

smiles



Baseline study

Country report Belgium (Flanders)

MEDIA & LEARNING
 ASSOCIATION



Colophon

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Research method

For this report on dissemination, impact and countering of disinformation and fake news in Flanders (Belgium) and the subsequent inventory of interventions aimed at fighting fake news and disinformation we used a survey, interviews, and extensive desk research.

Survey

We started with a survey where we addressed all Flemish media literacy initiatives as listed on the Mediawijs site (<https://mediawijs.be/organisaties>). Mediawijs is the Flemish Knowledge Center for Digital and Media Literacy of the Flemish government and imec vzw and as such, it plays the pivotal role of being an expertise and research centre, a knowledge pool and a hub for all organisations and initiatives that are related to media literacy in the Flemish and Dutch speaking Brussels regions in Belgium. Altogether the Mediawijs site lists 804 organisations, ranging from schools and (public) libraries to NGOs and companies that are to some extent involved with media literacy. We sent a survey to 367 organisations from this list, leaving out those organisations that are addressing a target audience outside our range of interest. While the survey itself was completed by only 8 respondents, we received 127 responses to our email providing us with information. Unfortunately, the majority of responses were negative (of the type “No, we don’t organise this type of interventions”, “We do not address this particular target group”) or inconclusive (“We will forward your message to another staff member”). Still, the survey provided us with a broad and up to date overview of the news and information literacy landscape in Flanders and thus gave us an excellent starting point for further information collection.

Interview

We also interviewed Andy Demeulenaere, coordinator Mediawijs with imec, who described the central role Mediawijs plays in a very large number of media literacy initiatives, in design, development, deployment and evaluation, in Flanders as well as in European collaborative projects and who provided the leads to a number of Fake news and/or Covid-19 related projects and initiatives.

Desk Research

Finally we carried out intensive desk research, reading articles and exploring web sites and social media, following up on the leads provided by Mediawijs and by the survey respondents. Altogether we collected over 70 resources, documents, articles, web pages and books and we corresponded intensively with experts active in the media and news literacy community in Flanders.

:: Part 1 ::

Dissemination, impact and countering of disinformation and fake news in Belgium (Flanders)

Policy

Fake news has only been on the public agenda for a few years. At a study day of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium (KVAB), Professor Peter Van Aelst (UAntwerpen) testified that fake news is relatively rare in Flanders. (Deltour, 2019)

According to Flemish Minister of Media Benjamin Dalle on 21 January 2021, there is little and certainly no structural research into disinformation and its occurrence in Flanders or Belgium. Some studies do examine the extent to which citizens in Flanders or Belgium are concerned about online disinformation, the extent to which they come into contact with it or in how far they have confidence in their ability to recognize disinformation. (Dalle, 2021) Furthermore, Minister Dalle stated that not much is known yet about which citizens and profiles are most susceptible to fake news or to the possible causes of this susceptibility. No studies have been done on this. The Minister stated that “It is important to point out that everyone is susceptible to disinformation.” According to Mediawijs the following factors may play a role:

- prior knowledge: a basis of good knowledge about a subject can help to better evaluate additional information;
- engagement: the extent to which a theme touches a sensitive nerve, the message can respond to concerns, frustrations, fears that bother someone personally;
- trust: the degree to which you have confidence in the authorities that disseminate information on the subject;
- more highly developed critical skills: those who are more practiced in abstract and critical thinking are more likely to see through bad information, although it should be noted that conspiracy theorists often act very critically and with a lot of research.

