DIGITAL MEDIA LITERACY

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

# Digital Media Literacy **Report**

## SLOVENIA

# *Digital Media Literacy Report*

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***2020***

## Overview

The aim of this report is to analyse the results of a survey on digital media literacy among youth in Slovenia that was part of the Erasmus+ project 'Digital media literacy for youth employment and social realisation'. The survey was distributed between February and June 2020 among young people aged 14-25. It was anonymous and several questions were based on the digital platform https://digital-competence.eu/. This report presents and evaluates the results of the survey and researches the specific country context and contextual factors that influenced the results, such as national school curricula in digital media literacy and national educational policies.

A total of 415 respondents participated in the survey. 87.9% of the respondents were born between 2001 and 2004 (age 15 – 19), corresponding with the age level of secondary school students in Slovenia, with additional 4.8% born in the years 2000 and 2005 and presumably also secondary school students; 6.1% of the respondents were 21 and older and 1% did not specify their year of birth.

The majority of the survey answers came from secondary students of six institutes:

- School Center for Biotechnics and Tourism Grm;
- Biotechnical Educational Center Ljubljana;
- School Centre for Postal Services, Economics and Telecommunications Ljubljana;
- Waldorf School Ljubljana;
- Student Home Anton Martin Slomšek; and
- Jeglič Student Home.

Of these, three are public technical and vocational secondary schools, one is a private general secondary school, and two are private Catholic student dormitories for students who study at Diocesan classical gymnasiums. Four are located in the capital city of Ljubljana, one in Maribor, the second largest city and the seat of Styria (Eastern Slovenia region), and one in Novo mesto, the 7th largest city and the seat of Lower Carniola (South-eastern Slovenia region). The four schools are all located in urban developed regions of Slovenia, but the two student homes primarily host students from suburban and rural areas away from their place of studies.

School Center Grm offers secondary programs in the fields of agriculture, horticulture, biotechnics, food technology, nature conservation, tourism, and hospitality. Biotechnical Educational Center Ljubljana offers secondary programs in the fields of biotechnology, veterinary technology, food science, nutrition (butcher, baker, etc.), nature protection, hospitality, and tourism. School Center for Postal Services, Economics and Telecommunications Ljubljana offers secondary programs in the fields of telecommunications, economy, electrical engineering and electronic communications. Waldorf Secondary School and Diocesan classical gymnasiums offer general secondary programs, known as 'gymnasiums' in Slovenia. A classical gymnasium differs from a general

secondary school in the emphasis on humanities and social sciences, especially Latin, history and philosophy.

## Country context

In Slovenia, media literacy is defined in Article 11 of the Act on Audiovisual Media Services, which states that "in accordance with the law governing the media, the Republic of Slovenia promotes media literacy, which includes skills, knowledge and understanding that enables users to use media and audio-visual media services efficiently and safely." [1]

Media content is included in Slovenian school curricula in several ways; as an elective subject *Education for the media* in elementary schools, as part of the elective subject *Active citizenship* in secondary schools [2], as a recognised secondary school program *Media technician*, and in various University study programs: *Media and Communication Studies*; *Journalism* at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana, *Communication and the Media* at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Primorska.

> *Education for the media* is an optional subject in the higher grades of elementary school in Slovenia, covering print, TV, and radio (students can choose print in the 7th grade, radio in the 8th grade, and TV in the 9th grade). Internet is included within the subject that covers TV. The subject includes 1 pedagogical hour per week. This subject can be taught by Slovenian language teachers and by teachers who graduated from communication science, cultural studies, journalism or sociology [3]. However, the emphasis of the subject is on education about the media, and not *media literacy* specifically. Nevertheless, teachers agree that the most important part of the *Education for the media* subject is teaching students how to critically evaluate contents of mass media [4].Critics emphasize that the subject *Education for the media* does not include sufficient amount of hours to have a noticeable impact on students [4], and teachers do not have enough time to teach the subject effectively. Training of teachers for the subject poses a significant problem [3]; research shows that more impact has to be put on increasing the media literacy of adults, especially teachers who pass on their knowledge of the media [3].
>
> *Media technician* is a recognised vocational secondary school program, offered by five secondary schools in Slovenia [5], none of which were part of the survey sample in this project. Among the key learning objectives, the *Media technician* program includes skills for using modern information and communication technologies, skills for problem solving and self-expression through the media (content creation), knowledge about protecting privacy and personal data, and skills in information and data literacy (searching, evaluating, managing and using data and critical thinking about the information) [6].

Outside of formal curricula, several media literacy initiatives have been implemented in the public and nongovernmental sectors. Some of them are presented below.

> Časoris (*eng*. *News-cartoon*), Information and Education Institute, has developed an online media portal for children and is the leading NGO in providing media literacy to

children in Slovenia. Časoris was created in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo in Paris. At the time, many parents were wondering how to explain what happened to their children and that reminded the institute that we have no such medium for children and their parents in Slovenia and it encouraged the launch of Časoris. In 2019, Časoris became a finalist of the first European Media Literacy Award. The institute has published a manual 'Children and the media: searching for truth in the world of news' [6] in cooperation with the Slovenian Association of Journalists, an educational video about fake news [7] and a leaflet on spotting fake news [8]. They also regularly post articles about media literacy for children on their online media portal [9]. In cooperation with the Dutch NGO DROG, they have translated and published the Slovenian version of an online game about recognising fake news [10], funded by the Dutch Journalism Fund.

