



Wires-Crossed Community Audit Report Summary Report - Cyprus



**Developing Community Media to Mitigate
the Impact of Fake News**

Executive Summary of the Audit Report for Cyprus

Introduction

The present paper is the executive summary of the findings of the research conducted for the needs of Wires Crossed project in Cyprus between January and March 2020 and were recorded in a paper compiled by CARDET. The research sought to study media literacy in Nicosia as well as examine the extent to which local residents would be interested in receiving training in the field. It also wished to explore a potential interest in supporting or being part of a community media group. Finally, through the research, the organization tried to identify spaces that can be used for the activities of such as groups as well as the availability of technical equipment and resources it can utilize.

The research was conducted as part of the Erasmus+ KA2 project Wires Crossed. The project aims to build up the capacity of local communities around Europe to identify fake news and run citizen-led media initiatives as agents of quality reporting and better informed public discourse.

Methodology

The research was conducted via an online questionnaire with the participation of 100 respondents from the local community. The implementing organization, CARDET, employed a participatory research approach that involved recruiting a Local Media Action Group to assist in the data collection and analysis process.

The Group, comprised by six individuals active in the field of youth, community media, social affairs and citizen engagement received training about the project, its scope and objectives as well as training in techniques and approaches to carry out the community audit effectively. They also assisted in the localization of the questionnaire provided by the project team before they engaged their contacts and associates to collect the information needed. Throughout this process, the project itself, the themes it is dealing with, as well as its objectives, attracted considerable interest by individuals within the community and many highlighted the need for action to empower citizens to tackle fake news and misinformation.

The data collection process was carried out under the supervision and with the support of CARDET's project manager using Google Forms that made possible the secure collection and analysis of the responses. Moreover, to ensure a more representative sample as well as a faster process of data collection, each member of the Local Media Action Group was asked to collect 15-20 responses engaging their peers. They did so via personal contacts, face-to-face interviews and message calling them to fill in the google form while CARDET promoted the online questionnaire via its social media accounts. form while CARDET promoted the online questionnaire via its social media accounts.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the responses collected via the research was divided into three interrelated sub-categories to mirror the structure of the questionnaire used for the needs of the community audit. Following this approach the research team tried to draw conclusions on:

- The media citizens in Nicosia, Cyprus use to get updates and information for news developments
- Their approach towards the news they 'consume' and the media-journalists reporting them
- The media they have at their disposals, their media literacy and the extent to which they would be interested in getting training in the field and support community media
- Available resources and facilities at a local level that can be utilized as part of the efforts to create a community media in the area.

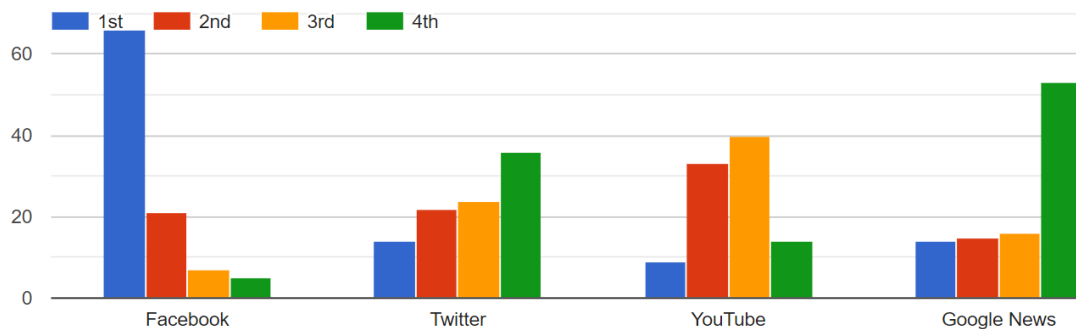
Given that the questionnaire featured both open-ended and closed questions, the analysis sought to attain a general oversight of the realities in the field as well as carry out an in-depth analysis of stances and approaches on the ground that call for assessment.

Results

The findings of the research made evident the important role social media as a news source for people, as the majority of the respondents (52%) stated that they are their primary source of information and media content while an additional 12% ranked the medium as second. They are followed by the traditional media, TV and radio, as 16% ranked TV as its primary source of information and another 21% as the second while in the case of radio 15 ranked it first and 37% as second. It is also important to note that an important segment of the respondents ranked local newspapers as its last source of information and media content. Additionally, as Graph 1 clearly shows, Facebook is by far the most commonly used social media for news content, as 66% of the participants stated that they use it the most, followed by Youtube and Twitter.

Fig. 1

2a. If you access news through social media, which platform do you use? Rank the options below as per the extent you are using them as a source of information and media content.



