EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

(To be filled in and uploaded as deliverable in the Portal Grant Management System, at the due date foreseen in the system.

⚠ *Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum)*

PROJECT	
Project name and acronym:	SEED - Supporting European Youth Engagement against Disinformation
Participant:	ICEI
PIC number:	10125212

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	D1.1 (WP1)		
Event name:	Training and thematic event in Italy		
Type:	Event		
In situ/online:	In-situ		
Location:	Prato (Italy)		
Date(s):	10-11 March 2026		
Website(s) (if any):	https://icei.it/en/progetti/seed/		
Participants			
Female:	19		
Male:	12		
Non-binary:	0		
From country 1 [Italy]:	18		
From country 2 [Netherlands]:	5		
From country 3 [Germany]:	4		
From country 4 [France]:	1		
From country 5 [Albania]:	2		
From country 6 [Hung.]:	1		
Total number of participants:	31	From total number of countries:	6

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

General Overview

The training and thematic event took place in Prato (Italy) on 10th and 11th March 2026 and was hosted in the MUERF / Monash premises in via Pugliesi 26.

The participants

The total number of participants was 31 from 6 different eligible countries and included:

- Project managers and projects officers from the technical (ICEI; MUERF; Rutgers; and Jugendstiftung) and associate partners (Qendra Impakt; TU Munchen; City of Prato; GDD)
- Researchers, academics and practitioners on the topic of disinformation (from University of Bologna; EDMO Florence; The CIVICS Impact Hub)
- Youth workers and experts on the topic of youth work and disinformation (from Arci Valdera; UNITED for intercultural action)
- Representative from international organization active in contrasting rumours, disinformation, and oppressive narratives (Council of Europe)

The objectives

- **Getting to know each other & group building**. To offer participants the opportunity to get to know each other and their organizations better, sharing previous experiences, knowledge, fears, and expectations regarding the project.
- **Introduction to the SEED project**. To present and discuss the objectives, phases, and flow of the project.
- **Challenges and trends of disinformation and young people**. To reflect with experts and practitioners on the challenges and trends of disinformation, with a particular focus on disinformation targeting the youth.
- **Preparing for upcoming activities**. To discuss and shape the next activities (WP2-9).

The methodology

The meeting was organized and facilitated according to the principles of **Non-Formal Education**, as defined by the Council of Europe. Participants were included in the preparation of the meeting, which was designed through a **participatory process**. The flow alternated dynamic group activities with panel discussions and experts' presentations.

The key findings

The key findings of the meeting could be summarized into three areas.

The first concerns the starting point of the project, namely the risks associated with disinformation, which is understood as **a systemic challenge affecting democracy, individual well-being, and the integrity of knowledge**. Disinformation is a multifaceted phenomenon with many interconnected causes, ranging from the **vulnerabilities of our democratic systems** (characterized by socio-economic inequalities and distrust in institutions) to **the very structure of the platforms** through

which disinformation spreads (driven by profit and generating polarization, information overload, and emotional burden).
SEED partners intend to adopt a **holistic, participatory, and context-aware** approach focused on **strengthening youth media literacy, fostering collective knowledge and action, and mobilizing trusted local ecosystems**.
Finally, partners consider **transnational exchange and mutual learning** (from practices, from successes, and from failures) **to be the real added value of this project**. Complementary expertise, strong networks, and thematic diversity (democracy, sexual education, intercultural action) are key assets of this partnership.
Partners identified key conditions to ensure both effectiveness and ethical integrity throughout implementation.

- **Ethics and safety:** The **protection of young participants** is a central priority, requiring a dedicated Ethics Clearance document to regulate data collection, use, and participation conditions.
- **Methodological balance:** The mapping phase will combine a **shared framework** for comparability with **flexibility** to adapt tools to local contexts.
- **Target groups and engagement:** Partners will primarily work with minors in schools, prioritising **long-term engagement**.
- **Implementation constraints:** Seasonal limitations (e.g. summer activities) and administrative aspects may require **adjustments to the timeline**.

Activities

Day#0 – 9/03

The event started with an informal gathering and dinner on March 9th, which was an opportunity for partners to get to know each other.

