



**HOW DOES  
MISINFORMATION  
IMPACT US?**

**AND WHAT CAN  
WE ACTUALLY DO  
ABOUT IT?**

**RESULTS OF THE  
YOUTH DIALOGUE  
FORUM 2025**

**DEMDIS**



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Visegrad Fund

DEMDIS



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In Bratislava

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# Executive Summary

**Youth Dialogue Forum 2025 (YDF 2025)** as an innovative deliberative forum explored how misinformation affects the everyday lives of young people in Slovakia, Czechia, Poland, and Hungary and what realistic responses are possible at the peer level.

The process combined large-scale digital mapping with face-to-face deliberation. Across two digital discussions, **1,533 participants** generated **187 statements** and cast over **43,000 votes**. **30** Selected participants then co-created practical recommendations during a live forum.

## Key Findings

### Misinformation strains relationships

Young people most strongly perceive **misinformation as a force that makes everyday conversations risky, creates tension in families and friendships, and erodes trust**.

The main differences are within countries, not between them

Across all four V4 countries some young people feel powerless, others remain confident in their ability to act. **Perceived impact does not automatically lead to disengagement**. Many who feel the pressure most strongly still express responsibility and willingness to respond.

### Emotional exhaustion is a major driver of withdrawal

Participants described debate fatigue, avoidance of conflict, strategic disengagement and self-protection through reduced exposure. **Disengagement often emerges from overload**.

# Participant's Recommendations Summary

Five thematic groups co-created practical strategies grounded in everyday situations:

1. **Engage or disengage strategically** - set boundaries and choose battles carefully.
2. **Navigate uncertainty responsibly** - adopt simple habits for evaluating information.
3. **Support others without moralizing** - preserve dignity and relationships.
4. **Stay engaged at lower cost** - remain visible without escalating conflict.
5. **Protect emotional well-being** - regulate exposure and reactions.

## Design Insight

YDF 2025 successfully demonstrates that:

- Disengagement is not a fixed trait.
- Participation depends on careful process design.
- Structured, fair, and rewarding participation strengthens agency.
- Combining civic tech with deliberation bridges scale and depth.

When young people are invited into carefully designed spaces rooted in lived experience, they demonstrate reflection, responsibility, and capacity for cross-border dialogue.



# 1. Introduction, Goals and Framing

Section by Michal Horský

## 1.1. Introduction

Democracy lives through discussion. It rarely collapses at once. It weakens slowly, in small moments when people stop listening, avoid hard talks, or leave shared spaces. In recent years, the increasing impact of misinformation has sped up this decline.

In our work at DEMDIS, we see a clear paradox. Public space is full of opinions and debate, yet many people feel unheard and unsure. The problem is not too few voices. There are too few spaces where disagreement can exist without turning into conflict or silence. We see this most clearly in families, schools, peer groups, and local communities.

The second edition of Youth Dialogue Forum grew organically from this tension. It was not another debate about who is right. It did not try to correct beliefs. It asked a simpler question: What happens to our relationships and sense of agency when misinformation enters daily life? And if harm happens there, what can we do there?

Youth Dialogue Forum 2025 brings together young people from Slovakia, Czechia, Poland, and Hungary. It combines DEMDIS civic tech with live deliberation. It works at community, national, and regional levels at the same time.

This report shows how young people from the V4 region worked on these questions together. It records what they said and how we designed the process to make listening and co-creation possible. It is an invitation to rethink participation and dialogue at a time when certainty is rare and relationships matter more than ever. Welcome!

## 1.2. Goals of YDF 2025

Youth Dialogue Forum 2025 was designed with two complementary layers of goals: thematic goals, focused on what the forum explored, and procedural goals, focused on how the forum was conducted and what it tested as a democratic model.

### 1.2.1. Thematic Goals

The ambassadors chose misinformation as the topic and the forum worked toward two main aims.

1. **Build a shared understanding of how misinformation affects daily life**

Participants explored how misinformation appears in everyday situations. They mapped key impacts and common patterns. The goal was to understand what misinformation does to trust, relationships, and community life.

