



## Smart eDemocracy Against Fake News (SMARTeD)

### **Sensationalism: from where to where?** **(Fake news and disinformation workshop report)**

*Partner: Institute for Electronic Participation (INePA)*

*Date of the event: 10th April 2019*

*Country, city: Koper, Slovenia*

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Co-funded by the  
Europe for Citizens Programme  
of the European Union

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## SECTION 1: DESCRIPTION OF EVENT

### I. Information about event

Venue (location & country)	Association for culture and education PiNA, Gortanov trg 15, Koper, Slovenia
Start date	10th April 2019 at 10:00
End date	10th April 2019 at 16:00
Type of event	Plenary discussion and workshops
Website	<a href="https://www.pina.si/senzacionalizem-od-kod-in-kam/">https://www.pina.si/senzacionalizem-od-kod-in-kam/</a> (Slovene language)  <a href="http://www.inepa.si/institut-inepa/novice/272-smarted-workshop-sensationalism-from-where-to-where.html">http://www.inepa.si/institut-inepa/novice/272-smarted-workshop-sensationalism-from-where-to-where.html</a> (English language)

### II. Participants of event

	Participants by target group*						Total no. of participants	No. of involved countries	No. of people indirectly reached
	Distribution by age			Disadvan. participants	Women	Men			
	< 30	30 - 65	> 65						
Planned	33 % (10)	57 % (17)	10 % (3)	6,7% (2)	33 % (10)	67 % (20)	30	1	1000
<b>Realized</b>	<b>30 % (8)</b>	<b>70 % (19)</b>	<b>0 % (0)</b>	<b>18 % (5)</b>	<b>59 % (16)</b>	<b>37 % (11)</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1000</b>
Difference	- 2	+ 2	- 3	+ 3	+ 6	-9	- 3	0	0

\* The following documents are required as an appendix in order to verify participants of the event:

- 1) A list of attendance signed by participants
- 2) An anonymous questionnaire on participants demographics and event evaluation

### III. Short description of event

Briefly describe how the methodology for SMARTED events was implemented and what was the content (activities: getting to know each other and topic of the workshop, discovering the phenomenon of fake news, analysing sources of information and media content, how to counter fake news, partners online meeting, evaluation and workshop closure)\*

Event was intended for non-governmental representatives, youth workers, educators, students and others interested in the fake news topic. The primary goal was to empower participants with practical tools for identifying fake news and various methods and strategies for addressing them.

An additional goals of the event were the following:

- to establish a critical view on media content and fake news and consequences of fake news on local, national, regional and European level;
- to gain practical experience and tools for addressing fake news by young people with focus on analysing media messages, identifying different types of media and assessing credibility of information provided;
- to familiarise with the European initiatives and e-platforms to combat fake news;
- to create their own proposals and ideas how to tackle fake news at the EU level;
- to engage in networking and exchanging experiences /expertise.

The event was composed of three parts:

OPENING PLENARY DISCUSSION with dr. Sonja Merljak Zdovc (Časoris youth on-line media) highlighting the fake news phenomenon in the past, present and for the future.

WORKSHOP I: Learning and using the E.S.C.A.P.E. method

- Introduction to the E.S.C.A.P.E. via Skype by Mrs. Jessi McCarthy, one of the method founders;
- Analysing and identifying cases of fake news from media sources based on E.S.C.A.P.E. method;
- Plenary discussion.

WORKSHOP II: Designing proposals to combat fake news

- Overview of platforms and online tools for addressing fake news, checking facts and other e-democracy tools;
- Creating proposals to combat fake news at the EU level;
- Presenting and discussing the proposals with the Slovene Member of the European Parliament, Mr. Franc Bogovič via Skype call;
- Sharing and exchanging workshop result with project partners from Estonia and Greece via Skype call.

Evaluation and closure of the event.

\* The following document is required as an appendix:

3) Programme of event

#### IV. How citizens were involved during event and which target groups / representatives of stakeholders were present?

Citizens were actively involved in all sessions of the event. They asked questions and shared comments in the plenary discussion and later during workshops. As a part of the E.S.C.A.P.E. method training, participants tested their skills, knowledge and experience in identifying and analysing fake news / disinformation. They created proposal based on their ideas on how to combat fake news at the EU level through world cafe methodology. Participants were also introduced to fake news / disinformation situation in Estonia and Greece with focus on public issues most often targeted by fake news, main producers of fake news, measures and tools to counter fake news and what should be role of the EU in addressing fake news. One participant presented workshop results to Greek and Estonian partners. Finally, participants engaged in Skype conversation with Mr. Franc Bogovič, MEP, European People's Party. Results, ideas and recommendations from the workshop were presented to the MEP. Mr. Bogovič shared his own experience with fake news. He also pointed out in what way should the EU, according to his opinion, address disinformation issue.