The Flemish government supports various initiatives through channels such as WAT WAT for young people and VRT NWS who together with Mediawijs, Artevelde Hogeschool and the Interuniversity Microelectronics Center (imec) made a special edition of the EDUbox Nepnieuws about corona for secondary education. (Dalle, 2021)

Research

"De Stemming" is a survey commissioned by VRT NWS and De Standaard, conducted among about 2,000 Flemish people by the universities of Brussels and Antwerp, led by Stefaan Walgrave (UA) and Jonas Lefevere (VUB). between the end of March and 19 April 2021. In this study the scientists polled the population's "gullibility" by means of a number of questions about Covid-19. The results show a clear difference between adults and young people. The latter are much more susceptible to fake news. This can be partly explained by the media use of young people: it is mainly online and on social media that these erroneous news items circulate. (Walgrave & Lefevere, 2021)

How Flemish young people use digital media is described in the 2020 report of the biennial *Apestaartjaren* research by Mediaraven, Mediawijs and the research group imec-mict (UGent). In October and November 2019, 4255 young people from secondary education completed an online questionnaire. The report gives insight into which devices young people have, how they use them and how they behave in the digital world. (Vandenbussche et al., 2020) A few conclusions of this report are relevant for our research even though the survey did not poll in 2019 for issues to do with fake news and disinformation. The results can however give an indication of preferred ways to reach young people in general.

94% of young people use a smartphone, compared with 76% for use of TV or 75% for laptop use. The use of social media by young people is changing rapidly. YouTube and Instagram remain very popular channels and their number of users continues to increase. 89% of young people use YouTube at least weekly and 86% of them use Instagram. Facebook is on the decline. Today only 37% of young people use Facebook at least weekly. 74% communicate mainly via Snapchat or private messages via Instagram.

In general, young people show little interest in news. On a scale from 0 ('not interested at all') to 10 ('very interested'), young people give an average of 4,7 in response to the question to what extent they are interested in news on topics such as social issues, culture, or sports. When we look at the weekly news use of young people, we see that news on social media (76%), television (55%), radio (53%) and messaging apps (49%) reaches more than half of young people.

Similarly, the Digital News Report from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, which surveys a representative sample of the population in 40 countries each year about how they seek, consume and experience news, concludes in its most recent June 2020 report (Neuman, 2018) that social media through the smartphone remains the most important source of information for young people. (Heremans, 2020)

A quarter of teenagers come into contact with news websites at least weekly (26%). In general, young people have reasonable confidence in journalists' news coverage. Young people consider themselves quite news-literate. They judge themselves sufficiently competent on various questions that gauge their own ability and conviction to understand news in the context in which it is presented. Regarding the feelings and experiences related to news, the research finds that 29% feel

overwhelmed by the amount of news available or confused by the quality of news and information (24%).

It is no surprise that young people turn to their friends and classmates (67%) if they have questions about the use of digital media and devices. Parents come in second with 44%, followed by siblings (42%). What is most striking here is that teachers are considered only as reliable as grandparents (both 5%). (Neuman, 2018) It should be noted here that another survey with 1090 Flemish young people carried out in 2019 concluded that young people in the first place turn to their parents to discuss the correctness of news, even more often than teachers and friends. In deciding whether a news item is real or fake, young people say that the opinion of parents is very important (55%). They rate this opinion slightly higher than that of teachers (53%). Both parents and teachers are therefore information providers for young people with regard to fake news. The role played by parents is different from that of teachers. Parents focus on conveying a critical attitude that may make it easier to debunk fake news. Teachers are more responsible for providing factual information. However, parents do not find it easy to guide their children in the world of news and in particular fake news. They feel insecure about their own knowledge and see teachers in particular as important partners in informing their children about (fake) news. (Deprez et al., 2019) (Deprez et al, 2020) (Nuytten, 2021)

In another survey published in June 2018, the Artevelde Hogeschool polled Flemish young people for their news literacy. The poll surveyed 641 young people between 15 and 24 years with just over half of them studying in secondary education (59.6%). At the time of the survey for almost half of Flemish young people, Facebook was the main source of news. Young people seem to consume the news offered on Facebook like "snacks": about half of the respondents (47%) open a news item on Facebook, but only partially read or view it. One quarter of the BSO (Vocational secondary education) students (25.8%) do not even click the message but read just the title. Furthermore, it appears that students deal fairly passively with current affairs on Facebook. They almost never share (71%) or forward a link (about 1/3 indicated they do this once a month). Recognising fake news on this social networking site and in other (social) media is not self-evident for young people. Often they rely on their own personal logic, background knowledge or intuition to determine the correctness of a news story. (Deprez et al., 2018)