Day#1 – 10/03

Welcome & Institutional greeting

The day started with an intervention from Monash University's Senior Events Officer Sarah Gore, who welcomed the participants on behalf of Pro-Vice Chancellor for Europe Cecilia Hewlett, who could not attend due to the cancelling of connections caused by the war in the Middle East. Matteo Dutto from MUERF and Maria De Pasquale from ICEI greeted the participants and kicked off the meeting. After that, participants engaged in a non-formal activity to break ice and get to know each other's names (name game).

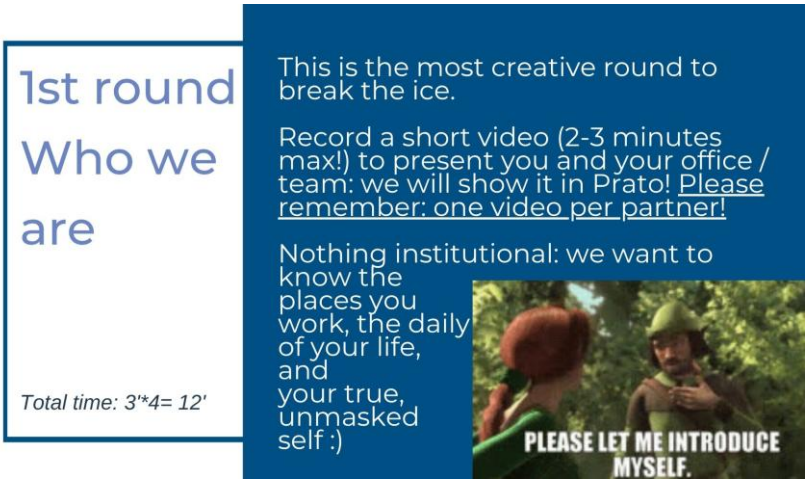
Session #1 – The SEED project: introduction

The first activity had been introduced to partners in the preceding weeks and aimed to provide a structured yet dynamic space for presenting their core activities, previous experience in the field of disinformation, and expectations regarding the SEED project.

Initially partners had a chance to introduce themselves, their respective premises (by showing a short video they had prepared) and their main activities:

- **Jugendstiftung** supports youth-led initiatives in urban (Stuttgart) and rural areas, while also running its own programs on strengthening democracy, media digital literacy, democratic education, and sustainability. It works closely with schools, teachers, and social workers.

- **Rutgers** is a long-established organization which focuses on sexual education and health through schools and educators and in cooperation with other NGOs worldwide.
- **MUERF** is a foundation affiliated with Monash University, a global academic player with multiple campuses worldwide and working on themes such as AI, climate change, business law, and social inclusion.
- Finally, **ICEI** is an NGO focusing on active citizenship, intercultural policies, and antidiscrimination. ICEI coordinates the Italian branch of the Intercultural Cities Network and supports an informal network of youth centers by training youth workers and youth in contrasting discrimination.



The task sent to the partners to record a brief introductory video

After presenting themselves, the partners shared the rationale behind their focus on disinformation and discussed their expectations towards the project, their combined strengths, and risks they see in dealing with the topic. The main points of discussion are reported below:

- **Rationale**. Partners consider disinformation **a threat to the well-being of society** (for its risks for democracy), **individuals** (particularly in sensitive areas such as sexual education, where disinformation can affect relationships and personal development), and **knowledge** itself (as it creates "alternative truths"). Partners intend to investigate the **emotional drivers** (such as fear, anger, and frustration) that allow disinformation to thrive.
- **Expectations**. Partners expect the project to enable **transnational exchange and mutual learning**, with a focus on sharing practices and improving the understanding of disinformation dynamics. There is a strong interest in **testing participatory methodologies** (such as living labs); in integrating an **intercultural perspective** to ensure context-sensitive interventions; and in informing **future research initiatives**.
- **General objectives and concrete outputs**. Partners confirmed their intent to promote responsible use of artificial intelligence and digital tools among young people, while strengthening their **media literacy and critical thinking**. SEED activities could be used to develop practical tools such as handbook/manual and to design training modules for educators.
- **Strengths**. The partnership feels well-equipped to the task, since partners combine complementary expertise in **youth work and research**, rely on **strong**

and established networks (with schools, youth workers / centers, and local authorities), and have developed **specific and complementary thematic expertise** (on democracy, sexual education, intercultural action).