Pismenost.si (*eng. literacy.si*) is Slovenian central online portal on media literacy, run by the Infrastructural program of Faculty for media with the aim of collecting, managing and archiving data on media literacy in Slovenia to enable comparative positioning in the European and global environment [11]. The infrastructural program offers support for research at the Faculty for media as well as in other national and international programs for media and communication research. Gathered and publicly published data presents a basis for different research projects in Slovenia and abroad. *Literacy.si* has published several reports on media literacy, including reports on media literacy among elementary and secondary school students, the elderly, and pre-school children. Their *Report on media literacy among secondary school students* included a sample of 818 secondary school students in Slovenia and has been analysed within this report and compared to the findings of the survey of YDML project in the following chapter on the presentation of project results.

Safer Internet Centre Slovenia is a national project promoting and ensuring a better internet for children [12]. The project is co-financed by the European Union's Connecting Europe programme and the Slovenian Ministry of Public Administration. 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: Online Awareness Centre Safe.si, Helpline Tom telefon (offers support with cyber bullying, internet addiction, internet safety, etc.), Hotline Spletno oko (*eng. Online* eye, anonymous reporting on illegal online contents such as child pornography and hate speech). The project raises awareness of children, teenagers, parents, teachers and social workers about safe and responsible use of internet and new technologies and equips them with knowledge and tools for guiding, empowering and helping children and teenagers in the digital world.

Logout.si is the first Slovenian outpatient clinic for digital addiction and online abuse [13], run by Institute Nora, Center for Modern addictions (*Zavod Nora, Center sodobnih zasvojenosti*). It offers support to people addicted to digital technology, help

for victims of online abuse and violence, preventive e-safety programs for the whole family, and support groups for parents and partners, children and young people. It operates in four Slovenian cities: Ljubljana, Celje, Izola, and Radeče.

Sio.si is the Slovenian portal on education, offering a catalogue of trainings - seminars, workshops and online courses - and support on online schooling and virtual materials, financed by the Slovenian Ministry for education, science and sports, the National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, and the Academic and Research Network of Slovenia (ARNES). They have prepared a set of recommendations and didactic materials for teachers to implement a curriculum on 'The role of media in the modern society' for secondary school students, based on the topic of media literacy [14].

Mipi.si is an online portal on media and information literacy run by the Agency for Communication Networks and Services of the Republic of Slovenia (AKOS) [15]. Its aim is to inform the public about the importance of critical and thoughtful usage of media contents and digital technologies. Its main topics are media and digital literacy, internet safety, inappropriate digital contents, and children & media.

The Academic and Research Network of Slovenia (ARNES) has been organising an annual online course on safe use of internet and modern technologies, especially for teachers and educators [16].

Danes je nov dan, Inštitut za druga vprašanja (*eng. Today is a new day, Institute for other studies* [19] has a platform existing in two languages, Slovenian and English. Their focus is on (digital) political participation, transparency, and public oversight. They support active citizenship and critical thought through commenting on various political issues, producing videos, articles and tools, all stored in an open source library. Among the tools they provide are *Newsgradient,* which highlights the differences in media coverage of the most important events, and *Media scanner*, which was developed to aid researchers and journalists in identifying critical points in (transcribed) spoken media statements to help spot inconsistencies.

The focus of these initiatives is mainly internet safety, hate speech and online abuse, internet addiction, and fake news. These corresponded with the YDML project topics of responsible use of technologies & health and communication and netiquette, but there is a lack of focus on promotion of critical thinking and creation of content.

## Presentation of the results

Respondents answered 25 questions on their behavioural patterns (use of digital technology), communication, responsible use of technology and health, attitude towards sources (critical thinking) and content creation. Three were multiple choice questions about what devices and social media respondents use and their preferred method of getting in touch with friends, two were open-ended questions about the purpose of use of phone and computer devices, and 20 were questions that used a 6-point Likert scale to evaluate their agreement with the question (where 1 was 'strongly disagree' and 6 was 'strongly agree').

The 6-point Likert scale meant that the middle option of 'neither agree nor disagree' was not available, thus removing the neutral option to take when a respondent was unsure. Respondents generally avoided using extreme response categories (central tendency bias) and tended to over-report desirable behaviour on questions concerning netiquette and responsible use of technologies (social desirability bias). It was therefore especially important to pay attention to nuances; how many respondents chose the highest (or lowest) option that implied mastery of a skill or knowledge (to somewhat eliminate the central tendency bias), and where did the majority of the respondents choose on the lower (3 or less) or higher (4 or more) half (to somewhat eliminate the social desirability bias).

***Behavioural patterns (Use of digital technology)***

98.8% of the respondents regularly use their phone, 69.2% regularly use their laptop, 21.4% regularly use a desktop computer, 7.5% regularly use a tablet and 1.4% (6 respondents) regularly use a Chromebook. The social media that respondents use the most are Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, YouTube, Skype, and TikTok (in that order). The majority of respondents stay in contact with their friends by meeting face-to-face (84.8%), by phone (71.1%) and by Facebook messenger (47.7%).