The participants were coming from the local NGO's, we had few students form the local faculties, some self-employed, youth workers, and unemployed youth interested in the topic and/or youth work.

#### V. Which dissemination channels were used to inform target groups about event?

*[Please respond in accordance to the dissemination plan:*

*[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/131uG8\\_1Vp2Sf2IYVwkjGoNaU5AFfqKXOwYlr3Ac9c\\_Y/edit#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/131uG8_1Vp2Sf2IYVwkjGoNaU5AFfqKXOwYlr3Ac9c_Y/edit#gid=0)]*

The event was promoted through local partner [PiNA web page](#), through [PiNA FB page](#) and [FB event](#), through PiNA weekly newsletter reaching around 500 people and by direct e-mailing to targeted mailing list and later following up with a call and personal invitation.

Information about the event were disseminated via project partner [INePA web page](#) and [INePA FB profile](#).

The event was also disseminated through the National network of non-governmental organisations for an inclusive information society [NVO-VID web page](#), [NVO-VID FB profile](#), [NVO-VID Twitter profile](#) and network e-mailing list.

In addition, some other web sites shared information about the event as well:

<http://tvu.acs.si/koledar/podrobnosti/?pid=1236>

<https://www.primss.si/sl/novice/senzacionalizem-od-kod-in-kam>

[https://www.napovednik.com/dogodek515990\\_senzacionalizem\\_od\\_kod\\_in\\_kam](https://www.napovednik.com/dogodek515990_senzacionalizem_od_kod_in_kam)

## **SECTION 2: DISCUSSION ON FAKE NEWS AND ONLINE DISINFORMATION TOPIC**

### **VI What were the general consideration and observations made by participants on the topic of fake news and its consequences on local, national, regional and European level?**

Participants shared several observations related to media practice relating to fake news on the national and local level in Slovenia:

1. The local media (monthly newspaper in the city of Koper for example), financed by tax payers money and distributed to every household in the Koper municipality, is under heavy influence of the private interest and is spreading fake news. The monthly newspaper dominates local media landscape and there is no space for national media. Due to selling private advertisements, the local media also get more coverage. Several critical issues are arising from this particular media situation: local and private media are coming to our houses and not the national media; local political and private campaigns are funded by the taxpayers money; some local media are reluctant to address the local anomalies; there is a lack of the national reporters to cover them. As a result, it is hard to differentiate between quality and non-quality media. People do not recognize who and what is Media. National media register in Slovenia accepts all sorts of “media”. Even the competitive one. Thus, there is a need for more transparency, stating who is “real” media and finding the way to encourage media practice in-line with journalistic standards.

2. The fake news problem is complex, media literacy is low. People are reading tabloids on one hand. On the other hand, it’s hard to know which media is trustworthy and credible. Young readers therefore doubt in the media and avoid reading newspapers for example. How can we help them to recognize credible media practice, which derives from investigative journalism? What does it mean to act as an accountable media and to pursue reliable media practice so we can point them out to citizens? We also have a time challenge / issue. Media literacy - how to recognize trustworthy content and to invest our time in reading it?

3. Web Portal comments - how much does the comments influence the news itself? Before social media expansion, there were an anonymity issues. Fake and hate speech were anonymous. Now with Facebook, we are shocked how fast we can see personal negative comments shared by people with real names.

4. Older people still perceive television as an authority. They are not updated with media trends and can be easily deceived by TV channels controled by an ideological interest groups.

5. There is also a problem relating to media business model. How to pay and receive payments for credible media content? We are not willing to pay and support trustworthy reporters and news. We need a new wave of media socialization. It is much easier to say don’t watch/ read the media. Media are still very important, and we need it. Media is here to protect our democracy. It is wise to follow different media sources, but it can be somewhat expensive and time consuming. We need a continuous debate about the topics. It is a process.