- **Risks/challenges**. The main risks stem from the politically sensitive nature of both the topics addressed and the language used. The project operates in areas where **disinformation can be weaponized and trigger communication backlash**. The **safety and well-being of young participants** is a high priority for partners, particularly when addressing topics that may expose them to online or offline risks. There is also a need to avoid extractive approaches in research and practice, ensuring that activities generate value for participants and local contexts. Finally, differences in experience with project management and funding frameworks may require additional coordination and support within the partnership.

The collective reflection was focused on drivers for participation, expectations, achievements

Session #2 – What we know and do not know about narratives. Stefan Manevski, Senior Project Officer at the Council of Europe

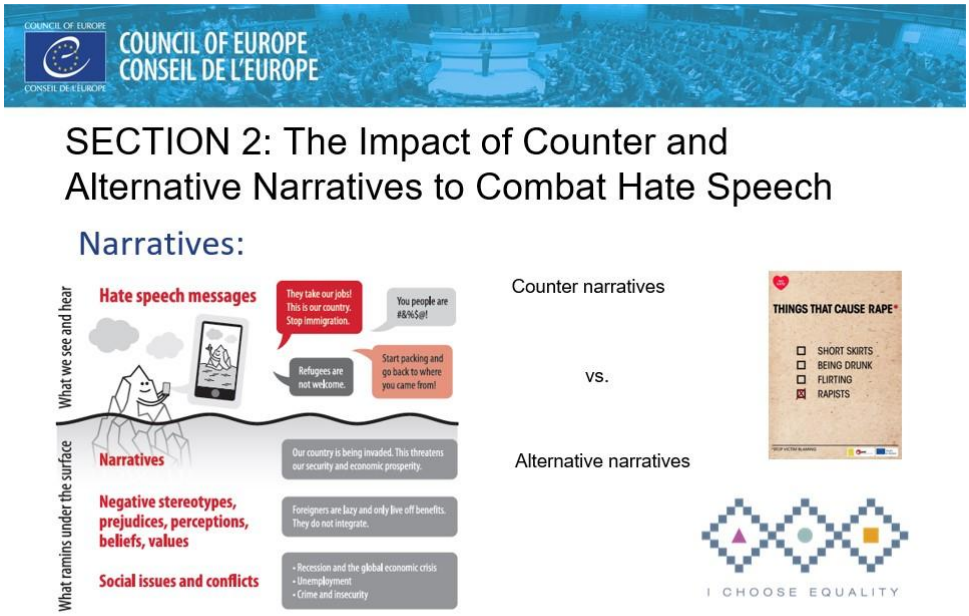
The intervention provided an overview of the current Council of Europe's work on disinformation, hate speech, and the use of counter-narratives.

Mr Manevski briefly referred to the roadmap towards *A new democratic pact for Europe*, which will serve as a collective and inclusive process to promote inclusive participation, protect democratic systems, and increase community resilience, and to the Council of Europe Recommendation on combating hate speech (2022), which serves as a guiding framework for policy development and advocacy.

The core of the presentation focused on the **role of counter- and alternative narratives (CANs) as prevention and response tools to disinformation and harmful speech**. In 2024, the Council of Europe commissioned a pilot study – run by the Dutch NGO Justice for Prosperity - on effectiveness, risks and potential of using counter and alternative narratives to address hate speech. The study analysed specific

activities by different European CSOs, including three SEED partners (Rutgers, ICEI, and Jugendstiftung). The study emphasized a few key findings:

- Individuals interpret messages through identity, beliefs, and emotions, and **there is no universally effective narrative**. Some targets are so emotionally invested in one narrative that they feel threatened by any critics, and will not change their mind;
- Goal of a CAN action is not to generate empathy, rather **emotional shift**;
- Messages that are too distant from an audience's values are likely to be rejected, while those **closer to existing beliefs may have greater impact**. Furthermore, **messengers should be credible** for the selected targets;
- Communication strategies should take **emotional dynamics** and practical contexts into account;
- **Offline, community-based activities were identified as particularly impactful** in fostering trust and engagement, whereas online interventions require specific expertise and investment;
- Overall, the approach suggested prioritising **educational strategies that offer alternative perspectives**, rather than focusing solely on countering or debunking harmful narratives.