2. **Create realistic peer-to-peer recommendations**

“When misinformation shows up in real life, what can a young person actually do?” This shifted attention away from abstract fixes and toward responsible action in daily life. The forum aimed to widen the range of responsible actions.

Importantly, the forum did not aim to decide who is right. Its purpose was to expand the range of responsible actions available to individuals and communities, especially in situations where certainty is limited and relationships matter.

### 1.2.2. Procedural Goals

Alongside the thematic focus, YDF 25 pursued procedural goals related to democratic participation and dialogue design.

- Engage and empower those who may not feel like that (yet).
- Create a space for a safe and respectful dialogue.
- Show that meaningful dialogue is possible across differences.
- Produce actionable and usable recommendations.

These goals reflect a broader ambition of YDF: to function both as a forum on misinformation and as a case study in how participatory and deliberative formats can be designed to empower participants and produce reasonable results.



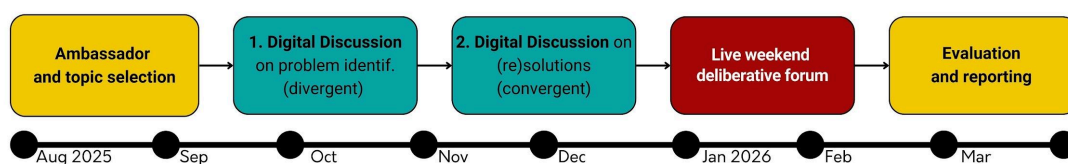
## 1.3. The YDF Approach and Process Design

Youth Dialogue Forum 2025 was intentionally designed as a process, not a one-off event. YDF is built on the conviction that *there are no lazy citizens, only badly designed games (participatory processes)*. Simply said, participation can work if we design it well.

### *Conceptual Flow of the Process.*

The process followed four steps: First, the registered Ambassadors of YDF participatively selected the topic of the forum. Second participants mapped how misinformation affects their daily life. Second, they explored possible responses. Third, selected participants co-created peer recommendations in the live forum.

### **Youth Dialogue Forum 2025 Project Timeline**



### *Combining Civic Tech and Live Deliberation*

Digital DEMDIS discussions<sup>1</sup> allowed scale and diversity. They helped identify shared concerns and points of division without forcing agreement. The live forum allowed deeper reflection and co-creation. It moved from mapping problems to shaping responses.

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<sup>1</sup> The YDF digital discussions ran on the DEMDIS platform Themis. Participants voted on short statements by agreeing, disagreeing, or skipping, and could add their own if needed. The system then grouped participants into opinion groups based on similar voting patterns. It also identified areas of consensus and disagreement by showing which statements received broad support across groups and which ones divided them. More on methodology at: <https://www.demdis.sk/metodika/>