Only half of the respondents like to stay up to date with new technologies and like to experiment with new digital devices and applications and 1 out of 4 do not find it easy to edit advanced settings on digital devices, online services and applications.

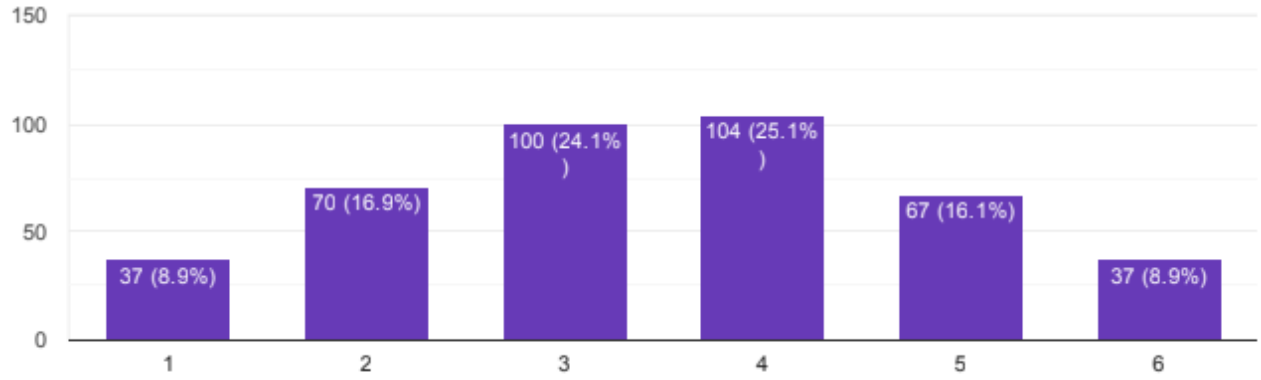


*Figure 1: I love to stay up to date with the new technology and like to experiment with new digital devices and applications.*

Communication (calling, talking with friends, texting) is the most frequently chosen answer to the open-ended question about what do respondents usually use their phone for, followed by social networks, video games, fun and free time, school, and photos (browsing and sharing). Only seven respondents use their phone to gather information and only three use it to follow the media and news. The most frequently chosen answer to the open-ended question about what do respondents usually use their computer for is school (homework, seminar work, creating pr esentations for school), followed by watching films and series, playing video games, and listening to music. Only eight respondents use their computer to gather information and only three use it to follow the news and stay informed.

The results of this cluster show that only few respondents use their devices to gather information, follow the news and stay informed. This corresponds with the results in the following clusters, especially the cluster *Attitude towards sources (critical thinking)*.

However, this does not correspond with the *literacy.si* report on media literacy among secondary school students, where 64% of the respondents said that they use their computer to read news and 87.7% use it to search for information. There could be several reasons for this discrepancy – one is that the *literacy.si* report data was based on a survey conducted in 2013 and computer usage could have shifted in the 7 years since then. The difference could also be attributed to different question forms – in the YDML survey this was an open-ended question where respondents only chose the activities they use the computer for *usually,* and the *literacy.si* data comes from a multiple choice question where respondents could choose all the pre-selected activities they use their computer for.

***Communication (Netiquette, etc.)***

The response to questions concerning communication and netiquette was overwhelmingly positive, with 80% or more of the respondents choosing 4 or more on questions regarding their understanding of the effects of communicating through different types of media, evaluating the recipients and tailoring their communication accordingly, and considering what personal information to share online.

It is interesting to compare the results of this research with the results of the *literacy.si* survey on media literacy among secondary school students [11], where a surprising 92.7% of respondents said that they have published photos in a provocative pose despite having doubts. This question corresponds with two questions in this project survey; question on considering what personal information to share online in this cluster and question on how online activities can affect life and reputation of the respondent and others in the cluster of responsible use of technologies & health. Further research is needed on the topic of sharing personal information and consequences of that action; however, there are already several public and nongovernmental initiatives working on the topic of internet safety in Slovenia, therefore this report does not recommend internet safety to be a priority topic.