One of the slides on the role of counternarratives in tackling hate speech

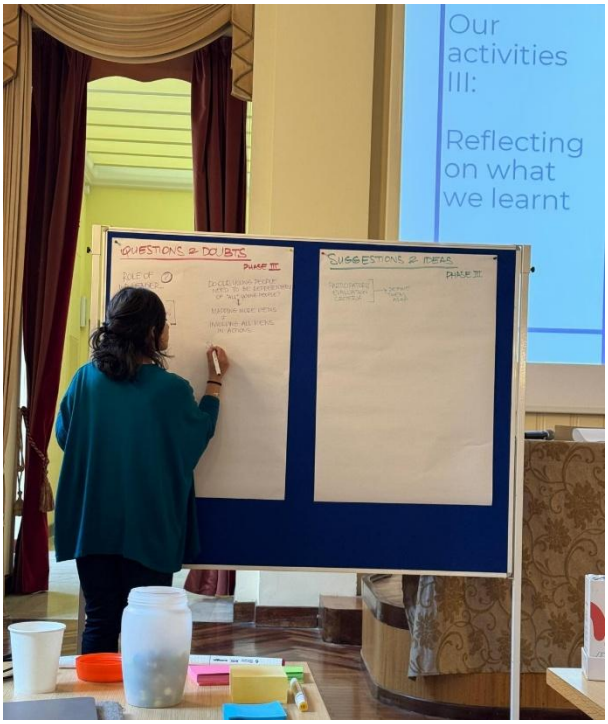
Session #3 – The SEED actions: flow and expected impact

The first half of the afternoon was dedicated to reviewing the project's flow, its activities, and its timeline, and to discussing specific obstacles and potential solutions. Key points of discussion were:

- **Young people's safety** is a top priority: all project activities must ensure that young people are not exposed to unsafe situations or public controversy. An Ethics Clearance Document will be prepared to ensure the project will respect ethical standards in both the research / mapping phase (WP2-3-4) and in the practical

implementation. The document will outline the procedures for data collection, sharing, access, and treatment. Due to its expertise in the field, MUERF will take the lead in drafting the document.

- The mapping will balance the need for **conformity and flexibility**. Partners will use shared framework across countries to ensure comparability of results, while maintaining a certain degree of flexibility to adapt instruments to local realities and specific needs.
- Partners have identified **minors in schools as their primary target** (14-18 for Jugendstiftung; 16+ for Rutgers and MUERF/ICEI). Engagement should prioritize young people who can remain involved over the project's full duration (approximately two years). **Working with minors, however, poses a great challenge in obtaining and storing full personal data**: hence, partners agreed to explore alternative solutions with the project PO.
- Mapping and capacity-building activities are scheduled over **Summer, a difficult time to include young people**. Partners agreed to explore the possibility of an extension of the activities with the project PO.
- Partners should reach an early agreement on the **content and methodology of the participatory evaluation**, in order to allow a timely collection of relevant data throughout the implementation of the project's activities.



Flipcharts collecting reflections on the obstacles and solutions of the different phases

Session #4 – Panel discussion: disinformation and youth

The last activity of the first day consisted of a panel discussion involving youth workers from different backgrounds. A first round of intervention was dedicated to presenting each panelist, their organizations, and main challenges/actions.

The panelists of the first day

Saradia Bregu, representing the Peace Volunteering Network and Qendra Impakt (Albania), highlighted the specific challenges faced in the Western Balkans that include **historical tensions shaping young people's perceptions of democracy and themselves**. Within this context, youth work focuses on empowering young activists and journalists to "speak the unspoken" by critically engaging with historical narratives while strengthening media literacy. Emphasis is placed on **participatory approaches**, ensuring that young people actively contribute to shaping how key issues are addressed.

