

Social Research Call

Title:

Schooling Against Fake News



Acronym: SAFN

Project leader: Carlos X. Lastra-Anadón

Host organisation: IE University

Main purpose of the project: To create a body of evidence about how best to tackle misinformation among teenagers that schools and policymakers can use and implement. In particular, to establish the current status of misinformation among young people and what approaches can be most effective to give them the tools and motivation to tackle them.

Design/methodology/approach: A series of randomized control trials (RCTs) with online and in-person treatments in Spain and Portugal that provide training and motivation to young people on handling online misinformation, evaluating its effects in real world scenarios.

Potential results:

1. A factsheet on the state of youth digital literacy in Europe
2. Ready-to-use curricular materials and multimedia tools to tackle misinformation
3. High-quality impact data for each treatment

Social relevance of the research: Young people’s lack of digital literacy has profound social costs. In the current digital landscape, a particular concern is the widespread dissemination of misinformation via social media platforms. In this setting, young people are particularly at risk. They spend significant time on social media and may lack the skills or motivation to scrutinize low quality information. One recent study finds that up to 96 percent of teenagers do not question the source of the information they are given. This lack of digital literacy can have profound consequences, reducing trust in democratic institutions, increasing misperceptions about high stakes issues such as vaccination, and fueling intergroup conflict.

Originality/value of the project:

This is, to our knowledge, the first research effort anywhere in the world to study digital literacy among this particularly vulnerable teenage population and to develop targeted interventions suitable for use among this vulnerable group. Collectively, our national surveys, in-person and online trainings, and experimental trials will for the first time offer policymakers and educators a holistic picture of the digital literacy challenge in Europe. It will also provide possible policy solutions that will be ready-to-use by schools throughout Europe.