## **VII What were the considerations made by participants on the analysis of different sources of information and media content?**

The following considerations were made by participants when trying to identify fake news:

- It is hard to identify and understand political or ideological agendas in media news.
- The amount of time needed to analyse and understand whether the news is fake or not. It takes time and not many people could afford it to check every potentially fake news or disinformation.
- In some situations it's hard to say whether the news is fake or not (e.g. biased, partial, incompleting news). Each of us is consuming the media based on our own value system and we tend to read what we believe and favour the content we are culturally preconditioned. We can even foster our partial beliefs by reading such “friendly” media.

## **VIII Which considerations were made by participants on possible ways how they personally tackle the issue of online disinformation ?**

The participants proposed the following approaches in tackling the issue of online disinformation:

- When in doubt, the first impression relating to the potential fake news is important (common sense). Establish your personal judgement and question your feeling whether the news is fake or not.
- You can check the potential fake news by following the feeds (identifying the source).
- It is important to check / understand the purpose behind the news. Is it short, fast or it is a completed text created by a journalist? It is also essential to recognize what the author is trying to achieve (e.g. why is he/she making such statement?). Also, you can compare the most controversial and the least controversial news or source on the same topic.
- We have to be aware that we all live in our own information bubble and have limited perspective on the world. Therefore, the first step towards better media literacy is to know which media are credible to follow. And that we deliberately expand our social media feeds and check feed from other media also.

In addition, several personal motivations to combat fake news phenomenon were highlighted by individual participants:

- I feel responsible, I have a duty to do it and contribute something for the younger generations. To stand together and defend our values. If the fake news can generate our attention, also the good news can do the same way.

- I need this inner feeling of contributing to better life in my local environment.
- Personal motivation as a journalist student to restore the authenticity and original mission of journalism.

### **IX What already pre-existing tools and EU initiatives were considered valuable to address the issue of fake news online disinformation?**

Mag. Simon Delakorda from the Institute for Electronic Participation presented different international and national on-line tools used in addressing the disinformation. Among EU examples, the following tools enabling sound decisions before voting were highlighted:

- <https://euandi2019.eu> Voting Advice Application built to help citizens make an informed choice in the 2019 European Parliament elections.
- <https://yourvotematters.eu> Digital platform designed as an innovative communication tool between the 2019 European elections' candidates and their electorate.

### **X. What were the recommendations to the European Commission on measures to be taken to combat fake news?**

Participants created the following suggestions to the European Union member states and institutions to combat fake news:

#### 1) The EU member states

- Raising awareness of EU citizens through education, starting from young age (better school curriculum to address media literacy).
- Online tools to detect and prevent fake news at the national level.
- Changing media legislation and enforcing penalties for media and journalist who are producing fake news (financial and other penalties).
- Law that obliges social media to introduce algorithms that track and enable reporting of fake news and following fact checking.
- Stronger monitoring of media registration process. Setting stronger rules for registration and better categorization of media.

#### 2) The EU institutions

- Marking the news with different colours (similar to food additives: red, yellow, green) combined with the following statement: "Read at your own risk".



- Developing a web or browser plugin for the EU countries that will enable users to vote, interact and label news as reliable or fake (fact and reliability checker).
- Giving EU awards to media, who tackle fake news or are not producing fake news.
- Support building community grass-roots and decentralised initiatives or platform(s) to support fact checking and sanctions.
- More programmes on EU level supporting media literacy and active citizenship.

In addition, participants developed an innovative project idea combining youth development, active citizenship and critical thinking:

### **EU awareness raising campaign lead by youth**

- Gathering 1.000.000 signatures for the European Citizens Initiative to tackle fake news and to raise Media Literacy in the EU.
- Online platform connecting youth (starting with Facebook page and groups) and creating media content to raise awareness about fake news and importance of media literacy.
- Connecting young journalists and journalism student to spread the voice in EU countries (through events, articles, social media posts) and support gathering signatures for European Citizens Initiative.
- Launching a competition, where winners would travel to different EU cities to get in touch with other local and national initiatives and project partners.
- Visiting youth would monitor different media in different countries.

### The aim

- To change a media legislation and incorporate media literacy into the educational curriculum.
- To involve youth into political advocacy and rise active citizenship through fake media phenomena, which is something youth can relate to (“we are defending our minds and our freedom”).