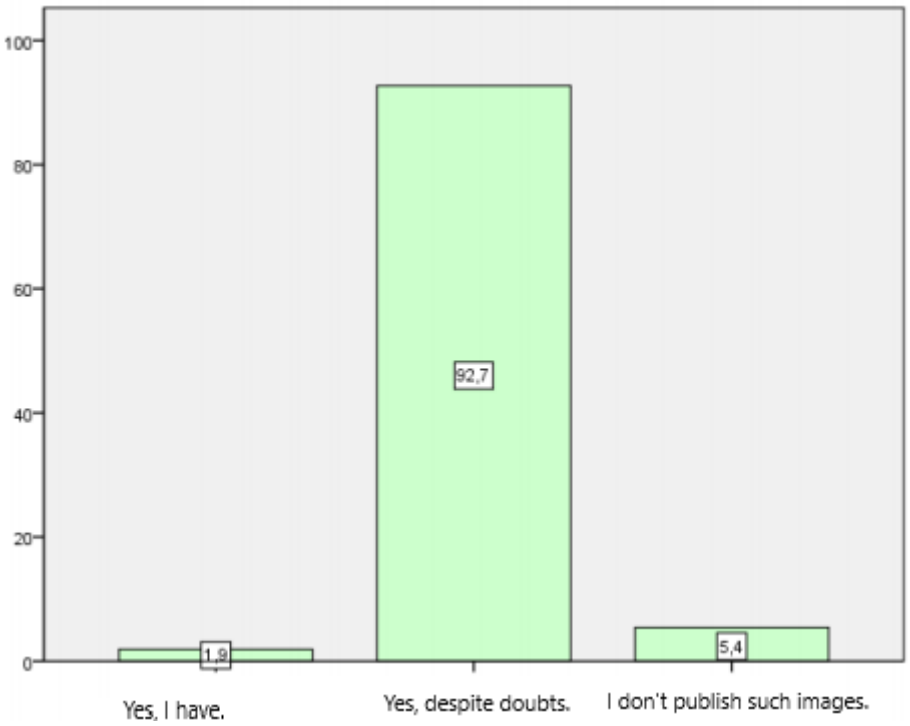


*Figure 2: Question "Have you published photos in a provocative pose (inadequately dressed, with alcohol, drugs, etc)?" in the literacy.si survey. [11]*

70% or more of the respondents chose 4 or more on questions regarding choosing the most suitable type of media to achieve the desired result and understanding how social media influence different forms of communities and democracy. It is notable that while the majority of the respondents chose a high ranking on these questions, only 17.3% chose 6 on understanding how social media influence different forms of communities and democracy and only 18.6% chose 6 on choosing the most suitable type of media to achieve the desired result. In practice this means that more than 1 out of 4 participants didn't know how to choose the most suitable media to achieve the desired result and how social media influence communities and democracy and less than 1 out of 4 participants mastered that knowledge. These are therefore the two topics we would recommend that respondents would benefit from in the proposed learning scenarios.

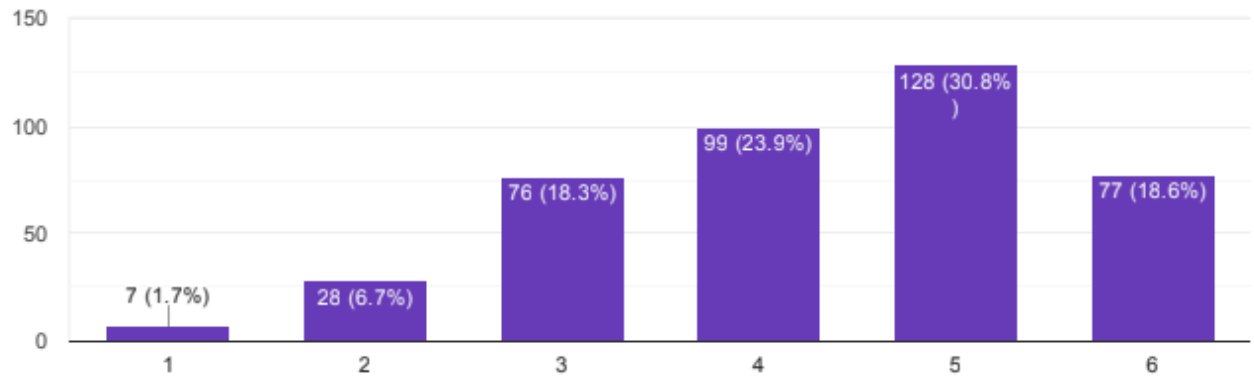


*Figure 3: I'm good at choosing the most suitable type of media (e.g. text, photo, video, animation, etc.) to achieve the desired result.*

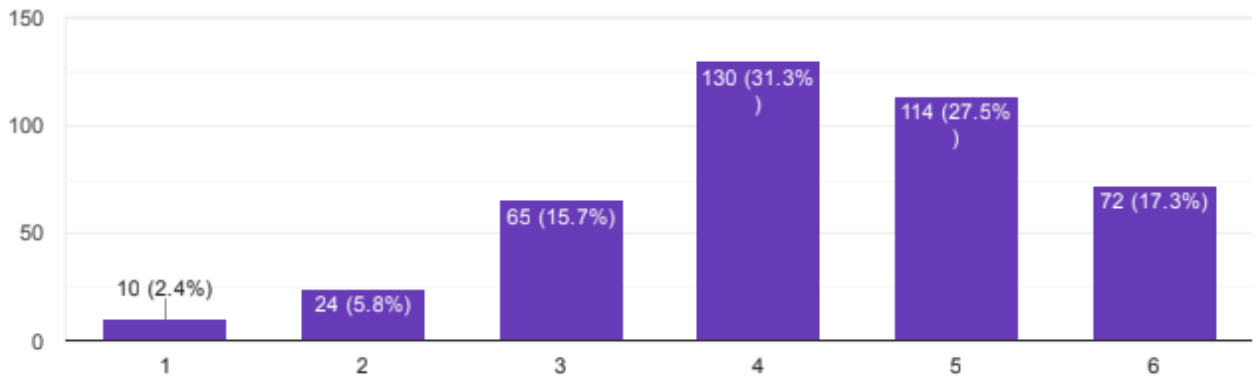


*Figure 4: I have an in-depth understanding of how social media influence different forms of communities and democracy.*

The most surprising was the fact that only 29% respondents enjoyed expressing their thoughts and opinions through relevant social media (and only 5.3% chose 6). 1 out of 4 respondents chose 1 on this question, therefore strongly disagreeing with the question. Interacting, engaging and sharing through digital technologies are core competences of the second dimension of the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens, 'Communication and collaboration' [17]. Mindful personal input is equally important for the digital citizenship as are literacy, understanding and online safety, and creating is one of the core higher order thinking skills that this project aims to develop in youth, along with analysing and evaluating (source: project application). We therefore recommend that content creation and personal expression is one of the core topics of the learning scenarios (see cluster *Creation of content* below).

