



The Truth about Lies

Youth challenging Disinformation



Conference
on the Future
of Europe



SHORT REPORT

YOUTH EVENT • 31 March – 1 April 2022

Students from the 27 EU countries, five candidate ones and a Brussels-based European school took part in the youth summit on disinformation and presented their recommendations live to European Commission Executive Vice-President Věra Jourová.

This year's Your Europe, Your Say! (YEYS) event, entitled "**The Truth about Lies. Youth challenging Disinformation**", brought together 99 teenage students and 44 teachers from various countries to reflect, engage in workshops and discuss how to tackle disinformation more effectively and how to better educate themselves, their teammates and others.

Over the course of two days, the students formed small groups for different workshops to deal with the theoretical background of and knowledge about disinformation and get themselves into the shoes of trolls and fake news spreaders. They developed disinformation campaigns, which they later countered as reporters using information ones. And they ended up better equipped to stand against fake news and tackle disinformation.

At the end of the workshops, **the students were able to draw up recommendations and came up with a set of policies to be sent to high-level EU representatives.** Eight of the 99 students were selected, each one representing a team, to brief **Věra Jourová, European Commission Executive Vice-President** on their conclusions and suggestions during the closing session, chaired by **EESC Vice-President Cillian Lohan.**

The students' recommendations were as follows:

- EU Member States should initiate national- and European-level public campaigns providing information about the dangers of disinformation and how easily fake news can polarise people and spread hate speech.
- Educational programmes should be developed. It is crucial that national authorities create and support educational courses on disinformation and invest in activities on how to spot and tackle fake news. Educational programmes on media literacy and learning tools should be included in schools' curricula. Disinformation should also be included in the Erasmus EU programme.
- Information platforms should be set up at national and/or European level, where information resources could be tracked and traced and fake news spreaders held accountable for what they publish online.
- Accessibility to reliable sources should be enhanced and a fact-checking mechanism inaugurated. Technology should be the vehicle to guarantee transparency and that could be achieved in a creative way by using modern online tools and apps like videos or games.
- By all means, say No to Censorship! Education is always the key and censorship should be avoided. National authorities and governments shouldn't ban or restrict freedom of speech, and truth and credibility are the pillars that should be emphasised and preserved as the essential competences of democratic participatory societies.
- Systematic oversight of the content and origins of sources should be reinforced. Vulnerable target groups should be protected by limiting accessibility for fake news spreaders. That could be done via increased controls on the identity of publishers, and credentials and certifications should be required as a matter of course.
- New regulations and stricter legislation establishing possible penalties for disrespectful or fake content should be framed. The budget should be increased accordingly.
- Campaigns should be started up in cooperation with social media platforms and social media app companies to pop up warnings and information messages and introduce algorithms to detect fake news.



The speakers involved were:



Christa Schweng, EESC President

"Those proposals will be your expectations, your hopes and your outlook for the future: the views of young Europeans at a critical moment for the credibility of Europe as a place of peace, democracy and prosperity. We are here to listen to you!"



Cillian Lohan, EESC Vice-President

"From our side, we can ensure that we always facilitate new voices, and will do our utmost to amplify your voices so that they can be heard!"



Věra Jourová, European Commission Executive Vice-President

"Disinformation is not illegal, but it is harmful. We need to take the necessary steps to tackle it while preserving freedom of speech. I want to push you to not provide space for highly dangerous content."



Rurd Oosterwoud, founder of DROG

"By giving people the tactics and techniques involved in disinformation, we can help them understand how it works."



Juliane von Reppert-Bismarck, founder of Lie Detectors

"The current situation in Ukraine has shown us how important it is to have reliable information."

The students:

"Even if no new regulations are devised, updating legislation would allow for stricter controls. People who spread fake news and are involved in illegal actions should be tracked and their actions penalised."

"There is a growing need for governments to introduce a reliable fact-checking mechanism."

"Authorities should not institute blanket censorship of or bans on content, and all actions must comply with the motto 'Don't silence, emphasise!'"



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