Remediation and education

In a long article in the Flemish teachers' magazine "Klasse" Annelore Deprez (UGent and Arteveldehogeschool) argues for a proactive attitude of teachers against fake news and disinformation. (Deprez, 2020) Only 1 in 5 young people can give a clear answer to the question "Fake news, what exactly is it? Can you give an example? Or tell us what impact it has on you?" Young people find it very difficult to expose fake news. That is a problem. Today, news comes in mainly through social media. This evolution is strongest among young people. They rarely watch TV, barely read the newspaper. The news comes to them through social media, they do not search for it.

When scrolling through their timeline, they just read the headline of a news article. Social media algorithms fill their timeline with the posts they find interesting. The result is that everyone isolates themselves in their own right and therefore also becomes more vulnerable to disinformation. Annelore Deprez has noticed that "...the demand for teaching material on fake news is increasing as a result. But you should not park that competence in one subject: that critical view must be woven into the entire curriculum. Show how misleading graphs can be and how you can prove everything with numbers. That you can minimize or dramatize the death rate from corona by comparing it to your entire population, or only to those who were tested? Very interesting for the mathematics lesson."

When making important decisions, people look for information before making a decision. If teachers train the critical eye of their students today, hopefully they will make the right decisions tomorrow based on correct information. That is why teaching about fake news and disinformation and training critical thinking is so important in the classroom. (Deprez, 2020)

:: Part 2 ::

Educational interventions in Belgium (Flanders)

Objectives of the inventory

In this report we describe what educational approaches / interventions are available in the Flemish context, which are ultimately targeted at adolescents between 12-15 years and that are aimed at the fight against disinformation and fake news. We conclude this part with recommendations that can be derived from these interventions for the development of interventions to counter fake news aimed at this age group.

Research results

We collected the information and data in a spreadsheet template we copied from the Dutch spreadsheet: "20210506_Overzicht interventies nepnieuws en desinformatie.xlsx" and described the information according to the following categories:

Name of intervention	
Publisher	
Type of organisation	
Description	
Themes	(Topic in focus e.g. fake news, Covid-19, disinformation...)
Type of intervention	workshop game single lesson lesson package vlog/video checklist online guide

Target group		According to age or type
Learning environment	School	
	Home	
	Library	
	Publishers' location	
	Other locations	
Duration		
Medium	Online	
	Offline	
Learning approach	Formal	follows a syllabus and is intentional in the sense that learning is the goal of all the activities learners engage in. Learning outcomes are measured by tests and other forms of assessment.
	Non-formal	takes place outside formal learning environments but within an organisational framework. It arises from the learner's conscious decision to master a particular activity, skill, or area of knowledge.
	Informal	takes place outside schools and colleges and arises from the learner's involvement in activities that are not undertaken with a learning purpose in mind.
	Blended learning	combines online educational materials and opportunities for interaction online with traditional place-based classroom methods.
	Active involvement	
Methodology	Debunking	exposes the false or exaggerated claims, pretensions, glamour, etc.
	Prebunking	makes people aware of potential misinformation before it is presented.
	Triangulation	applies a combination of several research or investigation methods in the study of the same phenomenon in order to come to an opinion or a conclusion.

Assumed impact

Evidence base

Price

URL

Comments



It was not always possible to make clear cut categorisations for each initiative, mainly due to a limited amount of information available, but also because many initiatives are covering multiple categories at once (for example multiple learning approaches, multiple methodologies), and often also because of the flexible or adaptive manners in which some of these could be implemented. The aspects *Type of intervention*, *Learning environment*, *Learning approach*, *Methodology*, *Assumed impact* and *Evidence base* are therefore completed to the best of our knowledge.

Number and type of interventions

Our categorisation according to the main topic or type of intervention can only be used as a basic indicator of the categories: first of all in many cases topics, type of interventions and even target groups are mixed, so it is not always easy to make a clean cut distinction between them. Secondly, some of the interventions are dynamic and change over time or according to the context of use or the requirements of the user(s). Thirdly and as a consequence of this, it would require much more in depth analysis to evaluate in how far each of the elements are central and essential to each of the interventions, or rather peripheral and secondary.