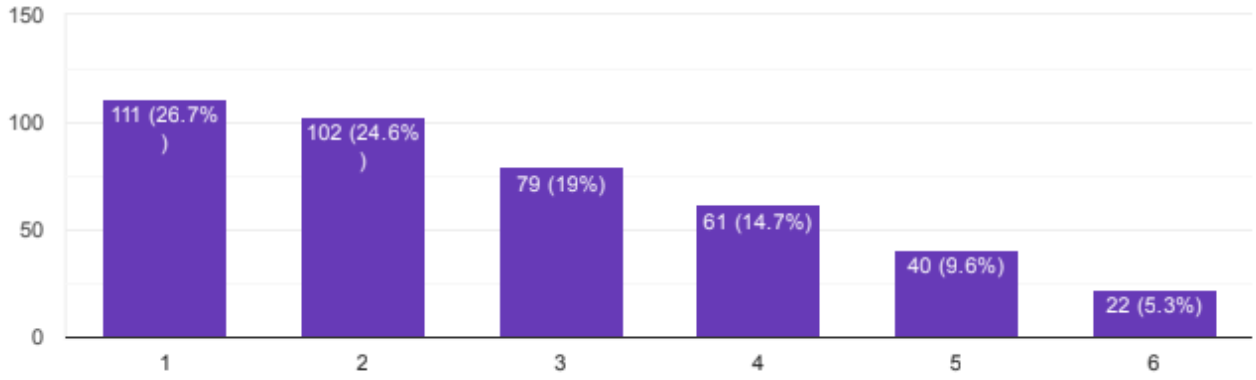


*Figure 5: I enjoy expressing thoughts and opinions through relevant social media.*

### *Responsible use of technologies & Health*

27% of the respondents do not pay attention to physical symptoms that may be related to overuse of technology and 22% do not have good strategies for handling the improper behaviour of others. These are therefore the topics we would recommend that respondents would benefit from in this cluster, which was otherwise overwhelmingly positively ranked.

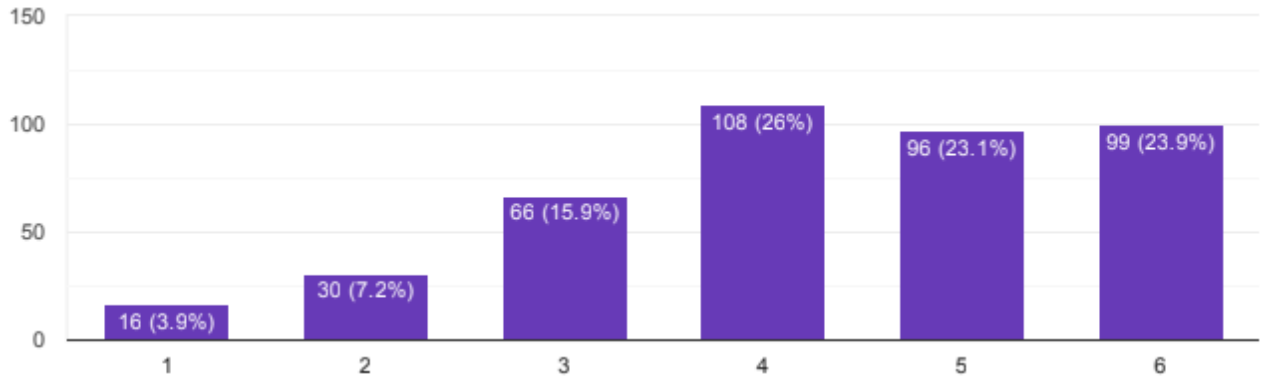


*Figure 6: I pay attention to physical symptoms that may be related to overuse of technology.*

An overwhelming majority (80% or more) chose 4 or more on the other questions in this cluster – paying attention to how online activities can affect life and reputation of the respondent and others, differentiating between inappropriate and illegal online behaviour, showing empathy and creating communities with others through digital communication, and understanding of how certain online behaviour can influence negatively a person's digital identity. We can therefore suppose that these are the topics respondents can handle with confidence.

### *Attitude toward sources (Critical thinking)*

An underwhelming number (10-15%) of respondents chose 6 on the questions in the cluster about critical thinking and attitude towards sources, and more than 1 out of 4 participants chose 3 or less on each of these questions. It is therefore our recommendation that critical thinking, gathering information, understanding search engines, and fake news should be at the core of the learning scenarios and special attention should be paid to this cluster.

