



REPORT ON ROUNDTABLE: EDUCATING DIGITAL NATIVES TO BE SMART ABOUT USING MEDIA

Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Module: Media Literacy and Active Citizenship - MELI Module

Thursday, 7. 3. 2023, 16.00

Location: **Hybrid event** – participation was possible via Zoom as well as physically at School of Advanced Social Studies (FUDŠ/SASS), Leskoškova 9e, 1000 Ljubljana



The poster features a dark blue background on the left and a light blue background on the right. On the right side, a pair of hands in yellow sleeves holds a silver smartphone. Floating around the phone are icons for Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. The text is arranged as follows:

Jean Monnet
MELI MODULE

With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union 

**JEAN MONNET
MEDIA LITERACY**

OKROGLA MIZA
torek 7. 3. 2023 ob 16.00

*»Kako vzgajati in
izobraževati digitalne
domorodce, da bodo
pametni pri uporabi
digitalnih medijev?«*

Agenda:

- Introductory presentation of the MELI Module and its activities (prof. dr. Mateja Rek)
- Going digital – presenting MELI Online resources (prof. dr. Mateja Rek)
- Photo moment
- Buffett with the debate: “Meeting the stakeholders” - discussion on the topics, responses on the students/research, their role in that regard, and suggestions for further cooperation. Participants of the roundtable addressed, discuss and shared their views on:
 - who is educating our children about media and how?
 - media education in formal and informal educational system in the EU
 - media education and social inequality in the EU
 - examples of good practices of media education in the EU

Experts on media education & literacy participating in the roundtable debate:

- Maja Vreča, Arnes
- Marko Puschner, Safe.si
- Sonja Merljak Zdovc, Časoris
- Živa Ahac, Logout
- Mateja Rek, Media Literacy Infrastructure Program & MELI Module

addressed, discussed and shared their views on:

- the role of family, school and peers as stakeholders in media education
- the role of the state as a stakeholder in media education
- the state of media education in formal and informal education in Slovenia
- opportunities for improvements in media education
- examples of good practices of media education in the EU

Students enrolled in undergraduate and master study program Media and journalism, who as "digital natives" are often not part of discussions about what their media education, also had a lot to say about the topic. We were very much interested in their views on the challenges of media education in the digital world.

Introductory comments

The mass use of digital media brings a series of challenges in the area of ensuring online safety, health, relationships between people, the ability to participate in various social and economic activities, etc. In the digital age, people need specific skills that enable them to create useful media habits and develop resistance to negative phenomena of the digital media landscape, such as non-chemical addictions, hate speech, fake news or disinformation. Especially when it comes to the population of children and young people, there is a common and justified concern about the effects and long-term consequences of their (too) large media exposure and the formation of harmful digital habits. Children and adolescents often lack the maturity to make more informed decisions or recognize the positive and negative aspects of screen or online content. They are vulnerable to the risk of developing unwanted behavioral patterns because of poor choices in media habits. The family, school or peer groups can play an important role in raising and educating growing children about appropriate ways

of using digital media and understanding media messages. The mass media themselves have also become an important factor in socialization processes and at the same time a great challenge for other social groups within which socialization processes take place.

The purpose of the round table entitled: *How to raise and educate digital natives to be smart when using digital media?* was to think and discuss the state of media education in Slovenia and EU. We also discussed innovative practices in media education and good examples in dissemination of existing knowledge and learning materials to improve children's media literacy.

Roundtable created an opportunity for knowledge transfer, debate and networking, bringing together MELI Module's target groups – students, academic staff, practitioners working in the field of media literacy and civic engagement from civil society, educational institutions, public or governmental offices. Students of Media and Journalism studies, enrolled in BA and MA level of studying – were participating at the roundtable and took an active role in its organisation, debate and post-festum activities.

We especially thank - discussants in the roundtable:

- Marko Puschner (Safe.si - <https://safe.si/>)
- Maja Vreča (Arnes - <https://www.arnes.si/en/>)
- Sonja Merljak Zdovc (Časoris - <https://casoris.si/>)
- Živa Ahac (Logour - <https://www.logout.org/sl/>)
- Mateja Rek (Infrastrukturni program medijska pismenost - <http://pismenost.si/>)

who greatly contributed to information sharing and to the quality of the debate.

To provide synergies with the existing and new Jean Monnet actions, other Jean Monnet Chairs, Module, Project and Network coordinators participated (among them dr. Matevž Tomšič, head of MELIA Observatory). A total of 72 people attended the round table.