Topics

We found 39 interventions, of which the vast majority address *Fake news* (32 interventions) and/or *Disinformation* (13), in 13 cases in combination with *Covid-19* as a specific topic of the intervention. Other relevant topics are *Media literacy* in 12 cases (obviously as an overarching term), or *Digital literacy* (2 cases), or *Critical thinking* (5).

Type of interventions

Workshops (16), Online Guides (18) and Lesson Packages (14) are the most frequently used format of the interventions., but it must be added that a large part of interventions (14 out of 39) use a combination of formats: for example, the Edubox by Flemish public broadcaster VRT is a combination of workshop, (interactive) video and online guide or lesson package that can be implemented as a classroom activity or as a self-learning activity.

Type of intervention	Number
Online guide	18
Workshop	16
Lesson package	14
Vlog/video	9
Single lesson	7
Game	6
Checklist	4

Table 01: Number of intervention types

Single lessons are almost always in the format of workshops, lesson packages are mostly combinations of activities. Online guides are as often used in combination with another type of intervention as they are used as a stand-alone intervention.

Target group

Two third of the interventions (26 out of 39) are aimed at young people themselves, in 2 cases in combination or in addition to their teachers. In 13 out 39 cases the intervention is aimed in the first place at informing or training the adults (teachers, trainers, librarians, volunteers, youth workers, parents) how to work with young people in tackling fake news or disinformation. Of course in these cases, the final target user is the adolescent or young person.

In the following table, we provide an overview of the age of the targeted group of young people.

Intervention 1	6 7 8 9 10 11	12 13 14 15 16 17 18	
Intervention 2	8 9 10 11	12 13 14 15 16 17 18	19 20 21 22 23 24 25
Intervention 3	8 9 10 11	12 13 14 15 16 17 18	
Intervention 4	10 11 12		
Intervention 5	10 11	12 13 14 15	19 20 21 22 23 24
Intervention 6	10 11	12 13 14 15 16 17 18	
Intervention 7	10 11	12 13 14 15 16 17 18	
Intervention 8	10 11	12 13 14 15 16 17 18	
Intervention 9	10 11	12 13 14 15 16 17 18	
Intervention 10		12 13 14 15 16 17 18	
Intervention 11		12 13 14 15 16 17 18	
Intervention 12		12 13 14 15 16 17 18	
Intervention 13		12 13 14 15 16 17 18	
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Intervention 19		13 14 15 16 17 18	
Intervention 20		13 14 15 16 17 18	
Intervention 21		13 14 15 16 17 18	
Intervention 22		13 14 15 16 17 18	
Intervention 23		14 15 16 17 18	
Intervention 24		15 16 17 18	
Intervention 25		15 16 17 18	19 20 21 22 23 24
Intervention 26		15 16 17 18	19 20 21 22 23 24

Table 02: Age distribution of (primary) target group

Environment

The largest number of interventions take place in an organised context, e.g. in schools or public libraries. Self-learning activities take place mainly at home. Other locations can be youth organisations or youth camps. 16 interventions can be deployed at two or more locations (e.g. at school in a group context, at home in a self-learning context), which again indicates a certain degree of flexibility for the implementation of a number of the interventions.

Environment of the intervention	Number
School	18
Public library	16
Home	11
Other locations	6
Publishers location	2

Table 03: Environment of the interventions

Duration

This category does not provide much significant information about the quality or nature of the interventions, depending on the type of intervention the duration varies between 1 min for a short video (“Tegen FAKE NEWS! Leer nep nieuws herkennen”) to several weeks for a workshop with a series of training sessions and self-learning activities (“Mediacoach” by Mediawijs).

Delivery medium

15 interventions are off-line, physical, or face-to-face interventions, 13 interventions are hybrid interventions and use both on- and off-line delivery mechanisms, 11 interventions are delivered exclusively online.