More precisely, 36.9% respondents chose 3 or less on critically evaluating information (considering both the source and placement), 25.3% chose 3 or less on knowing what fake news is and having strategies to deal with them, 36.2% chose 3 or less on understanding how search engines operate, classify and display results, and 41% chose 3 or less on having a proactive attitude towards finding and collecting information from the internet (and only 10.6% chose 6 on this question). This corresponds with the results from the first cluster (use of digital technology), where it was noted that less than 3% of the respondents use their phone or computer to gather information, follow the news and stay informed.

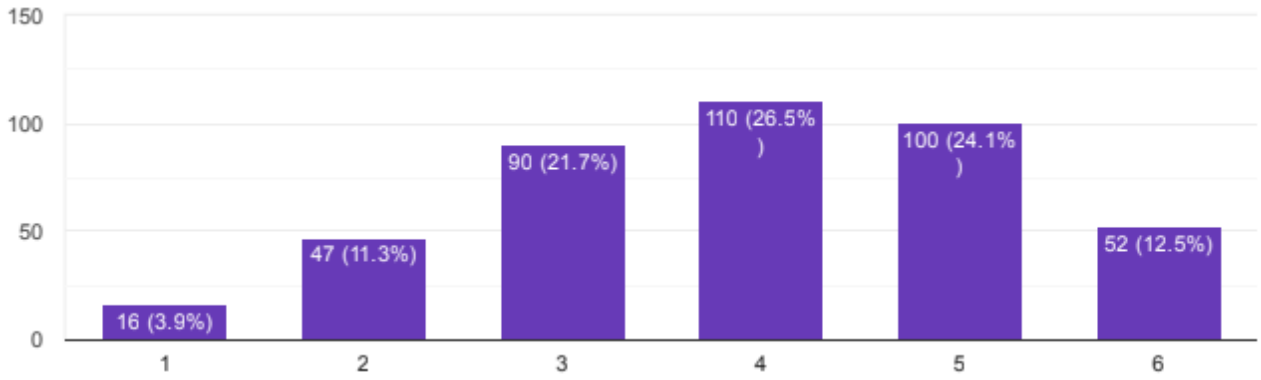


*Figure 7: I have a habit of evaluating information critically (considering both the source and placement).*

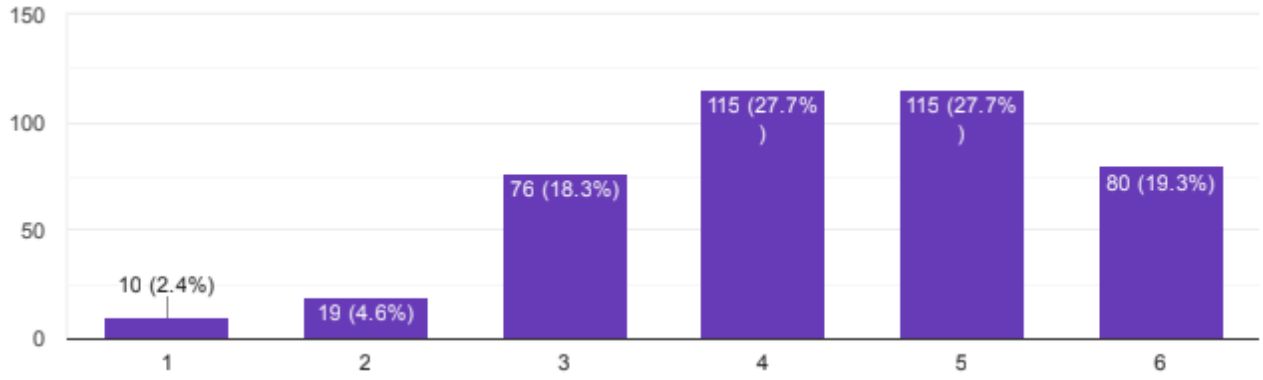


*Figure 8: I know what fake news is and I have strategies how to deal with it.*

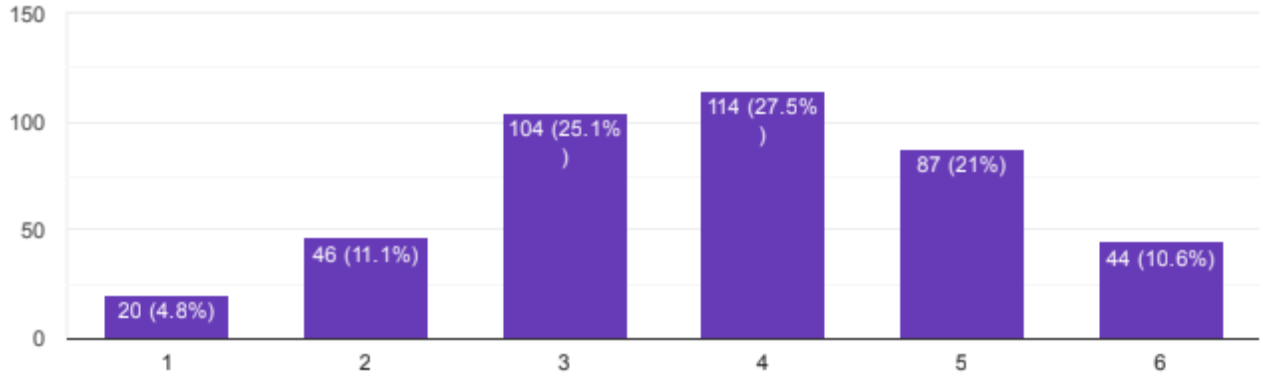


*Figure 9: I have a very proactive attitude towards finding and collecting information from the internet.*

