EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Project name and acronym:	SEED - Supporting European Youth Engagement against Disinformatio
Participant:	STICHTING RUTGERS
PIC number:	944918614

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number:	WP3 - D3.1		
Event name:	Mapping weak spots and building trust networks #Netherlands		
Type:	Event		
In situ/online:	In-situ		
Location:	Utrecht		
Date(s):	21/04/2026, 12/05/2026, ongoing		
Website(s) (if any):	https://icei.it/en/progetti/seed/		
Participants			
Female:	18, in group of young people | 50, in group of professionals		
Male:	4, in group of young people | 11, in group of professionals		
Non-binary:	2 in group of young people		
From country 1 [Netherlands]:	85		
Total number of participants:	85	From total number of countries:	1

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

As part of Work Package 3, Rutgers conducted a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify the key challenges related to dis- and misinformation on sexuality and relationships, explore how young people can be supported in becoming more resilient to dis- and misinformation, and map existing knowledge, initiatives and stakeholders in the Netherlands. The activities focused on three target groups: (A) young people, (B) health and education professionals working with young people, and (C) professionals working at the intersection of media literacy, education and dis- and misinformation.

Throughout the report we mix the words disinformation and misinformation. Misinformation reflects young people (and some professionals) describing the unintentional sharing of incorrect information. For example, young people repeating false claims they saw online without realising it being false. Where we spoke to professionals and organisations whose work explicitly addresses the deliberate manipulation of information, such as BENEDMO, we use the term disinformation.

Description group A

On 21 April 2026, Rutgers hosted an interactive consultation with 24 young people aged 16–27 at its office in Utrecht. The participants were recruited by our partner NJR (the Dutch National Youth Council) as part of a broader youth participation program. The group represented a diverse mix of ages, genders, cultural backgrounds and educational pathways, while sharing a strong interest in social issues and civic engagement.

During the session, participants discussed how they encounter information and misinformation about sexuality on social media, which platforms they use, which topics they most frequently see misinformation about, how they assess the reliability of online information, and what they believe is needed to strengthen young people's resilience against misinformation. The session consisted of facilitated group discussions in which participants shared experiences, reflected on examples from social media and formulated recommendations for future educational interventions.

Description group B
On 12 May 2026, Rutgers organized a consultation meeting with 61 professionals working in the field of sexual and reproductive health and education. Participants included sexual health nurses (Sense), public health nurses, sexuality educators, sexologists and other professionals who work directly with young people in educational and healthcare settings.

The objective of the meeting was to collect professional perspectives on dis- and misinformation related to sexuality and relationships. Participants completed interactive polls using Mentimeter and took part in facilitated discussions on the prevalence of misinformation, the topics most affected, young people's susceptibility to misinformation, and strategies to strengthen their resilience. The professionals contributed insights based on their daily work with young people, providing valuable practice-based knowledge that complemented the perspectives gathered from the youth consultation.

Description group C
In addition to these stakeholder consultations, Rutgers mapped the existing landscape of organizations working on media literacy, education and disinformation. We attended two conferences organized by Netwerk Mediawijsheid (the Dutch Network on Media literacy) and BENEDMO (the Belgium and Netherlands hub of the European Digital Media Observatory) and held several discussions with professionals from non-governmental organizations, educational organizations and knowledge institutes.

These activities helped identify existing initiatives, exchange knowledge and explore opportunities for possible collaboration. They also helped position the SEED project within the broader Dutch ecosystem of organizations working to strengthen media literacy and resilience to dis- and misinformation among young people.

Conclusions
The discussions revealed several clear topics around which dis- and misinformation is circulating, as identified by both young people and professionals. These are the topics that should be the focus of the next phase of the project: (1) contraception, hormones, and fertility; (2) abortion; (3) LGBTQ+ issues; (4) first sexual experiences and how sex works; (5) consent and respect; and (6) the manosphere and gender (in)equality.

An important finding was that professionals tend to be more pessimistic about the impact of dis- and misinformation on young people than young people themselves. This difference in perception could be an interesting topic for further research: are young people underestimating the influence of dis- and misinformation, or are professionals primarily focused on risks and less aware of young people's resilience and critical thinking skills? We will explore this difference in the development of the SEED training modules in WP 6, where young people are in the lead in developing the main interventions against dis- and misinformation.

In terms of possible responses, young people and professionals largely agree. Both groups emphasize the importance of comprehensive sexuality education, delivered both in schools and online, as well as strengthening digital literacy education in schools. They also support campaigns involving role models and influencers, as well as holding major social media platforms accountable for moderating and removing dis- and misinformation.

In addition, professionals mention measures such as restricting social media access through age limits or bans. Young people, however, do not support these approaches. Within SEED, our primary focus will be to explore how young people can help build the resilience of their peers against dis- and misinformation.