Medium of delivery	Number
Off-line	15
Hybrid (Off-line + Online)	13
Online	11

Table 04: Medium of delivery

Learning approach

The categorisation according to learning approach is difficult because of the flexibility with which they can be adopted in the learning environment. Only a few (9) refer explicitly to learning outcomes that correspond with learning objectives as expressed in the national curriculum and are therefore considered formal learning interventions. A larger number of interventions are self-learning at the own initiative of the learners or offered in a non-formal context e.g. as youth work activities or activities that can be adapted for use in the classroom, but without explicit reference to the curriculum. The latter does of course not prohibit the teachers from applying these interventions in a formal learning context, but this is difficult for us to assess.

Learning approach	Number
Informal	17
Non-formal	15
Formal	9

Table 05: Learning approach

The relatively high number of active learning (13 out of 39) is easy to understand because of the larger number of workshop-type interventions.

Methodology

Based on the available information, we distinguish the following methods with regard to learning about fake news and disinformation:

Method to cope with fake news and disinformation	Number
Prebunking	30
Debunking	6
Triangulation	4

Table 06: Method of tackling fake news and disinformation

It should be noted here that most interventions are combining the methods to some extent, for the sake of categorisation here we categorised them according to the main methodological component.

Impact and evidence base

The large majority of interventions do not publicly provide any documentation of an impact assessment of their interventions or of the pedagogical or scientific foundations of their interventions. Exceptionally well documented with pedagogical and scientific background information are the Edubox programs from VRT and a number of initiatives by Mediawijs, in some cases in collaboration with the Flemish universities and with the Ministry of Education. Mediawijs, the agency founded by the Flemish government and the Interuniversity Research Centre imec, initiates or participates in at least 13 of the initiatives and acts as a partner or clearing house for many others as well. Mediawijs has built the necessary expertise over the last years to support all media literacy initiatives in Flanders and has contributed to leveraging the quality of the interventions. Nevertheless, we did not find any in-depth evaluation of the interventions related to fake news or an overall impact assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions. Possible explanations for this apparent gap may be the short time span organisations had until now to develop strategies and interventions against fake news and disinformation. It is only since the beginning of 2018 that a common and wider accepted awareness has been growing about the size and importance of the issue of fake news and disinformation, which has accelerated and become more apparent due to the Covid-19 crisis.

Cost of the intervention

The large majority of interventions is free, only a small number (7 out of 39) is paid, in most cases these are workshops aimed at trainers or teachers. One case (Bibster) is a paid license game platform aimed again at adults (library staff) that enables them to build their own bespoke game based applications. The cost is in that case 260 EUROS per license.

Conclusions and recommendations

Over the last years, the media literacy community in Flanders has created a number of interventions that relate to news literacy and in many cases more specifically to disinformation and fake news targeted at young people. The most important organisers are Mediawijs, the Flemish Knowledge Center for Digital and Media Literacy of the Flemish government and imec vzw, and the Flemish public broadcaster VRT. Mediawijs acts as a hub for many media literacy initiatives and is closely involved, for example, in the interventions created by VRT (the 4 Edubox activities). Mediawijs often functions as a networking agent or enabler for collaborations between different organisations, like for example in the Kritikat project (a collaboration between Odisee, Mediawijs and OBIB from the VGC), in the NoCap project where Mediawijs collaborates with the Flemish Ministry of Education and KU Leuven and in the Nieuws in de Klas project where it collaborates with Vlaamse Nieuwsmedia, We Media, Media.21, VRT NWS and meemoo. (Nieuws in de Klas, 2021) Mediawijs provides the media literacy education expertise in many of the mentioned initiatives and as such has the potential to play a pivotal role in any project that addresses aspects of media literacy in Flanders. (Hermans et al, 2020)

Other organisations behind the initiatives we collected are in most cases NGOs and NFPs that often originate from youth work or from volunteer organisations focusing on inclusion, non-discrimination, poverty reduction, or accessibility. Examples of these are Linc vzw, Link in de Kabel, Mediaraven, Stampmedia, WatWat and de Ambrassade, often collaborating with each other or sharing their resources.