### Resources needed for implementing the proposal:

- Financial investment.
- European Parliament, European Commission, DIGI REGIO support at the EU level.
- Grant support (Europe for Citizens programme and Europe Direct).
- Support from media and media influencers promoting the project / topic.

- Support from various companies (social responsibility).

## **XI. Please indicate media reporting, photo and video material from event\***

We find no media reporting about the event. Photos from the event were shared on social media by [PiNA NGO](#) and MEP Franc Bogovič [Twitter profile](#). Photos below were taken by project partner INePA.



*Opening plenary discussion with dr. Sonja Merljak Zdovc*



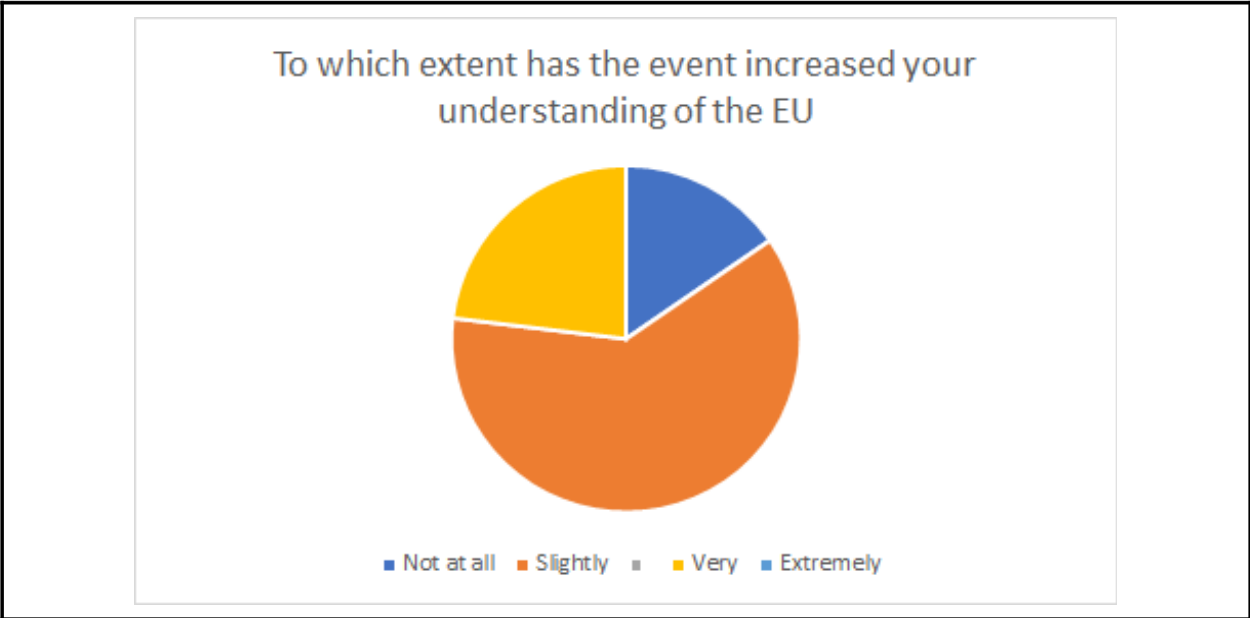
*Introduction to the E.S.C.A.P.E. method via Skype by Mrs. Jessi McCarthy*

\* The following document is required as an appendix:

4) All (including social media) dissemination activities should be archived in PDF formats in google drive project folder & in your personal folders