## *Dialogue as Transformation, not Persuasion*

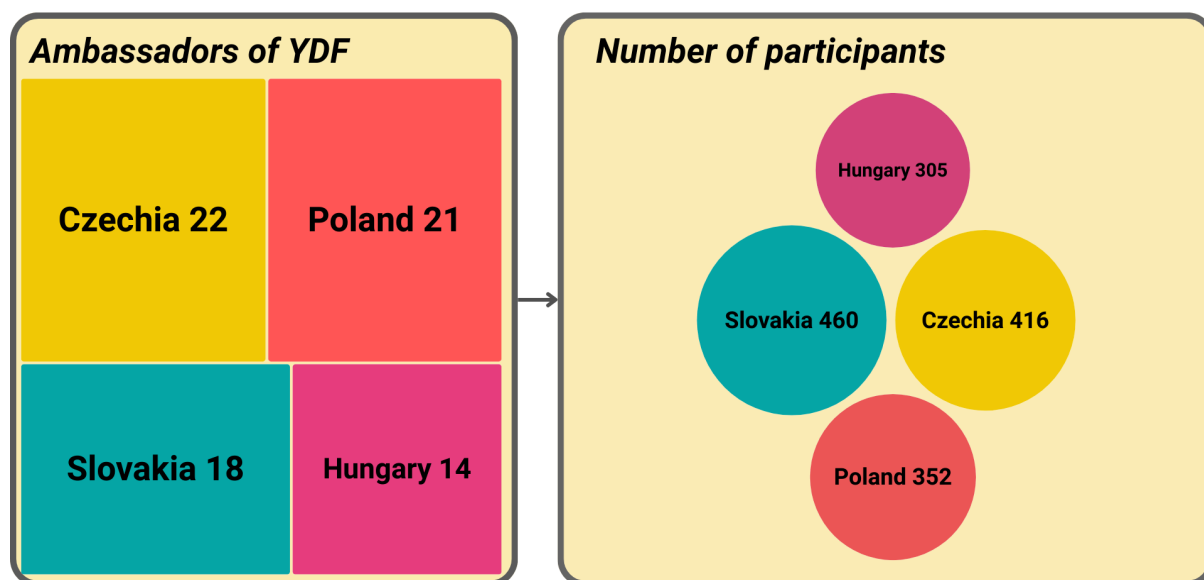
The forum did not try to persuade or win arguments. Dialogue served a different aim. It helped participants see impacts, notice patterns, and expand their options for action. Discussions began with lived experience, not abstract claims. Participants asked what misinformation does to trust and relationships before asking what to do. This made space for disagreement without escalation.

## *Peer-to-peer Logic and Shared Responsibility*

YDF treats young people as active agents. It asks what people can do in their own circles. The key question was simple: What can I do when misinformation appears in a real situation? Responsibility is shared. It depends on context, timing, and care.

## *Participation as a Decentralized System*

The forum uses a decentralized model of Ambassadors of YDF. 75 people and actors from 4 countries engaged diverse communities in the digital discussions across the V4 region. Participation grew through trust networks, not just central outreach.



## *Participation doesn't have to be Boring*

This model of inviting participation through a decentralized network of Ambassadors again proved useful in engaging various social groups and communities. This enabled us to engage different social groups and break the bubbles of information spaces.<sup>2</sup>

Gamification and clear progression paths were used as recognition of effort and engagement. Participants could move from digital discussions to deeper involvement, reinforcing the idea that engagement emerges when people feel their contribution matters.

Below is the global scoreboard<sup>3</sup> of the top 10 most active Ambassadors of YDF. The number of votes from their custom link to the digital discussions were translated into points (1:1). Top 6 Ambassadors automatically gained the invitation to the live forum.

Source	Votes
Antonín Šváb	6084
Ewelina Kopciuch	4004
Monika Balcová	3506
Annabella Topos	3371
Anton Slesarenko	2785
Viktória Anna Kulich	2612
Kata Eszter Kálmán	2205
Lukáš Kocera	1301
Rafał Wasilik	1292
Vee Tranová (Non-competitive)	1283
Šimon Mareček	1279

---

<sup>2</sup> On top of that many of the Ambassadors of YDF 25 were participants or ambassadors in last year's edition. This shows us the meaning in repeating the iterations and building on the foundations of each edition.

<sup>3</sup> Link to the full global scoreboard:  
[https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/c7d19f97-6a58-4008-9604-66c92d2a6147/sources\\_scoreboard?language=en](https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/c7d19f97-6a58-4008-9604-66c92d2a6147/sources_scoreboard?language=en)



## 2. Topic Selection Process

Section by Michal Horský

The goal of the topic selection process was to identify a shared topic for Youth Dialogue Forum 2025 that would be rooted in lived experience, relevant to local communities, and meaningful across borders.

To ensure legitimacy and ownership, the process was designed as participatory from the beginning. Clear criteria for topic selection were defined in advance, and Ambassadors were invited to propose and prioritize topics through a structured process that included a kickoff email, individual reminders, a mid-process update, and a transparent announcement of results on 30 September.