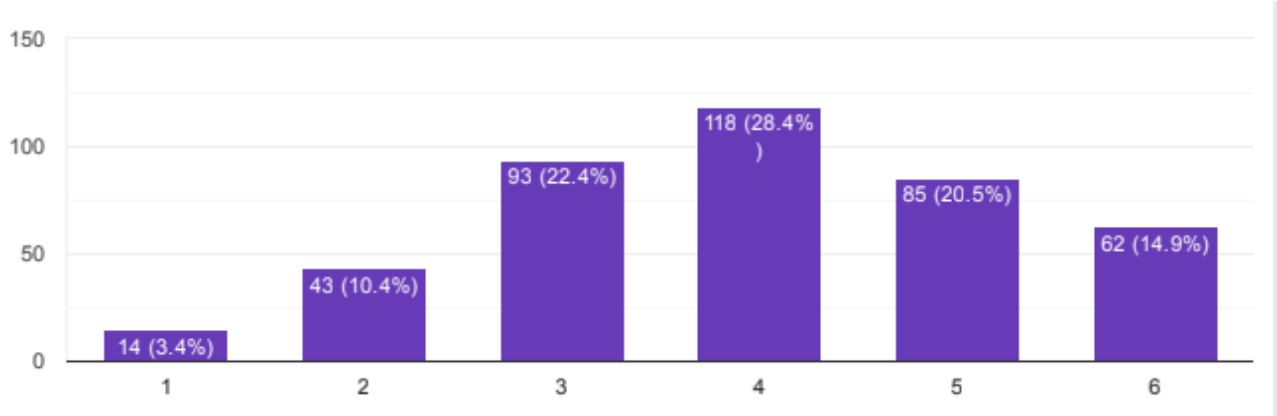


*Figure 10: I understand how search engines operate, classify and display results.*

This data corresponds with the findings of the *literacy.si* research [11], where it was found that when accessing an internet website for the first time, 60.7% respondents do not check the information via internet, 64.3% respondents do not check the purpose and credibility of the authors of the website, and 78.6% do not check the http or IP address of the website.

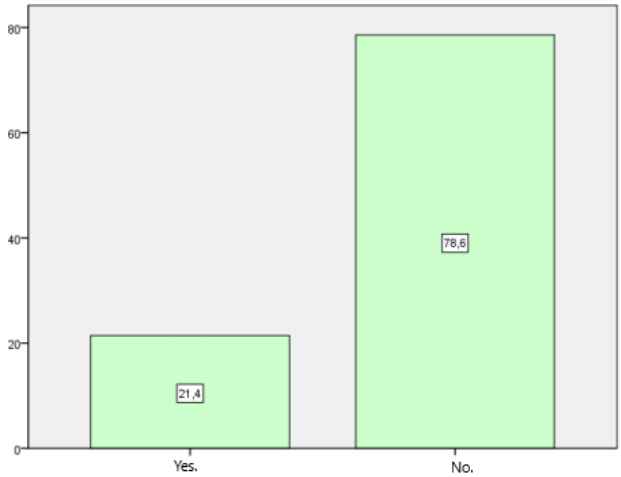


*Figure 11: Question "When accessing an internet website for the first time, I check its http or IP address." in the literacy.si survey. [11]*

### *Creation of content*

A staggering 59.5% respondents do not enjoying creating and editing digital content, and only 6% chose 6 on this question. 1 out of 3 respondents is not skilled at using applications to create relevant multimedia. These results correspond with the results on personal input in the Communication cluster, where it was noted that more than 1 out of 4 participants don't know how to choose the most suitable media to achieve the desired result, and only 29% respondents enjoy expressing their thoughts and opinions through relevant social media. Creation of content, multimedia application skills and choosing suitable media for self-expression should therefore be a learning priority of the project, along with critical thinking (see above).