A special case is the Flemish public broadcaster VRT. The VRT Edubox initiatives are aimed at providing teaching and learning materials that can be used in formal education with adolescents or young adults. For these interventions, VRT collaborates with partners such as Mediawijs, Artevelde Hogeschool, Brightlab, Tropisch Instituut voor Geneeskunde, Vlaams Instituut voor Biotechnologie, Health House, Hannah Arendt Instituut, Tumult and Vlaams Vredesinstituut. The interventions are pedagogically well defined and supported with teaching and learning materials, the learning goals are well defined and follow the national curriculum programs and can be assessed accordingly. The high technical and didactical quality of the materials, the relevance to the official learning objectives as stated by the Ministry of Education, the widespread distribution and support make these resources the most used resources in schools (the videos used in the Edubox activities have been viewed already over 100,000 times).

Case: Edubox: Nepnieuws Speciale editie Corona

Edubox: Nepnieuws Speciale editie Corona is a classroom activity supported with didactical materials, teaching, and learning resources: students receive information about fake news and are given some tips to help them recognise fake news. Armed with this information, the students then get to work and have to distinguish between real and false news. Finally, students are offered additional information about fake news. This version is based on the Edubox

Nepnieuws but adds a special chapter on fake news related to Corona: Just like with the EDUbox Nepnieuws, young people take on the role of a "fake news detective". Using tips such as "check the date", "check the author", "check the source" they should find out which examples are real or fake. This version adds tips and examples. At the end, the user finds a QR code to a video with the solutions.

The EDUbox Nepnieuws defines explicit cross-curricular global final learning objectives for secondary education as follows: (VRT, 2020)

Pupils

Communicative ability

- can put important elements of communicative action into practice;

Creativity

- can develop and implement original ideas and solutions;
- can take steps to realise innovations;

Perseverance

- can continue to pursue a goal despite difficulties;

Empathy

- can take into account the situation, opinions, and emotions of others;

Aesthetic ability

- can experience beauty;
- can create beauty;

Explore

- use learning opportunities in various situations;

Flexibility

- are willing to adapt to changing demands and circumstances;

Initiative

- engage spontaneously;

Critical thinking

- can question data, practices, and reasoning by relevant criteria;
- are capable of weighing alternatives and making a conscious choice;
- can approach subjects from different angles;

Media literacy

- deal with media alertly;
- participate thoughtfully through the media in the public space;

Open and constructive attitude

- take into account developments in oneself and in others, in society and world;
- test your own opinion about social events and trends to different points of view;

Respect

- behave respectfully;

Collaborate

- actively contribute to the realization of common goals;

Responsibility

- take responsibility for one's own actions, in relationships with others and in society;

Self-image

- gain insight into one's own strengths and weaknesses;
- develop one's own identity as an authentic individual, belonging to different groups;

Self-sustainability

- call on social services and institutions;
- use appropriate channels for questions, problems, ideas, or express opinions;

Carefulness

- set quality standards for their own work and that of others;

Empathy

- deal with diversity;
- take care of the future of oneself and the other.

Conclusions

Fake news and disinformation have only recently started to become a real issue in Belgium. It is only since 2017 that the term fake news has become a familiar household term. In 2018 Eugénie Coche, Master's student in Informatics Law at the Universiteit van Amsterdam wrote in Mediaforum 2018-6 that fake news and disinformation in Belgium was a minor issue in Belgium when compared to other European countries. (Coche, 2018) In 2018 the Belgische Expertengroep inzake Fake news en Desinformatie reported that "so far there is no hard evidence of a strong impact in Belgium of the deliberate creation of (foreign) fake news with the aim of creating a certain atmosphere setting, nor of (foreign) campaigns using fake social media accounts." (Alaphilippe et al, 2018) However since then, and certainly since the presidency of Donald Trump and the Covid-19 Pandemic, the term has gained attention and the impact on the public has increased exponentially, also in Belgium. This significant rise of fake news and disinformation in recent years has made it critical that young people have the skills they need to identify truth and discern bias and it is in schools that the digital citizen must begin and maintain constant critical thinking in order to attain meaningful participation in their community. The ability to handle disinformation and fake news can be a key skill in a number of school subjects, e.g., History, Social Studies, Science, Religious Studies, Mathematics, Languages, and Art. (Deprez, 2020)