The mapping exercise also showed that the Netherlands already has a well-developed network of organizations working on media literacy, digital resilience and dis- and misinformation. Through participation in two conference organized by Netwerk Mediawijsheid and BENEDMO (the Belgium and Netherlands hub of the European Digital Media Observatory), and in discussions with professionals from (other) non-governmental organisations, organisations that work in education of young people and knowledge institutes, we identified opportunities to add to existing expertise and possibly collaborate with ongoing initiatives rather than duplicating existing interventions. These conferences and meetings also served as an opportunity to present SEED to the wider media literacy and dis- and misinformation research community, acting as an early dissemination activity for the project.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	27/08/2026	Initial version

Annex: Results SEED Research among target groups (WP3, mapping)

Authors: Marianne Cense (researcher), Daan van Engelen (project lead)

From the survey at the Sense Doedag and Sprint. Bundled in this memo so we can take this into account when developing the next step towards lessons at MBO and the development of tools by young people. In addition to these focus-group conversations, we collected information on existing resources, including via a visit to Media Literacy Day and conversations with organisations.

Research groups:

Young people:

- Group size: 24 young people
- Youngest is 16 years old and oldest is 27 years old
- Smaller group of men and diverse cultural backgrounds

Professionals:

- GGD Sense nurses and education staff — professionals who work with young people on sexuality/sexual health during consultation hours and in the classroom.
- Group size: approximately 100; 61 completed the Mentimeter
- Mostly women, a few men, largely white, a few people of colour.

Results:

First the input from young people is described, then what professionals say about it. Not all questions were asked to both groups.

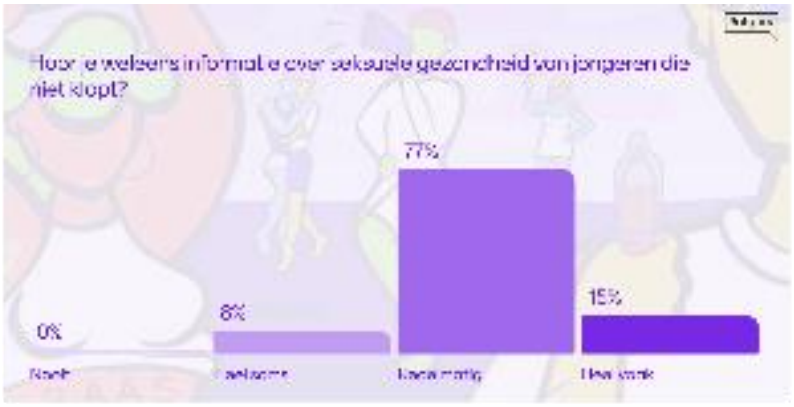
1. Which social media do young people use?

- Instagram and YouTube: almost everyone
- Snapchat and TikTok: many young people
- Reddit: somewhat fewer
- X/Twitter: not many young people.

This question was not asked to professionals.

2. Do you ever come across disinformation in young people's questions or stories?

77% of professionals regularly come across disinformation in young people's questions or stories, 15% even very often.



Translation: Do you ever come across information about young people's sexual health that isn't correct? A-never, B-sometimes, C-regularly, D-a lot

3. Which topics do they encounter a lot of misinformation about?

Contraception:

- I see a lot on TikTok about contraception, temperature tracking, or the pill. Or people who've stopped or switched contraception.

Abortion:

- I saw a foetus being cut up. A Christian friend of mine sent that to me. I think there's quite a bit going around in that area.
- It can also be less extreme, for example about when an abortion is performed. It adds to a feeling of distrust. So it can also be a bit more subtle.

Homosexuality:

- A huge amount. Especially from America. All the problems in society, all the problems can be blamed on trans people and migration.
- You see it a lot in comment sections too, though at the same time those are also opinions. The distinction between disinformation and opinion is difficult. I think that can be a fine line. There are certainly also people who say: this is how I see it. For example, people who say non-binary people are terrible — is that an opinion or is that disinformation? 'For example, is homosexuality a choice?' 'Yes, that falls more under misinformation because it's an opinion.'

Trans/non-binary:

- An influencer's opinion can be harmful. Sometimes you can take your opinion so far that it's no longer an opinion but simply harmful.
- It matters who makes the comment: is it someone in a leading position or not. Everyone wants to belong to the in-group.

Manosphere/gender inequality:

- The online manosphere has become a big thing online. A lot of disinformation is spread there. Things like what makes an alpha male, for example, or that women are the property of men, etc. I'm not part of that myself, but it's definitely very present.

Sex education:

- I've also seen a lot of disinformation around politics, such as information about the 'Week van de Lentekriebels' (the Dutch national sex-education week for primary schools).

