search for solutions;
- build confidence;
- learn through practice.

Possible Topics for Forum Theatre •

- cyberbullying;
- discrimination;
- peer pressure;
- manipulation on social media;
- conflicts within youth groups.

8.7. Visual and Artistic Methods

Not all young people enjoy speaking in front of groups or participating in discussions. For some participants, visual creativity offers a more comfortable form of self-expression.

Possible Methods

Collages - Participants create visual compositions based on a chosen theme.

Comics - Comics help participants communicate stories through images.

Posters - Useful for social campaigns and civic initiatives.

Photography - Allows participants to explore the world through visual perspectives.

Emotion Maps - These can be used to discuss feelings, experiences and personal reflections.

Advantages of Visual Methods - Visual approaches help engage participants with different learning styles, communication preferences and confidence levels.

8.8. Gamification and Game-Based Learning

What Is Gamification?

Gamification is the use of game elements within non-game contexts.

It does not mean turning learning into pure entertainment. Its main purpose is to increase motivation, engagement and participation.

Game Elements

Examples include:

- missions;
- challenges;
- levels;
- achievements;
- points;
- team tasks;
- fictional characters.

Quests in Youth Work

Educational quests can combine:

- learning;
- movement and physical activity;
- problem-solving;
- teamwork;
- reflection.

They are particularly effective when addressing media literacy

Conclusion

Working with young people with fewer opportunities requires flexibility, empathy and a willingness to adapt educational approaches to participants' needs.

Non-formal education provides a wide range of tools for this purpose. Role-plays, storytelling,

Why Game-Based Methods Work Well with FO Youth

Game-based environments reduce the fear of making mistakes and increase engagement among participants who may feel less confident in traditional educational settings.

Connection with Active Citizenship and Youth Participation

Creative methods help young people gain knowledge while also building confidence in their abilities.

This is especially important for participants with fewer opportunities who may face barriers to participation.

Inclusive methods allow young people to:

- have their voices heard;
- participate in decision-making;
- express their ideas;
- develop leadership skills;
- become active members of society.

For youth workers, creative methods are valuable tools for building more equitable and accessible learning environments.

Activity 1. Tower of Opportunities



Aim: To explore the impact of different life barriers on participation.

Age: 14+

Group Size: 10–30 participants

Duration: 40 minutes

Materials:

- Cards describing different life situations;
- Construction materials or paper.

Instructions:

Participants receive different starting conditions but are asked to complete the same tasks. Afterwards, the group reflects on how the opportunities available to participants differed.

Discussion Questions:

- How did different starting conditions affect participation?
- What barriers became visible during the activity?
- How can these barriers be reduced?

Activity 5. Media Literacy Quest

Aim: To combine learning with game-based activities.

Age: 14+

Group Size: 10–30 participants

Duration: 60–90 minutes

Instructions:

Teams move through a series of stations focused on:

- fact-checking;
- image analysis;
- recognising manipulation;
- source evaluation;
- digital safety.

After completing all stations, participants take part in a group reflection session to discuss their learning outcomes and experiences.

Discussion Questions:

- Which station was the most challenging?
- Which skills will be most useful in everyday life?
- How can these skills be applied in future civic and digital participation?

Activity 2. Fake or Fact?

Aim: To develop media literacy through interactive learning.

Age: 13+

Group Size: 8–30 participants

Duration: 30 minutes

Instructions:

Participants receive different information messages and identify which elements require additional verification.

Discussion Questions:

- Which messages were most difficult to assess?
- What information would help verify the claims?

Activity 3. Forum Theatre: The Difficult Choice

Aim: To explore conflict resolution strategies.

Age: 14+

Group Size: 10–25 participants

Duration: 60 minutes

Instructions:

The group performs a conflict scenario. Audience members then intervene and suggest alternative actions and solutions.

Discussion Questions:

- Which solutions were most effective?
- How did different actions change the outcome?

Activity 4. My Story

Aim: To promote self-expression and confidence.

Age: 13+

Group Size: Any

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Instructions:

Participants create a short story about an important life experience using one of the following formats:

- written narrative;
- drawing;
- comic strip;
- video.

Discussion Questions:

- What was it like to share your story?
- What did you learn from listening to others?

Chapter 9.

Workshop Library for Youth Workers

Even the highest-quality knowledge and educational materials will have limited impact if a youth worker is unable to transform them into engaging and meaningful learning experiences.

One of the defining characteristics of youth work is that young people learn most effectively through experience, discussion, interaction and practical activities. For this reason, non-formal education methods play a central role in youth work practice.

In the previous chapters, we explored media literacy, critical thinking, fake news, digital safety and youth participation in society. The next step is understanding how to translate these concepts into concrete workshops, activities and learning experiences.

This chapter serves as a library of methods that youth workers can adapt for different age groups, levels of experience and educational objectives.