There is a broad offer of interventions of diverse types for young people and to a lesser extent for their teachers, youth workers, librarians, parents. The assessment of their effectiveness is a weak point, similar to many project-based interventions, there are almost no findings of impact measurement of these interventions and to get a picture of this aspect we can only rely on references to these from within other initiatives or from research documents, and in that respect the initiatives from VRT and Mediawijs are most frequently mentioned.

The majority of interventions are to be used by teachers in the classroom, but only a few of these are ready for integration in the learning curriculum. There are only a few training initiatives aimed directly at librarians. A few interventions are designed specifically for deployment within libraries as an activity for young readers, while some libraries present their readers with recommended readers or digests on the subject of fake news (for example the Ghent Public Library). (Stad Gent, 2021)

Recommendations

Compliance to learning objectives

To ensure large scale take up, we certainly recommend to ensure alignment with the (national) curriculum or concrete learning objectives as expressed in the educational networks. This may require a certain level of localisation of the intervention, not only for language but also for specific content (examples or case studies) and compliance to the learning goals. The success of an intervention like the Eduboxes from VRT and Mediawijs in Flanders are for a large part due to the very clear alignment with the

Flemish “eindtermen” (curriculum goals). This makes it attractive for teachers to deploy the intervention in the classroom.

Acceptance

Related to the compliance is the necessary acceptance by teachers of the intervention. While the effectiveness of the intervention needs to be evaluated at the level of the target users (the young people or the learners) in the end it is the teacher who will decide to use the intervention in the classroom, the teacher will need to see evidence of the effectiveness of the intervention as well as of the compliance to the learning objectives as well as the learnability and teachability of the materials (the ease with which the intervention can be applied).

Sustainability

When designing an intervention, care should be given to ensure that the intervention works as much as possible as a stand-alone activity, with good and complete support materials, with clear descriptions of learning objectives, with instructions for all users (teachers, trainers, librarians as well as the learners). In order to ensure the sustainability of the initiative it is important to also engage with teacher training organisations, both pre- and in-service, to make sure teachers are confident in their own skills and abilities to run this and similar interventions aimed at tackling fake news and disinformation.

Duration

Although that there is no strict indication of an ideal duration, we recommend to create interventions that fit easily in the classroom schedule, and that last under one hour including assessment and all parts of the activity. This may indeed limit the scope of possible interventions and the ambition to go beyond lower to medium levels of complexity of knowledge goals.

In addition to the focused learning instance, we think it is useful to train teachers to seek and take the opportunities to embed the accrued knowledge in other subjects as well, for example manipulation of graphs in Mathematics, propaganda in History, deep fakes in Arts, etc. See also next point:

Provide training for teachers

Train the teacher on media and information literacy is key to raising the profile of the issue in general in schools. Training should alert teaching staff to the importance of media, information, and news literacy for their students. The more important teachers see the area, the more they will feel the need to continuously up-date their skills themselves and it will help them integrate these issues into the curriculum of different subjects.

Type of intervention

There is no preferred choice of type of intervention. There is something to say for the choice of a game design because of its attractiveness to our specific target group, but the very specific pedagogical strengths of gaming (skill-building, increases memory capacity, computer and simulation fluency, fast strategic thinking & problem-solving,

develops hand-eye coordination, specifically beneficial for children with attention disorders) may not necessarily be the most important pedagogical levers for an intervention that aims at knowledge, skills and attitude building.

Attitude change

Simply sharing knowledge and teaching facts is never going to be a successful remedy to the scourge of disinformation and so we strongly suggest a focus on interventions that focus on positive relevant attitudes such as personal responsibility, ownership, and solidarity. By implication this means that interventions need to highlight the real and damaging effects of fake news and disinformation, so that adolescents understand not only their cause but also their effect.