Topic: Educating digital natives to be smart about using digital media

The abilities to use digital media, to critically analyze and understand digital messages (received and generated) and to develop a meaningful and realistic response to the changeable complex digital environment, have become indispensable competences in a digital age. Societies and individuals are massively faced with the question of how to keep pace with the rapid changes of digital media and how to shape upbringing and educational processes, both in the context of primary and secondary socialization, and in the context of lifelong learning, which will enable people to form useful digital habits, norms, values and digital-related professional and life-related competences. A meaningful digital education promotes the socially beneficial use of new digital technologies, conveys relevant skills, competences and motivation for active participation in the economic and political processes. It guides people to active, responsible and competent use of the digital media and teaches them how to avoid the pitfalls and dangers that lurk in the digital environment.

Media-literate children and young people have greater opportunities to develop resistance to negative phenomena in the modern digital media landscape, such as security and privacy issues, the dangers of virtual relationships and communication, hate speech, fake news or disinformation, etc. Both parents

and schools must include the media dimension in educational processes so that children can function meaningfully in the digital media environment.

Children and adolescents are an important target population for digital upbringing and education activities. Digital media have become a regular part of children's every day, even to the extent, that many of children spend more time with digital media than in the physical presence of their fellow people. Even babies are often confronted with digital media for longer periods of time daily, although the paediatricians and psychologists strongly discourage the use of digital media by children under two years of age.

There is a common and justified concern about the effects and long-term consequences of children's (too) large media exposure. Children and adolescents lack the maturity that would allow them to make more informed decisions or recognize the positive and negative aspects of screen or online content. They are vulnerable to the risk of developing unwanted behavioral patterns because of poor choices in media habits. The family, school or peer groups can play an important role in raising and educating growing children about appropriate ways of using digital media and understanding media messages. Even the mass media themselves have become an important factor in socialization processes and a great challenge for other social groups within which socialization processes take place. As children grow up, so does the amount of time they spend with digital media. Online media increasingly influence the shaping of their life experiences and offer many opportunities to learn, create, connect, play and have fun. But heavy, intense, reckless or uninformed use of digital media can have a negative impact on a child's development.

Adults play different roles in the digital education of children and adolescents. As parents or family members, we influence a child's knowledge of the digital media through examples, conversations and experiences. We ourselves are role models that children imitate.

Teachers, who use, think about and discuss the digital media in the educational process, can also play an important role in promoting children's digital literacy. Parents see schools as an important actor to transfer knowledge and provide information to parents on how to protect children on the Internet, but, on the other hand, they think that teachers are, together with parents, responsible for children's media education. However, schools differ significantly in their capacity to deliver digital education, providing trainings for either children, teachers or parents causing digital divides because of inequality in digital education.

The role of parents and relevant other adults in guiding children's digital habits and the way they think about media content is emphasized in childhood. As children grow older, especially during the transition to adolescence, the importance of peers begins to grow. Peer relationships that significantly influence digital habits and perception of digital content are becoming more independent of adult guidance and control. Even the digital media themselves have become an important factor in socialization as well as digital upbringing processes.

Policies need to ensure that schools prioritise their links with parents and communities and improve their communication strategies to align school and parental efforts in media education. The more effective strategies target parents who are more difficult to reach and identify and encourage

individuals from the same communities to mentor children (OECD, 2012). Building links with the communities around schools, business and civic stakeholders, can also strengthen media education efforts.

This deficiency of formal educational system is partly compensated by projects, activities and courses delivered by NGOs or other service providers (many of them are financed by the funds of the European Union), that schools can cooperate with to deliver up to date knowledge on media related topics (like safety on internet, film education etc.) to their pupils or in some cases also parents and teachers. However, not all schools in Slovenia engage in such activities. Especially in more rural areas, such cooperation with outside sources of knowledge on media is not as present as in urban centers.

Guidance on how to use, interpret and create media messages in their home environment is also highly depended on factors like level of their parents' education, socioeconomic status of the family and parents own media habits. Disadvantaged parents tend to be less involved in their children's media education, for multiple economic and social reasons. Policies need to ensure that schools prioritize their links with parents and communities and improve their communication strategies to align school and parental efforts in media education. The more effective strategies target parents who are more difficult to reach and identify and encourage individuals from the same communities to mentor children (OECD, 2012). Building links with the communities around schools, business and civic stakeholders, can also strengthen media education efforts.