It is important to remember that there is no universal method suitable for every group. Effective youth workers always adapt activities to the needs, experiences and context of their participants.

9.1 Icebreakers

What Is an Icebreaker?

An icebreaker is a short activity designed to help participants get to know each other, feel more comfortable and create a safe atmosphere within the group.

Icebreakers are particularly valuable at the beginning of training courses, youth exchanges and new educational programmes.

Activity: "Media Avatar"

Age: 13+

Group Size: 8–40 participants

Duration: 15 minutes

Instructions:

Participants introduce themselves through a media-related metaphor.

Each participant answers the question:

"If you were a social media platform, app, film or media format, what would you be and why?"

After the introductions, the group discusses the different responses.

Activity: "Information Map"

Age: 14+

Group Size: 10–30 participants

Duration: 20 minutes

Instructions:

Participants move to different areas of the room according to their answers to questions such as:

- Where do you usually get your news?
- Which social media platform do you use most often?
- What type of information format do you prefer?

The activity helps visualise the diversity of information habits within the group.

9.2. Media Literacy Workshops - Workshop: "How News Is Created"

Age: 14+

Group Size: 10–30 participants

Duration: 60 minutes

Aim: To understand how news content is created and presented.

Process: Groups receive a description of the same event.

Each team creates:

- a newspaper article;
- a social media post;
- a video news report;
- a sensational headline.

After presentations, participants compare how the same event can be represented in different ways.

Discussion Questions:

- What changed between the different versions?
- Which elements influenced audience perception?

Workshop: "Media Journey"

Age: 13+

Duration: 45 minutes

Instructions:

Participants track how a single news story appears across different platforms and analyse how the content changes during the process.

9.3. Fake News Simulations - Simulation: "Viral News"

Age: 14+

Group Size: 15–40 participants

Duration: 45 minutes

Aim:

To demonstrate how disinformation spreads.

Process:

One participant receives an original message. The message is passed through a chain of participants. Each person may slightly modify the content before passing it on. After several rounds, the group compares the final version with the original.

Discussion Questions:

- Why did the information change?
- What happened to the facts?
- Why do similar processes occur online?

Simulation: "The Sensation Creators"

Age: 15+

Duration: 60 minutes

Instructions:

Teams receive an ordinary event and attempt to transform it into the most attention-grabbing news story possible. The group then analyses the manipulation techniques used.

9.4. Fact-Checking Exercises - Activity: "Information Detective"

Age: 14+

Group Size: 10–30 participants

Duration: 45 minutes

Instructions:

Participants analyse a publication and identify:

- the author;
- the source;
- the publication date;
- supporting evidence;
- possible indicators of manipulation.

Activity: "The Trial of a Publication"

Age: 15+

Duration: 60 minutes

Instructions:

One group acts as journalists, another as fact-checkers and a third as the audience.

The task is to evaluate the reliability of a publication based on the available evidence.

Activity: "The Source Hunt"

Age: 15+

Duration: 40 minutes

Instructions:

Groups receive publications containing multiple references and links. Their task is to identify the original source of the information. Afterwards, the group discusses how the information changed as it was retold.

9.5. Digital Safety Activities - Activity: "Secure Account"

Age: 13+

Duration: 30 minutes

Instructions:

Participants receive a description of an online account containing various vulnerabilities.

Their task is to identify potential risks and suggest ways to improve security.

Activity: "Cyberbullying: What Should We Do?"

Age: 14+

Duration: 45 minutes

Instructions:

Groups analyse different cyberbullying scenarios and develop response plans.

Discussion Topics:

- supporting the affected person;
- the role of bystanders;
- responsibilities of moderators;
- available sources of support.

Activity: "Digital Footprint"

Age: 14+

Duration: 40 minutes

Instructions:

Participants create a map of their digital activity and discuss what information about them may be visible to others.

9.6. Social Campaign Simulations - Activity: "Create a Social Campaign"

Age: 15+

Group Size: 10–30 participants

Duration: 90 minutes

Instructions:

Teams receive a social issue and develop:

- campaign objectives;
- target audience;
- key message;
- content plan;
- evaluation methods.

After presentations, all projects are discussed by the group.

Activity: "Activism in One Day"

Age: 15+

Duration: 60 minutes

Instructions:

Participants receive limited resources and must design a strategy for raising awareness about a social issue.

The activity highlights the importance of planning, teamwork and strategic thinking.

9.7. Reflection Methods

Why Reflection Matters?

Reflection is the process of analysing and making sense of learning experiences. Without discussion and reflection, even the most engaging activity may remain only entertainment. Reflection transforms experience into learning.

Method: "Traffic Lights"

Age: Any

Duration: 10 minutes

Participants respond to three questions:

- What was useful?
- What requires further reflection?
- What remains unclear?