Apart from that, the participants in the survey showed a fairly developed capacity to evaluate news as the overwhelming majority of them stated that they can identify both the target audience and the perspective of a news story they are reading. Similarly, 67% of them noted that they are aware of the term 'clickbait'. However, it is interesting that though that they expressed awareness about the term, 74.1% of them stated that they 'fell' for clickbaits. A result that highlights the extent to which this 'tactic' is being used by the media and its overall presence in the media reporting. Moreover, it is concerning that the vast majority of the respondents noted that they are aware of fake news reporting in Cyprus making also specific reference to incidents or issues this has happened or is happening.

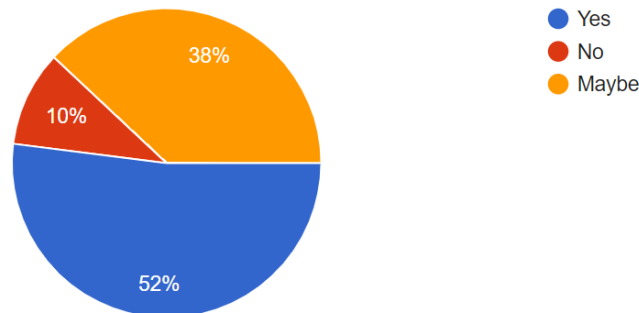
The second section of the research, examining media literacy and whether people would be interested in being trained in the field as well as supporting or participating in a community media, presents a series of interesting findings.

82% of the participants described their media literacy as intermediary or advanced. This though, has not lead to a diminished interest for training in the field. In fact, as fig 2. Illustrates 90% of the respondents expressed an interest in media literacy training with 52% responding yes to the relevant question and a further 38% responded maybe.

Fig. 2

5. Would you be interested in training to help you develop your media literacy?

100 responses

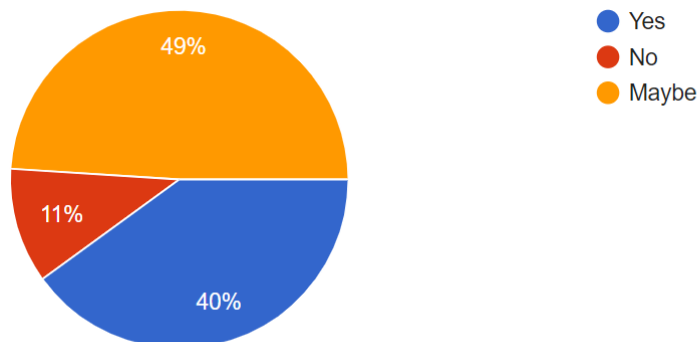


Similarly, the overwhelming majority of the respondents expressed its willingness to support a community media in their local area, with 64% of the participants responding yes and an additional 32% maybe to a relevant question. Moreover, in a follow-up question, they listed local news, cultural affairs, youth and environment as the issues they would like to be covered by a potential local community media. They also conveyed their interest to participate in such an endeavour with, as Fig. 3 shows, just 11% of them responding negatively to a question exploring that prospect.

Fig. 3

10. Would you be interested in participating in a local media team, that will produce community media content for your area?

100 responses



Finally, things seem to be more complicated and unfavourable in the final pillar of the research, assessing the physical assets for a community media initiative in Nicosia. The majority of the participants said that they are not aware of any facilities that can be used by a local media group. Also, a lack of knowledge as to the technical equipment needed for such an endeavour was recorded.

Reflections

The fact that the majority of the respondents are being informed through social media calls for further exploration of the trend as well as catered responses, as they are often a field where disinformation is spread. Moreover, news and reports in social media do not often go through the story verification processes that we would expect from established media outlets while it is often the case that through social media users only interact with accounts with whom they share similar perspectives and views. A parameter that may lead to a subjective interpretation of developments and the state of affairs.

Apart from that, it is evident that clickbaits are being extensively used by media outlets in Cyprus, a sign of low quality reporting. However it is encouraging that most people seem to be aware of the threat 'fake news' pose for the society, recognize click baits as well as the targeting and perspectives of the news they consume. It is also positive that most of the participants expressed an interest in getting engaged in the work and actions of the WIRES CROSSED project, i.e. receive training in media literacy and support or participate in the work of a local community media endeavour.

Consequently, we can deduce that there is a fertile ground in Nicosia, for the project to effectively undertake its planned actions and fulfil its set objectives. In doing so though, it should invest time and efforts to identify and inform people about facilities and equipment they can utilize if they wish to proceed with the development of a community media at a local level.

Next Steps

The findings of the research point towards the need for a dual focus for the project's next steps:

- a) Take advantage of the interest and existing knowledge in the field by the citizens and encourage them to become more active in the public discourse/sphere. This may involve identifying individuals with the interest and capacity to take the next step and connect them with each other
- b) Record all the facilities and equipment already available or needed for the community media endeavour to proceed at a local level.

Wires - Crossed



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