

Social Research Call

Title: Uncovering political information diets among youth through novel computational methods



Acronym: CSSINFOYOUTH

Project leader: Laia Castro

Host organisation: University of Barcelona

Main purpose of the project:

This project aims to describe and raise societal awareness about the nature, amount and effects of political information consumed by youth in Spain. It explores the impact of non-political sources (e.g., influencers) vs traditional media, as well as different devices and social platforms on youth information habits using advanced computational tools.

Design/methodology/approach:

We will analyze the exposure, interaction, and engagement of individuals aged 16-25 with political information on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Using their social media, survey and web-browsing data, we will create a pilot simulated social media environment to be used in an online field experiment.

Potential results:

We will identify different information diets among Spanish youth and their links to political cognition and behavior. The pilot experiment will allow participants to view, react to and share content, and interact with other virtual users. The experiment’s research design, chatbot prototypes, and the app will be made available to the scientific community.

Social relevance of the research:

The project will contribute to uncover the impact of algorithmic and social media curation on youth information diets in Spain. Understanding these dynamics is crucial as youth are the main gatekeepers of information spread via social media, pass it on to older populations and are meant to be the citizens of the future.

Originality/value of the project:

This project will lead the way in social science research by harnessing advanced computational tools used in biology and ecology. Such tools will be used to gather and analyse a vast array of data and to develop a pilot version of a simulated social media environment that helps unpack citizens’ information habits with high precision.