Method: "One Step Forward"

Age: 14+

Duration: 15 minutes

Each participant answers:

"What is one action I am prepared to take after today's session?"

Method: "Letter to My Future Self"

Age: 15+

Duration: 20 minutes

Participants write a short letter to themselves describing what they learned and how they intend to apply it in practice.

9.8. Evaluation Tools

Why Evaluation Matters?

Evaluation helps determine:

- whether learning objectives were achieved;
- which methods were most effective;
- what could be improved in the future.

Pre/Post Assessment

Participants answer the same questions at the beginning and end of a programme. This helps measure changes in knowledge, attitudes and skills.

Learning Thermometer

Age: Any

Duration: 5 minutes

Instructions:

Participants rate their understanding of the topic on a scale from 1 to 10.

Competence Map

Participants assess the development of competencies such as:

- media literacy;
- critical thinking;
- digital safety;
- communication;
- teamwork.

The assessment is conducted before and after the educational process.

Method: "Suitcase – Shelf – Bin"

Age: 13+

Duration: 10 - 15 minutes

Instructions:

Participants categorise their learning experience:

- Suitcase – what I will take with me.
- Shelf – what I may use in the future.
- Bin – what was not relevant for me.

Connection with Active Citizenship and Youth Participation

Practical methods allow young people not only to gain knowledge but also to apply it in real-life situations.

Through games, simulations, role-plays and discussions, participants learn to:

- critically analyse information;
- recognise manipulation;
- use digital technologies safely;
- participate in community life;
- work effectively in teams;
- make responsible decisions.

For youth workers, a library of methods becomes a tool for transforming theory into meaningful practice.

Conclusion

Effective youth work is built not only on knowledge but also on methods of facilitating learning. Icebreakers, simulations, fact-checking activities, role-plays, digital safety exercises, social activism workshops and reflection methods help make learning engaging, interactive and meaningful. For youth workers, it is important not simply to use ready-made activities but to understand the educational purpose behind each method and adapt it to the needs of a particular group.

Practical Exercises for Training Youth Workers

1. Workshop Builder

Aim: To develop educational activity design skills.

Age: 16+

Group Size: 8–25 participants

Duration: 60 minutes

Instructions:

Participants design their own mini-workshop based on one of the toolkit topics.



2. Methodology Laboratory

Aim: To adapt activities for different target groups.

Age: 16+

Duration: 45 minutes

Instructions:

Teams receive one activity and adapt it for:

- teenagers aged 13–15;
- young people aged 16–18;
- participants with fewer opportunities.

3. Facilitate an Activity

Aim: To develop facilitation skills.

Age: 16+

Duration: 60–90 minutes

Instructions:

Each participant facilitates a short activity for the group.

4. Challenging Group Analysis

Aim: To prepare for real youth work situations.

Age: 16+

Duration: 45 minutes

Instructions:

Participants receive a description of a challenging group and develop an appropriate workshop programme.

5. The Youth Worker's Toolbox

Aim: To create a personal collection of methods.

Age: 16+

Duration: 30 minutes

Instructions:

Each participant selects five methods from this chapter that they intend to use in their own practice and explains their choices to the group.

Conclusion

Media literacy, digital safety and responsible participation in online environments are no longer optional competencies. They have become essential life skills for young people growing up in a world where information is constantly expanding, communication happens instantly and digital technologies influence almost every aspect of daily life.

Youth workers play a key role in developing these competencies. Through non-formal education methods, mentoring and experiential learning, they can create environments where young people learn not only how to access information but also how to critically evaluate it, recognise manipulation, protect themselves in digital environments and use technology to make a positive contribution to society.

This toolkit was created as a practical resource rather than a purely theoretical publication. The chapters provide foundational knowledge on key topics, while the activities help participants develop skills through active participation, reflection and hands-on experience. The proposed methods can be adapted to different age groups, educational contexts, levels of experience and participant needs, making the toolkit particularly valuable when working with young people with fewer opportunities.

The main goal of this toolkit is to support youth workers in helping young people become informed, resilient, responsible and active citizens. In a world where every individual has the ability to create, share and influence information, the capacity to think critically, communicate ethically and act responsibly has become one of the most important competencies we can help young people develop.

The question reflected in the title of this toolkit — “Is It Safe to Say a Word?” — does not have a simple answer. However, through the development of media literacy, digital safety skills and a culture of democratic participation, young people can gain the confidence and competencies needed to use their voices responsibly, safely and meaningfully.

Ultimately, the goal is not to encourage silence or fear, but to empower young people to participate thoughtfully in society, engage in dialogue with respect for others and contribute positively to democratic communities both online and offline.

By strengthening these competencies, youth workers help create a generation that is better prepared to navigate complex information environments, defend human rights, support inclusive communities and actively contribute to a more informed, resilient and democratic society.