Debora Barletta from the international network UNITED for intercultural action (Hungary) emphasized the **structural nature of the digital environment**, describing it as inherently problematic yet normalized by young users, while media and information literacy competencies remain low and the rise of disinformation further complicates young people's ability to interpret information critically. In response, UNITED aims to **equip young people with the skills to protect themselves and understand the broader implications of digital security**, focusing on providing concrete means for young people to recognise risks and act upon them.

Virginia Marchetti and **Saosen Echi** from ARCI Valdera presented the findings of a study conducted by IPSOS on youth civic engagement indicating that democracy and political participation rank low among young people's priorities, while social media narratives contribute to polarization and a loss of distinction between opinion and information. To respond to these trends, ARCI Valdera implements **anti-rumour participatory workshops** designed to analyse and deconstruct stereotypes and understand how they spread online, peer education, and youth-led communication initiatives. This approach deliberately uses the same digital spaces where disinformation circulates to foster positive engagement.

Pim van den Dool from the Dutch National Youth Council focused on how to effectively include, motivate, and sustain young people's engagement. Drawing on the principles of self-determination theory, he stressed the importance of young people's meaningful participation, outlining a set of key building blocks for meaningful participation, which include:

- maintaining a **strong orientation** towards young people's interests
- recognizing the **diversity of motivations** across different groups

- and adopting **targeted approaches** to reach and involve specific audience.

Dario Carrera from Save the Children Italy focused on an approach centered on **social innovation** to redesign local interventions in more flexible, non-linear fashion. This approach responds to the specific characteristics of each territory and considers community participation a key principle.

Following their interventions, the partners and other participants asked a few questions to the speakers. Here are the main takeaways of the discussion:

- **Banning social networks**. Both Debora Barletta and Pim van den Dool agreed that banning minors from social networks is not the right answer, whereas the educational commnity should foster media and technology literacy instead.
- **Involvement of young people**. Key element is to start with topics they were passionate about and provide a good share of fun.
- **Institutions' role in challenging disinformation**. Debora Barletta stressed the underlying wellbeing of a community as a key factor of resilience. During the covid epidemy, young people suffered the most from the social disconnection provisions and were never compensated for the sacrifice.

Day#2 – 11/03

Session #5 – Panel discussion: Legal and political responses to Disinformation

The second day of activity opened with a brief wrap-up of the main findings of the previous day, followed by a panel discussion involving academic, researchers, and practitioners on the topic of legal and political responses to the challenges posed by disinformation. After a brief description of each panelists' field of activity, the discussion explored the structural nature of disinformation.

- **Felis Kwadwo Nketia**, from The CIVICS Hub (Germany) argued that disinformation should be understood as **a symptom of deeper democratic vulnerabilities** rather than merely a problem of false content.
- **Friederike Quint**, PhD candidate from the TU in Munchen (Germany), remarked that platform governance systems (moderation policies, reporting mechanisms, and community guidelines) influence user responses and noted a growing tendency for platforms, particularly those based in the United States, to **shift responsibility onto users** to identify harmful or misleading content.
- **Lisa Ginsborg** from EDMO Italy underscored the complexity of defining disinformation itself, noting that it often overlaps with hate speech, discrimination, illegal content, and AI-generated material that may not be unlawful. In this regard, a **"whole-of-society" approach** is needed and must engage multiple actors and perspectives.

The third round focused on practical contributions, particularly in relation to young people and local contexts.

- Lisa Ginsborg highlighted EDMO's network of 14 hubs, which reflects the **dual global and local nature of disinformation**. These hubs implement a range of initiatives, including media literacy programmes tailored to different age groups, educational materials such as glossaries and webinars, AI-focused learning, and collaborations such as the Italian Digital Media Observatory's work with ANSA to explain disinformation to children.

- Kwadwo Nketia raised concerns about **user engagement**, noting that most individuals do not read platform rules or guidelines, making it unrealistic to expect them to independently navigate complex regulatory and informational environments.
- Friederike Quint emphasized the potential of **online communities to counter disinformation**, while also identifying the challenge of mobilising largely passive audiences and encouraging more active and critical participation.

