

**Outcome document – Thematic debate on disinformation, misinformation and the  
safe use of AI  
13th meeting of the EESC Youth Group on 27 April 2026**

## 1. Participants

A debate was held during the EESC Youth Group meeting on 27 April 2026. It was attended by the [9 EESC Youth Group](#) members and in the presence of the following external participants:

- Carolin Hochstrat, YEYS 2026 panellist and co-founder of Democratic Spin
- Lasha Machabeli, YEYS 2026 participant
- Viktoriia Simakova, YEYS 2026 participant

## 2. Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the debate, the EESC Youth Group formulates the following recommendations:

### **Strengthen media literacy and education**

- Encourage practical educational activities on critical thinking, media literacy and AI education to all generations across the EU
- Develop practical training and awareness campaigns for all generations on the risks and opportunities of AI
- Support peer-to-peer and intergenerational learning approaches

### **Ensure effective and balanced regulation**

- Improve implementation and enforcement of the DSA and AI Act
- Introduce clear safeguards against harmful AI applications, including deepfakes
- Avoid over-regulation that could limit freedom of expression or public trust

### **Protect vulnerable groups and address societal impacts**

- Address mental health risks and digital addiction, particularly among young people
- Ensure inclusion of young people with disabilities and disadvantaged groups
- Strengthen safeguards against online harassment and manipulation

### **Reinforce youth participation in policymaking**

- Systematically involve young people in AI and digital policy debates
- Ensure follow-up to youth consultations and recommendations
- Expand outreach to underrepresented and less connected youth

### **Improve evidence and knowledge base**

- Invest in research on the environmental, social and psychological impacts of AI
- Support data collection to better understand disinformation trends and risks

## Overall conclusion

The debate confirmed that tackling disinformation and ensuring the safe use of AI requires a combined approach of education, regulation, and participation. Empowering young people as informed, involved and critical digital citizens is key to safeguarding democracy and building a trustworthy digital environment.

## 3. Key points discussed

### Education, media literacy and critical thinking

- A strong consensus emerged that **education is the most effective long-term response** to disinformation. Participants agreed that **media literacy should be practical, continuous and adapted to different age groups**.
- Carolin Hochstrat emphasised the need for AI education across all age groups and the development of safe and accessible frameworks for its use.
- Lasha Machabeli highlighted the importance of media literacy campaigns and education systems in addressing deepfakes and misinformation.
- Viktoriia Simakova stressed that building resilience and critical thinking skills is more effective than simply regulating content.

### Regulation of AI and online platforms

- The discussion underlined the importance of a **balanced regulatory approach**. There was no consensus on age restrictions for AI use, but broad agreement that education and platform design are more effective than strict bans.
- Calls were made for stronger enforcement of existing rules, including the DSA and AI Act.
- Concerns were raised about over-reliance on platforms or authorities to define “truth”, which may risk censorship and undermine trust.
- Participants highlighted the need to regulate AI applications such as deepfakes, including possible financial penalties and safeguards.

### Risks for young people and vulnerable groups

- Participants stressed that AI and disinformation **disproportionately affect certain groups**.
- Concerns were raised about mental health impacts, digital dependency and the blending of online and offline realities.
- The issue of deepfakes and online harassment, particularly affecting young women, was highlighted.
- The need to better include and protect young people with disabilities was also raised.
- Participants agreed that policies must address inequalities in access to information and digital skills.

### Participation of young people

- A key theme was the need to **ensure that young people actively shape digital policies**. The debate confirmed the relevance of instruments such as the EESC Youth Test and YEYS, while highlighting the need for stronger follow-up.
- Carolin Hochstrat stressed stronger youth participation in AI-related policymaking.
- Participants called for more structured and continuous dialogue between youth and EU institutions.
- The importance of reaching less connected or underrepresented young people was emphasised.

#### Broader societal and environmental considerations

- Participants noted limited evidence on the **environmental impact of AI**, calling for further research and transparency.
- **Ethical issues**, including trust, accountability and transparency, were highlighted as central challenges.
- The importance of addressing information manipulation and foreign interference was acknowledged in line with EU priorities.