

# The Youth are Ready to Challenge Disinformation

After the European Elections, young liberal leaders met in **Ljubljana, Slovenia**, with a shared aim and objective of exploring methods to **empower young people** to remain at the forefront of the path to a liberal Europe. Discussions over the course of the two day meeting explored best practice and experiences to tackle disinformation, populism and methods to make Europe feel connected and relevant to young people in each of our home countries.

There were significant inputs surrounding the new political space we have entered in the digital age, and what our campaigns and our policies look like in the future as we navigate this new world. Importantly, the **national differences and experiences** of the participants were kept in mind as we navigated discussions, to ensure a wide representation of perspectives as we came together to find a shared vision of best practice to tackle populism, misinformation and disinformation.



## Challenges in Media Consumption and Information Trust

There's increasing distrust in the media due to a lack of comprehensive coverage, leading to scepticism even towards research and reporting. The fast-paced circulation of information on social media also complicates discerning credible news from misinformation. A sense of feeling overwhelmed by the volume of media to verify, plus the spread of disinformation on a multi-platform level (thus negating the traditional rule of checking for three sources before accepting a new piece of information), was cited as a concern.

While the focus of our discussion was centred on youth, it was vitally noted and agreed that older and younger generations face challenges in media literacy. Older generations are more likely to quickly believe AI-generated images, while younger individuals rely heavily on platforms like TikTok for information, often without verifying sources. With the rapid strides that AI is taking, along with the knowledge that many are using social media as a news source, we see the need to be proactive in restoring trust by living best practices in our use of media as young politicians and youth political organisations.

## To this regard, our young European liberal leaders believe that:

- Liberals should promote open, transparent communication in politics by including clear context and making use of straight forward language.
- Liberals should foster the ethical use of AI in content creation by using labelling of generated visual media and encouraging human checks on content.
- Supporting nuanced conversations in public and/or trusted media by addressing genuine concerns of the voter while encouraging trust through the avoidance of moralistic messaging.
- Encouraging bipartisan efforts to define what constitutes reliable news sources, bridging the gap between different political ideologies and reducing polarisation in media consumption.

## Strategies for Improving Media Literacy and Regulation

To combat misinformation, we explored methods to enhance transparency and accountability. Media Literacy skills give consumers of media the ability to discern real content from misleading one, and also give tools to take actions which can enhance the transfer of online information into the real world. What was noted quite loudly in discussion, was the perception that media literacy is lacking across Europe, and the expectation for media users to seek out training and education for this on their own is unreasonable and ineffective.

Our discussions around regulation, particularly of popular platforms like TikTok, emphasised the need for careful, thoughtful approaches without stifling freedom of expression. We note the importance of open accessibility on these platforms to create, but also importantly accountability when media is published, which constitutes a real risk to the person on target for disinformation, for example when it comes to defamation, hate speech and publication of personal private information.

## To this regard, our young European liberal leaders believe that:

- Liberals should encourage the implementation of education programs aimed at improving media literacy, encouraging critical thinking, and teaching the importance of fact-checking among both young and older generations.
- Liberals should lead the way in providing sources for our information we publish online to help assist with media literacy.
- Social media companies should monitor the use of malicious disinformation to mislead their users, particularly when it comes to posing significant human risk in transfer to real world events.
- Developing realistic regulations to limit the spread of fake news and AI-generated disinformation is needed, while carefully ensuring these policies don't undermine free speech or lead to government overreach.



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