The discussion also addressed broader societal dynamics and the role of collaborative approaches to **knowledge production** (such as Wikipedia) and to **boycotting** as ways to balance the asymmetry of power between platform ownership (whose business models is creating closed information ecosystems) and users.

One group photo taken at the meeting venue

Session #6 – Group activity: mapping challenges and opportunities

In the following activity, participants were randomly divided into four groups and had a chance to discuss visible and deep causes of the spread of disinformation and potential solutions.

- **Low trust in institutions** is rooted in deeper mistrust, weak political commitment to address disinformation, and concerns over the use of institutional powers. **Some national and international political actors benefit from polarization**, contributing both to its visibility and persistence.
- Mainstreaming of disinformation is driven by underlying **platform business models that prioritise engagement and profit**. This includes the amplification of emotionally appealing, highly visual fake news.
- **Rapid technological change and AI growth intensify deeper social issues**. The lack of investments in media literacy, critical thinking, dialogue capacity, and public interaction spaces make society less resilient towards disinformation.
- The challenges of countering disinformation are reinforced by deeper **social and economic inequalities**, which increase susceptibility to simplified and divisive narratives.

Following the reflection on challenges, the groups were asked to come up with specific objectives:

- Generate youth media literacy.
- Enhance platform regulation and demand their accountability.
- Build collective knowledge and promote collective action through participatory processes.
- Mobilise trusted ecosystems of allied, institutions and stake/needholders.

The iceberg metaphore was used to reflect on visible and deeper trends

Session #7 – SEED activities in the next months

Finally, the afternoon activities of the second day were attended only by partners and associates. In the first half, participants grouped in national cluster (Jugendstiftung and TU Munchen for Germany; Rutgers, GDD and Dutch National youth Council for the Netherlands; ICEI, MUERF/Monash and City of Prato for Italy) and discussed in details the activities WP2 to WP9. In the second and last part, participants shared and confronted their ideas.

The following table sums up some of the most relevant findings.

	Italy	**Germany**	**Netherlands**
Mapping (WP2-3-4)	Target**:** Youth (11–21 y.o.) Focus groups adapted to target (age, etc.) → for mapping Networking with stakeholders related	Target: Youth (13–18 y.o.), from cities and rural areas To be reached through network of teachers Survey + focus groups.	Target: Teachers, Health professionals in schools (nurses, psychologists), Vocational education, municipal officers Young people aged 16–20

	to topics identified in mapping	Topic to be investigated: Use of social networks Challenges Needs & requests	Focus groups, interviews, discussions Build a Youth Advisory Board
Training (WP5-6-7)	Target: young ppl & youth workers Connecting w/ existing events (multipliers)	Experience and training modules are ready. Training could be paired with / delivered during school conferences.	Target: Adults: teachers, nurses, health professionals, and whoever comes out from mapping Young people: it can be difficult to involve them for 12 hours. Peer education to be explored.
Co-design (WP8)	Contest among young people	School conference project	Contest among students, with a jury of YP (advisory committee)
International meeting (WP9)	Using evaluation of WP 1 as basis Dates: to be set before Summer, ideally Feb 2027	Objectives: get inspiration, prepare future activities, showcase what we did so far	Involved: partners, associates, external experts

The evaluation

In general, the meeting was appreciated by the respondents. The average rating for the **meeting as a whole is 8,6/10**, with both the **venue** (9,8/10) and the **food** (10/10!) getting the highest score.

While receiving a good (8/10) rating, **the flow** was considered by several participants as improvable, in particular by dedicating more **time and space for exchanging with partners** on specific actions, even if that should come at expenses of panel interventions or general reflection on the topic.

The connection with partners ("*It was lovely meeting you all*"); the reciprocal inspiration ("*you are an inspiring group of people*"); and a positive attitude towards the next two years of cooperation ("Y*ou set a great base for our cooperation*") are the most significant legacy of the meeting, together with several inputs for the next in-person event in the Netherlands (in short: exchange on the implementation of WPs in the different countries, and planning future activities).

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0		