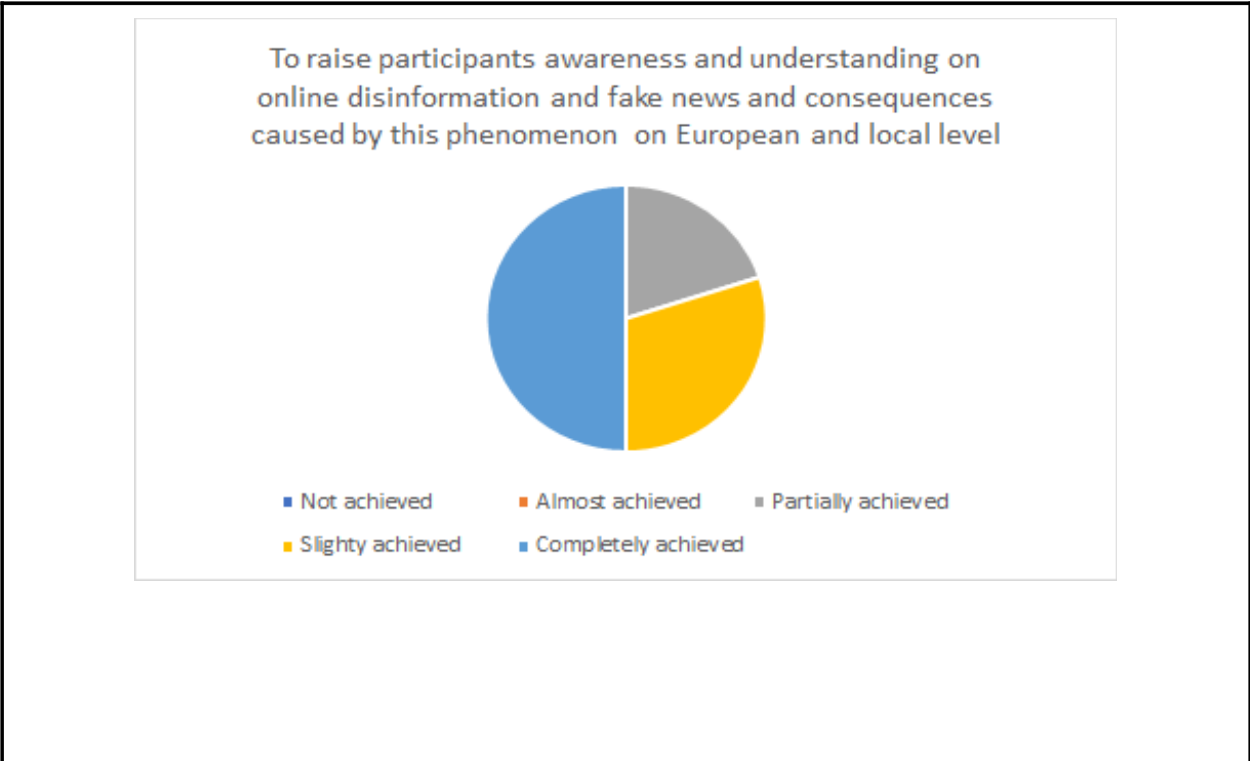
**SECTION 3: EVALUATION OF THE EVENT**

**XII. To which extent has event increased participant's understanding of the EU?\***



*\* The following documents are required as an appendix:  
An anonymous questionnaire on participants demographics*

**XIII. To which extent has event achieved the workshop objectives? \***



To develop participants critical thinking skills



■ Not achieved    ■ Almost achieved    ■ Partially achieved  
■ Slightly achieved    ■ Completely achieved

To foster and develop a sense of European citizenship based on a truly informed debate on real European issues

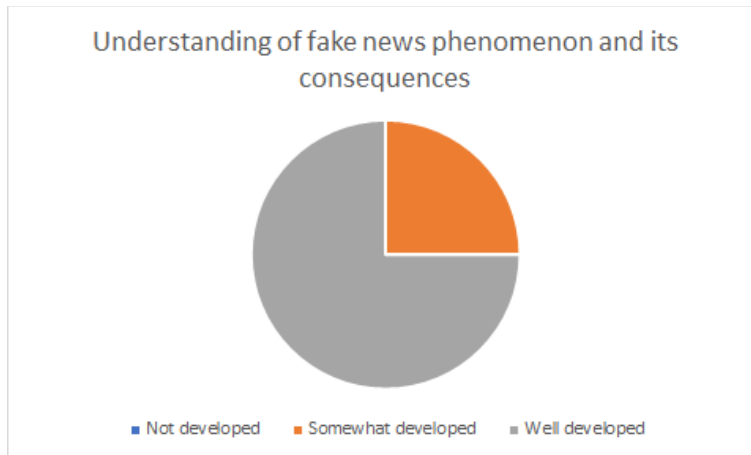
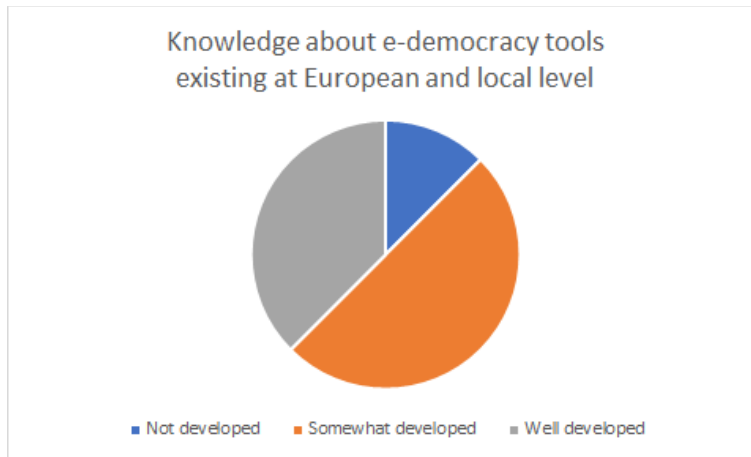