Examples of best practice:

Časoris

Časoris is an award-winning free online newspaper for children. Their mission is to guide and inspire children in making informed decisions and becoming informed, active, compassionate and responsible citizens of the world. Children want to know what is going on around them. They offer them news they can trust – timely, relevant articles on current affairs for children, by children and in the name of children. Information is put in context and presented in kids-friendly language. They support them to understand the news and current affairs, to critically think about what they're reading, and to apply this knowledge to the real world. Every article is accompanied by questions for additional reflection and a glossary. They believe they have stories to tell and we also offer them a platform for their voices – a place to discuss issues that are important to them. They believe in unbiased, accurate and ethical journalism. Without quality journalism, there is no democracy nor freedom.

How it all started ...

Časoris was created in April of 2015 – in the aftermath of the January's terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo in Paris. At the time, many parents were wondering how to explain what happened to their children. An article about how a French newspaper for children did just that reminded us that we have no such medium for children and their parents in Slovenia and it encouraged us to launch Časoris. Today, it is considered as Positive Online Content by Better Internet for Kids. Časoris is published by Časoris, Information and Education Institute. It is edited by Sonja Merljak Zdovc, and a team of journalists, copyeditors, teachers and other professionals contributes regularly. Additionally, children share their stories in a special section.

In a special section we also publish additional information for parents and teachers.

Časoris is dedicated to encouraging a supportive and inclusive culture amongst the whole workforce. It is within our best interest to promote diversity and eliminate discrimination in the workplace. Therefore, Časoris has signed the Diversity Charter of Slovenia, and the editor Sonja Merljak Zdovc is also one of the Slovenian diversity ambassadors.

Further info are available on: <https://casoris.si/about-us/>

Logout

In order to establish and maintain balanced use of technology, it is important to reflect on our daily use of it and what impact it has on our lives. For some people, this is enough to make necessary adjustments, while for others more structured and professional support in a form of counseling, advice from experts, support groups, or treatment is needed.

Logout provides free psychological help and support to girls and boys suffering from the mental health issues caused by social media, digital burnout, digital addiction and to victims of online abuse as well. Their mission is on improving the digital well-being of all people especially youngsters by providing treatment, help, information, education, and raising awareness on balanced and healthy use of media and technology.

They strongly believe every digital environment, metaverse space should be mental health friendly. One of our goals is to open an inpatient rehab clinic in the near future. Maybe even in the metaverse.

Further info are available on: <https://www.logout.org/en/home>

Safer Internet Centre Slovenia

Safer Internet Centre Slovenia is the national project promoting and ensuring a better internet for kids. The project is co-financed by the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA), in Slovenia financial support also comes from the Government Information Security Office. The project is run by a consortium of partners coordinated by Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana, Academic and Research Network of Slovenia (Arnes), Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth (ZPMS) and Youth Information and Counselling Center of Slovenia (MISSS).

Safer Internet Centre Slovenia has three components:

- *Awareness Centre Safe.si*
- *Helpline Tom telefon*
- *Hotline Spletno oko*

Further info are available on: <https://safe.si/english>

Concluding remarks

Impact of MELI Module 3. roundtable was as follows:

- promotion of innovative teaching methods, techniques and technologies
- connecting academia to professionals, policy makers and civil society in the field of media literacy
- increased ability and interest in studying EU issues

- academic staff improved their experience in terms of working with different stakeholders, providing practical recommendations and gaining new ideas for applied research
- academic staff deepened their understanding of the relation of their EU related study courses with the crucial practical issues.

Impact on the students and learners benefiting from the MELI Module was as follows:

- through their presentation of the research and discussion within the roundtable, students were engaged in the learning-by-doing process, gaining their research experience, becoming more familiar with EU related content, concerning digital single market, and becoming more aware of how their academic skills can affect the other stakeholders and the community
- students gain additional skills relevant for their further professional and career development.

Impact on other organisations and individuals involved at local, regional, and national levels:

- networking, relationship building among relevant stakeholders in the field of media literacy
- knowledge transfers, good practices' exchange
- innovative teaching practices were exchanged between participants from FAM and other Slovenian HEIs, to identify cases of good practice, which affects the pedagogic practices of the other Slovenian and non-Slovenian academic institutions, particularly in the field of media studies
- local, regional and national representatives of the civil society were engaged in co-creative dialogue
- they become more familiar with the recent advances in the academic sphere related to the digital single market in the EU and new practical solutions for mitigating negative consequences of disinformation and fake news for democracy, active citizenship and good governance in the EU.

The participants were satisfied with the round table, which is also evident from the survey data intended for the evaluation of the event.