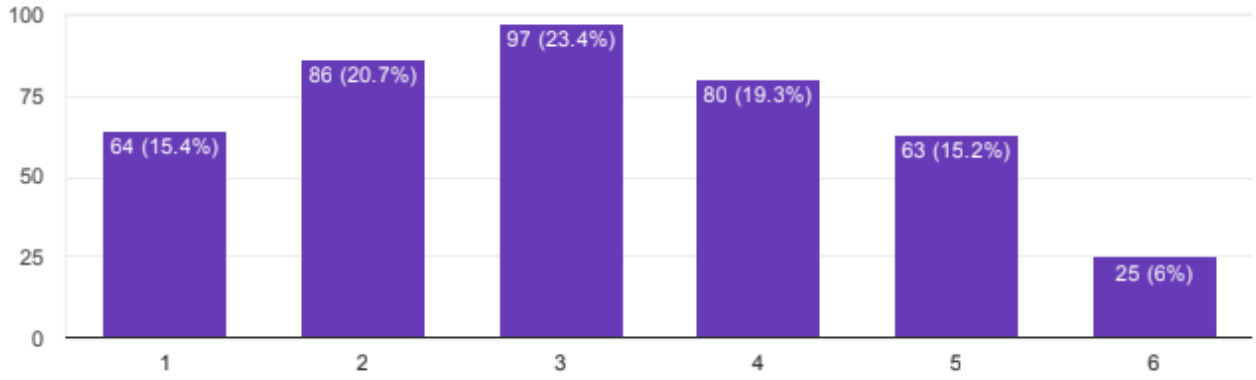


*Figure 12: It excites me to create or edit digital content.*

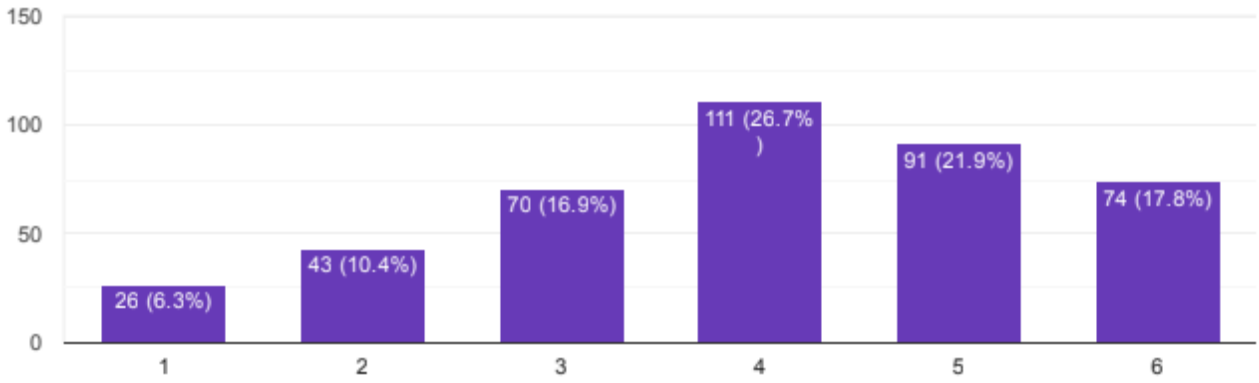


*Figure 13: I'm skilled at using applications to create relevant multimedia.*

## Conclusion

While media literacy education is present in Slovenia - taking the form of elective subjects in formal education, or advocacy and awareness raising campaigns run by public-nongovernmental consortiums – it is not systematic, and there is no media literacy education that would cover the entire population of elementary or secondary school students [11]. The *literacy.si* research report on media literacy among secondary school students concludes that it is difficult for young people to develop a reflective attitude and critical distance from the media, which could protect them from online abuse or media addiction.

The general objective of the YDML project is to provide young learners with meaningful experiences while mastering digital media literacy and thus raise their awareness on the influence of the digital technologies on their lives, encourage safe and confident use of digital technologies, and bridge the gaps between young people's skills and the skill-set relevant to their employability. The objective of this survey was to collect meaningful feedback and evidence base on patterns of use of digital technologies among youth with the hypothesis that the project objectives and outputs are relevant to the needs of the young people.

The results of the survey revealed that respondents – young people in Slovenia between the age of 15 and 19 - excel in netiquette and responsible use of technologies, but lack skills in critical thinking and creation of content. As it was shown in the *Country context* chapter,

several institutional and non-governmental initiatives in Slovenia already exist to promote safe and responsible use of technologies and netiquette, but media literacy, creation of content and critical thinking are still relatively new and unknown terms, despite the fact that the European Digital Competence Framework [17] lists *Digital content creation* and *Information and data literacy* (critical evaluation of the credibility and reliability of sources of data, information and digital content) as two of five main areas that need to be mastered for a person to become digitally competent [17]. Therefore, digital content creation and critical thinking are the two key focus areas where the YDML project is the most relevant and can benefit youth in Slovenia most.

The specific areas in which the YDML project can help young people in Slovenia to significantly improve their skills or knowledge, based on this survey, are:

- learn how to critically evaluate information;
- learn about fake news and implement strategies to deal with it;
- learn about how search engines operate, classify and display results;
- build a proactive attitude towards finding and collecting information on the internet;
- encourage creating and editing digital content in fun and appealing ways;
- learn how to use applications to create relevant multimedia;
- learn how to edit advanced settings on digital devices, online services and applications;
- understand how social media influence different forms of communities and democracy;
- learn how to choose suitable type of media to achieve desired communication results; and
- encourage expressing thoughts and opinions through relevant social media.

In her Master's thesis 'Media literacy: Creating and sharing digital contents and information', Maja Kuralt (2017), concludes that a critical analysis of the current media literacy of youth (and their evaluation and assessment of digital contents that they use and produce) is needed for any further research on media literacy in Slovenia [18]. Thus, the YDML project not only responds to the needs in skill and knowledge improvement among youth, but also to key research needs on the topic of media literacy in Slovenia.

Future research is recommended to uncover the causal and correlational effects of the results. A refined version of the survey may help to collect more complete data, taking in account demographic information such as gender, rural/urban setting, socioeconomic status of parents (and/or personal), academic achievement, activities outside of school, and other key variables. Additionally, a survey among youth workers and teachers is recommended to measure their digital media literacy skills and knowledge and discover if the results correlate.

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