Professionals mention many themes, many of which overlap with the ones young people mention above. The main themes professionals raise are (1) contraception, hormones and fertility; (2) male/female roles, division of roles and gender; (3) gender diversity and gender identity; (4) first time having sex and age at first time; (5) consent, respect and how sex 'should' go. Notably, young people did not mention the last two topics, and professionals did not mention abortion, homosexuality or sex education.

A world cloud

4. How susceptible are young people to disinformation?

Young people were asked whether they recognize disinformation. They say they are aware that disinformation circulates and that there are bots posting comments, but that it isn't easy to recognize it.

- I try to be aware of what the source is of what I read. Things like the words used by large organisations — that matters a lot too. It's not easy to trace. Everyone already has preconceived ideas and opinions.
- Comments under a post could also be bots. They could just as easily be computers. Or posts being spread around by bots.
- In the comments I see: this is AI, and then I know it's not right.

Professionals estimate that young people are very susceptible to disinformation (64% think very susceptible; 36% think somewhat susceptible).

Translation: Do you feel like young people are susceptible to misinformation? A- not at all, B-barely, C-somewhat, D-very much

5. What needs to happen to make young people more resilient?

Societal change

Regarding AI and looking everything up

- You can also turn AI off on Pinterest, for instance. If you extend that to other things... There should also be more attention on normalising 'I don't know'. Maybe that could be acknowledged more too.

Countering polarization

- I know research has been done into polarization. When you bring two different groups with different opinions together and have them talk in a low-threshold way, that counters polarization.
- You also have things like the 'living library', for instance: there you can have a conversation with someone about whom prejudices exist. Or a place at school.

Professionals did not mention this area.

Good sex education at school (prebunking)

- I think it's important that at school you learn a lot about different topics. Correct information means less disinformation, for example about sexuality.
- Professionals also focus a lot on this: relationship and sex education. More lessons on this at school. Collective prevention (in the classroom). Age-appropriate information. Conversation in the classroom. Better information about sexual health at a young age. Ensuring a low-threshold place to ask questions.
- Professionals also mention: promoting websites that do provide reliable information. Clearer, easily accessible information. Promoting Sense.info (website for young people with information about relationships, sexuality and your body)

Digital literacy as a school subject

- ‘Schools need to invest more in digital literacy’

- Professionals: share more information about misinformation on social media. Have students look up sources themselves, not ChatGPT answers. Education on how to find the right information. More training on misinformation. Teach young people to look critically at sources. Media literacy training: tackle it at its core — when do you know if something is correct? The problem is broader than sex education. Explain how misinformation arises; teach how to recognize it.

Campaigns

- I was thinking more about, if you're in doubt whether something is fake news or not: a kind of campaign on fake news. A sort of stamp saying 'this isn't correct'.
- Professionals: role models on social media providing correct information. More outreach. More reliable content from trustworthy organisations on TikTok/Instagram/social media. Meeting young people where they are: on socials. Correct information on TikTok. Involving influencers. Marking trustworthy sources on socials. Good influencers. Creating more reliable content. Partnering with influencers. Deploying peers via social media. More condom campaigns.

Social media companies need to intervene more on disinformation

- There's also a role for social media companies. The big platforms need to filter for disinformation.
- Professionals: implement the Digital Services Act to hold social media companies accountable. Tackle 'tech bros'. Regulation on social media. Digital platforms need to take responsibility. Stricter regulation of influencers, etc. Improve algorithms to better catch disinformation.

Better information from GPs

- Specifically about contraception. I think GPs themselves often don't know much about it. Then people go looking for information elsewhere.
- Professionals' input: listen without judgement to their experiences (as a professional, towards young people).

Additional ideas from professionals, not mentioned by young people:

- Social media ban for young people; raise the age limit for social media
- Investment from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS); more funding
- More attention and time devoted to it
- As the 'other' generation, seek more connection with the younger generation. Understand their world.
- Try to understand where the (mis)information comes from.
- Involve parents more. Support parents in how they talk with their children/young people.

- An AI system that automatically inserts the correct information and flags when something is misinformation.

Conclusion

Clear topics emerge, around which disinformation circulates, that both young people and professionals identify. We should focus on these topics in the follow-up process: (1) contraception, hormones, fertility; (2) abortion; (3) LGBTQ; (4) first time having sex and how sex works; (5) consent, respect; (6) manosphere and gender (in)equality.

Professionals are more pessimistic than young people about the impact of disinformation. It would be interesting to investigate this further: are young people 'blind' to the impact here, or are professionals too focused on risks and insufficiently aware of young people's resilience?

In terms of approach, young people and professionals agree on most things: investing in good sex education, both at school and online; and also in digital literacy at school. Campaigns with role models and influencers. And making the big social media platforms responsible for moderating and removing disinformation. Professionals additionally mention a social media ban and an age limit. Young people are not in favour of that. In SEED we mainly want to explore how young people can make other young people more resilient, so that's an additional track alongside what schools and knowledge centres can (already) do.