Involve parents

Even if the planned intervention is relatively modest, we strongly suggest exploring the possible engagement of parents. We know from the research how important the role of parents remains even with young adolescents and so interventions that take this into account are likely to be more effective than those that do not.

Bursting the bubble

Just like adults, adolescents live in their own news bubble largely dominated by social media, hearing, seeing, and reading a narrow version of all the available news and information in ways which largely reflect their own pre-determined ideas and attitudes. Any successful intervention needs to successfully burst this bubble by making sure that not only are aware of the limitations of their bubble but are helped to develop new information seeking habits that are challenged by reliable sources from outside their bubble.

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Annex 1: Survey questions

Survey: Bestrijden van COVID-19 desinformatie bij adolescenten

De Media and Learning Association (<https://media-and-learning.eu/>) werkt mee aan een Europees onderzoek naar de impact van COVID-19 desinformatie bij 12 tot 15-jarigen. In een eerste fase gaan we op zoek naar initiatieven met betrekking tot COVID-19 desinformatie die in Vlaanderen genomen worden voor deze doelgroep. We zijn geïnteresseerd in alle projecten, zowel kleinschalige, lokale, informele projecten als grootschalige, meer formele initiatieven, zowel projecten gericht op desinformatie in het algemeen zoals bijvoorbeeld “EDUbox Nepnieuws” of specifiek op COVID-19 gerichte acties zoals #coronderwijs en #gemaskerdescholieren van het Departement Onderwijs. Als U of uw organisatie betrokken bent bij een initiatief van welke aard dan ook met betrekking tot COVID-19 desinformatie voor 12 tot 15-jarigen, mogen we U dan vragen deze korte vragenlijst in te vullen. Alle informatie is nuttig op dit ogenblik, we zullen deze informatie enkel gebruiken om daarna de relevante initiatieven gericht te onderzoeken. U mag vanzelfsprekend deze vragenlijst invullen voor elk initiatief dat U kent. U mag deze vragenlijst ook doorgeven aan collega’s in uw werkveld. Hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking. Als U wenst op de hoogte gehouden te worden van onze bevindingen, mag U uw email gegevens achterlaten op het einde van deze korte vragenlijst.

Voor dit onderzoeksproject werkt de Media and Learning Association samen met de Koninklijke Bibliotheek in Nederland, de Fundación Goteo (Spanje), Public Libraries 2030 (Brussel), de Stichting Hoger Beroepsonderwijs Haaglanden (Nederland) en het Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid.

1. Wat is de naam of titel van het initiatief ter bestrijding van COVID-19 desinformatie bij jongeren?

2. Geef een korte beschrijving van het initiatief:

3. Hoe zou U dit initiatief omschrijven? Is het een workshop? een les? een spel? een web site? een MOOC? ...

4. Welke methode gebruikt dit initiatief? Verspreiding van desinformatie voorkomen? desinformatie ontkrachten? versterken van correcte informatie? blootleggen van desinformatie processen? ...

5. Welke theoretische of onderzoeks-achtergrond ligt aan de basis van deze methode?

6. Wie is de doelgroep van deze activiteit?

7. Wie is de initiatiefnemer van deze activiteit?

8. In welke context wordt dit initiatief gebruikt? Thuis? op school? in de bibliotheek? in de media? ...

9. Heeft dit initiatief een bepaalde focus of een specifiek aandachtspunt? w

10. Wat is bij benadering de duurtijd van dit initiatief? Minuten? uren? dagen? maanden? ... w

11. Om wat voor type van activiteit gaat het? w

- Een activiteit met fysieke aanwezigheid (bv. een workshop, een spel...)
- Een digitale activiteit (vb. een webinar, een web site...)
- Een gemengd digitaal en fysiek initiatief
- Een strikt formele activiteit (vb. met registratie, onder begeleiding van vb. leerkracht, tijdens de lessen, ...)
- Een informele activiteit (vb. een sociale media actie, een web site, ...)
- Andere?

12. Als U op de hoogte wil gehouden worden van onze bevindingen, kan U uw email adres hier achterlaten:

Hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking!