



Media Literacy in the Baltics: Workshops and Trainings

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If we look back at ourselves before the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, we will probably notice that we trusted more what was published in the media and on social networks. During COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine, especially in 2022, fake news and disinformation in the media and on social networks increased significantly in the Baltic States, deliberately aimed at creating discord and uncertainty in society.

How to identify and stop fake news and disinformation? – we are not alone in asking this question. To do this, it is important to have media literacy competences that enable us to critically look at the information field around us, to analyse the news that reaches us, and to identify and stop fake news and disinformation. Fake news and disinformation reach people of all ages, but children and young people are the most vulnerable group, lacking critical thinking, fact checking, recognition of opinions, and emotional resilience.

Taking into account today's challenges in the field of media literacy, the Education Academy at Vytautas Magnus University, together with teacher and journalist training universities in Latvia and Estonia, and in coordination with the IREX International Research and Exchange Board, has implemented the project of Media Literacy in the Baltics for the period of 2022–2023, with the overarching aim to strengthen the skills of citizens in the Baltic States how to use the media critically. One of the main objectives

of the programme is to introduce media literacy-related topics to students in education and journalism studies.

Media Literacy project team of Education Academy of Vytautas Magnus University consisted of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ilona Tandzegolskienė-Bielaglovė, Prof. Dr. Giedrė Kvieskienė, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nijolė Čiučiulkienė and Danguolė Bylaitė-Šalavėjienė, who devoted a great deal of attention to updating of the pedagogical study subjects “Social Communication”, “Modern Didactics”, “Organization of Action Research in Pre-school Education”, which integrated the IREX media literacy methodology of “Learn to Discern”.

In July 2022, we piloted the Media Literacy seminar for educators within the Media Literacy project, introducing the updated study subjects and teaching materials in pedagogical studies. In the autumn semester of 2022, students of the pedagogical study programmes at bachelor and master levels learned according to the updated descriptions of study subjects, which significantly increased the focus on developing media literacy competences.

In September, students of the Education Academy of Vytautas Magnus University had the opportunity to participate in the presentation of the online platform “Very Verified” in Kaunas and to complete an online media literacy course. In November-December 2022, students conducted media literacy initiatives in educational institutions, working with children and young people, families and colleague lecturers.

In December 2022 and January 2023, the Media Literacy project team implemented extra-curriculum seminars for university lecturers and educators to share their experience of integrating media literacy into pedagogical studies. Seminars were also organised for school teams (teachers and pupils) on issues related to civil resistance and media literacy.

In March 2023, an international scientific conference “Media Literacy and Information Technology: Challenges and Solutions for the 21st Century” [“Medijų raštingumas ir informacinės technologijos: iššūkiai ir sprendimai XXI amžiuje”] was held at Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the Education Academy of Vytautas Magnus University in Vilnius. One of the main objectives of this conference was to discuss the impact of media on society, the encoding and decoding of news through the media, and the emotional and intellectual impact of the media on individuals and society.

Considering the paramount importance of media literacy in today’s challenging society, the Media Literacy project at the Education Academy of Vytautas Magnus University aimed to strengthen the media literacy competences of the university students and lecturers, general education teachers, and pupils.

References

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