

UNDER PRESS URE

Organisers: AEGEE-Europe, Diversion, DROG, Uppsala University, Schwarzkopf Stiftung, Fryshuset

Day and time: Tuesday 12 January 2021, 14:30 - 17:30 CET

Location: Online

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Democracies Under Pressure: Polarisation in the Digital Age

Join us for an interactive online event with stakeholders from all over Europe about the impact of polarisation in today's digital era, what it means for democracies, and how peer education and gamification can contribute to tackling the problem while making young people more resilient to disinformation!

With the advent of the digital age, these last decades have seen new and worrisome phenomena affecting people and politics worldwide. Extremist groups are growing on social media, elections are targeted by digital (foreign) interference, polarisation is reinforced online through the use of algorithms, and that is just to name a few. The more recent COVID-19 outbreak has intensified these problems - seeing for instance the spread of new conspiracy theories feeding into stereotypes-, while the crisis pushes people to spend even more time online.

As a consequence, young people are increasingly exposed to viral disinformation online, and frustration and distrust towards traditional media are on the rise. In addition to harming trust in the press and leaving youth vulnerable to fake news and polarisation, this process undermines young people's support for democratic values, such as press freedom and freedom of speech.

In these times of trouble in the digital age, there is a pressing need to take action and to make the next generation more resilient to polarisation. For this purpose, the PEGAP consortium has developed an interactive methodology to help young people navigate the media landscape and to counter disinformation: Under Pressure.

The main goal of Under Pressure is to foster critical thinking and media literacy skills among young news consumers. That is why the Under Pressure methodology aims to:

- Strengthen resilience against disinformation amongst young people in order to counter polarisation, isolation and extremism
- Strengthen (digital) democratic citizenship among students with a special focus on freedom of the press and freedom of speech

To engage with young people's media behaviour, it is essential to address them as equals. This is why, in the framework of this project, peer educators are invited to visit schools and to engage in discussions with students about the way they use media. This unique approach is combined with the Under Pressure disinformation game. This game strengthens resilience against disinformation by putting its players in the shoes of fake news mongers and by exposing misleading techniques, such as impersonation, discredit, and the use of conspiracy theories. Taking the game as a starting point, the peer educators work together with the students to uncover the ins and outs of disinformation. The result is an innovative, challenging and captivating curriculum.

During this online event, lessons learnt and project results will be shared, and the need for joint efforts against disinformation will be discussed together with experts and policy-makers. The event will also be a good opportunity for the participants to try out the Under Pressure game and to become more aware of common misleading techniques.

Programme

- 14:30 Introduction and welcome speech by Věra Jourová, Vice-President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency
- 14:45 Fostering critical thinking and media literacy skills among young news consumers – Presentation of the PEGAP project and Under Pressure methodology
- 15:10 Under Pressure in European classrooms – Presentation of working elements from the methodology in different contexts
- 15:20 How are disinformation and online polarisation hollowing out our democratic values? And what can we do to prevent this? – Panel discussion on the threats disinformation and new (online) media attitudes are posing to European democracies and possible solutions from several perspectives.
- 15:45 Coffee break
- 16:00 Get into the skin of a fake news mogul and create your own disinformation empire – Play the Under Pressure game!
- 16:30 Conclusions and closing
- 17:00 Open space for reflection and networking (optional)

PEGAP project and consortium

The Under Pressure methodology is developed in the context of the PEGAP education project. PEGAP (Peer Education and Gamification Against Polarisation) is a European project carried out by DROG, Diversion, AEGEE-Europe, Uppsala University, Schwarzkopf Stiftung and Fryshuset, and co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme and Fonds21.



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

