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MEDIA LITERACY PROJECT YOUTHINK



Goals

Increase youth resilience to disinformation and political manipulation

Enhance youth media literacy and critical thinking skills

Duration

May 2021 – May 2026

USAID Funding

\$4.4 million

Implementing Partner

IREX

In collaboration with:

- Macedonian Institute for Media
- Institute for Communication Studies
- Youth Education Forum

Key National Partners

- Ministry of Education & Science
- Bureau for Development of Education
- National Examination Center
- Universities
- Youth Clubs

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BACKGROUND

Since 2018, North Macedonia has been ranked among the European countries which are least resilient to malign influence from disinformation campaigns. This leads to societal divisions, lack of trust, polarization, and reduced social cohesion. At the same time, there is recognition that to become involved in and contribute to democratic processes, all citizens—especially youth—should have highly developed media literacy and critical thinking skills as a foundation for active participation in society. USAID contributes to North Macedonia's efforts to empower youth to take an active role in the country's development.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The program enables youth to distinguish high-quality, fact-based information from that which is biased, poorly researched, false, or malign. The program integrates critical information engagement and media literacy competencies in the country's primary and secondary school curricula in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Bureau for Development of Education, and higher education institutions, including pre- and in-service teacher training institutions and journalism schools. To support media literacy and critical thinking through non-formal education, the program works with a network of youth clubs to provide peer-to-peer training, online courses, and blended learning opportunities. The program provides youth the opportunity to practice these new skills and use information to form, present, and defend positions on issues of concern to them through constructive participation in decision-making processes. Youth also produce high-quality, appealing media content and reach audiences through digital short film festivals, municipal debates, and competitions. The program enhances the quality, quantity, and relevance of media information targeting youth by strengthening training offered to journalists, both through the country's journalism schools and by honing the skills of young practicing journalists. All program activities are carried out under the guidance of an advisory board composed of youth representing diverse groups. The advisory board participates in co-designing, co-leading, and decision-making processes for all project activities, including training, grant competitions, recruitment, and outreach efforts.

EXPECTED RESULTS AND IMPACT

- Youth will be empowered to assess the value, authenticity, authority, and intention of the information they encounter. They will have a deeper understanding of the relationships between media, audiences, and information.
- Media literacy will be more integrated into education from primary school through higher education as well as pre-service teacher training, and more opportunities will be available for students and other young adults to apply these skills.
- Promotion of media literacy through non-formal education (e.g., skill-building through youth clubs, professional development, and young parent resources) and through public media messaging will be increased.
- Young practicing journalists will provide more relevant and higher quality information targeting youth in the media.



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