■ Not achieved    ■ Almost achieved    ■ Partially achieved  
■ Slightly achieved    ■ Completely achieved

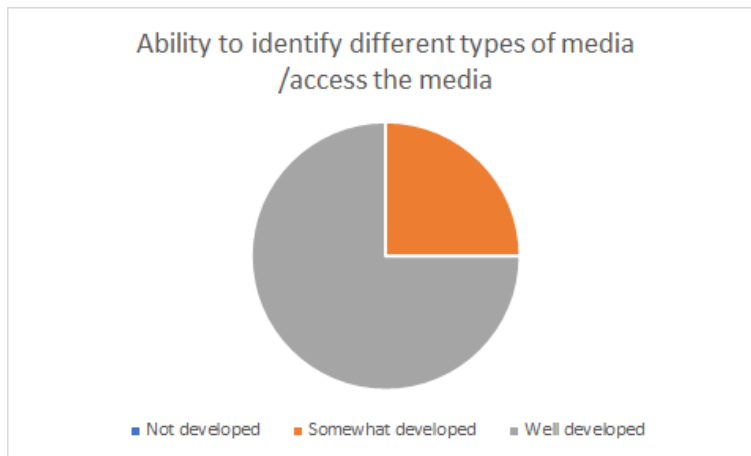
\* The following documents are required as an appendix:  
6) Workshop evaluation form

**XIV. To which extent participants have developed their competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes)? \***

**Knowledge**



**Skills**



### Ability to access information



■ Not developed ■ Somewhat developed ■ Well developed

### Ability to analyse information and communication messages



■ Not developed ■ Somewhat developed ■ Well developed

### Ability to evaluate information and communication messages in a wide variety of form



■ Not developed ■ Somewhat developed ■ Well developed

## Attitudes

Curiosity about current European issues



■ Not developed ■ Somewhat developed ■ Well developed

Sense of responsibility as European active citizen



■ Not developed ■ Somewhat developed ■ Well developed

Ownership of European values and a shared vision on the future of Europe



■ Not developed ■ Somewhat developed ■ Well developed

\* The following documents are required as an appendix:

6) Workshop evaluation form

**XV. Were the minimum indicators/results of the workshops achieved? (total number of people reached (directly), ideas/suggestions/needs collected, profile of participants)**

The total number of participants was not achieved (27 out of 30). Several people registered for the workshop and cancelled their participation or did not show up (some due to personal reasons and some probably due to another similar event that took place in the same time).

The suggestions collected from participants were diverse, concrete and problem oriented. Solutions proposed were addressing fake news challenges on local, national and the EU level.

The mix of participants profiles was satisfactory, the group was divergent and enabled fruitful exchange of ideas, knowledge, experience, opinions.

**XVI. What was the impact of the event in relation to the aims of SMARTeD project?**

The event was successful in framing fake news and improving participants understanding of fake news phenomenon and its consequences. The event highlighted the main issues relating to fake news on national, European and global level and shared current cases and practices addressing them.

Different tools to analyse information and recognise fake news like E.S.C.A.P.E. method and Bad news game were introduced at the event. Participants become more aware of the importance of a critical approach to information, managed to develop practical skills and gained better insights of its usability in their (future) work.

The event introduced different eDemocracy tools to address the phenomenon of fake news and provided a space for participants to exchange information and improve ability to access and use different sources of information.

The sense of European citizenship was fostered through (international) Skype calls, connecting Slovene participants with project partners from Estonia and Greece and to MEP Franc Bogovič. These enabled more broader perspective on the phenomenon and provided insights on real European issues and efforts.