To aggregate preferences fairly and efficiently, the civic tech tool All Our Ideas (AOI) was used. Out of 70 registered Ambassadors, **55 actively engaged** in the topic selection by submitting votes.

AOI enabled participants to compare topic pairs and add new ideas, producing a collective priority list without overburdening participants. The results showed a clear preference for themes related to misinformation, critical thinking, polarization, and trust.

The highest-ranked topic - *"Fake news, real effects: How misinformation spreads in local contexts"* - was selected as the core theme of YDF 2025, while the full ranking informed the design of subsequent digital discussions and the live forum.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The table with the ranked results can be found in the annex under the heading 6.2.

### 3. Identified Impacts of Misinformation

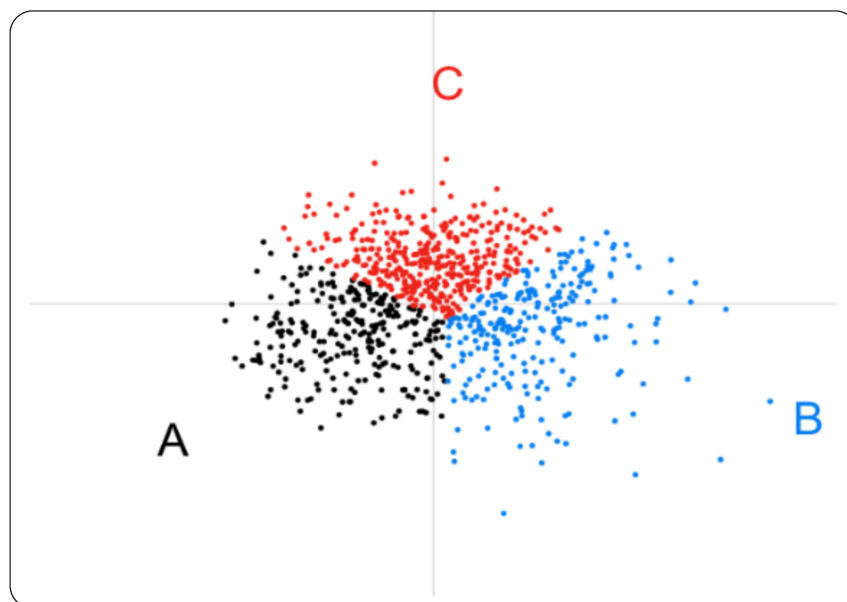
Section by Klára Kaničárová

#### 3.1. Digital Discussions Overview

Two digital DEMDIS discussions were organized as part of this process. Together, they engaged 1,533 participants, generated 187 statements, and received 43,000+ votes. This level of participation shows strong interest and active engagement with the topic of misinformation.<sup>5</sup> This section focuses on the first discussion, which explored how misinformation affects daily life and communities.<sup>6</sup>



The results<sup>7</sup> revealed the following clusters of distinct opinion groups:



<sup>5</sup> The national datasets for both discussions can be found in the Annex under 6.1.

<sup>6</sup> The discussion ran between 8. 10. and 7. 11. 2025.

<sup>7</sup> The report can be found on

[https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/fc35b11e-6560-4b51-a75d-437d38deb2d4/external\\_report?language=en](https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/fc35b11e-6560-4b51-a75d-437d38deb2d4/external_report?language=en)

The main question of the first discussion was simple: **How does misinformation affect daily life and communities?** The goal was to map how young people experience the impact of misinformation in their everyday lives and in their communities.

Two hypotheses guided the reading of the results. The first assumed that misinformation is perceived as having a high impact on the country and on trust towards other citizens and members of the ambassadors' community. The second assumed that a higher perceived impact would be linked to a lower willingness to engage, cooperate, and stay involved.

To organize what emerged, the findings were grouped into five impact areas. Misinformation:

1. makes everyday conversations risky,
2. overwhelms us with uncertainty and slowly erodes our ability to trust,
3. affects some people more than others and turns attempts to help into tension,
4. discourages people from speaking up and pushes many to withdraw from discussions and public life,
5. overwhelms us emotionally.

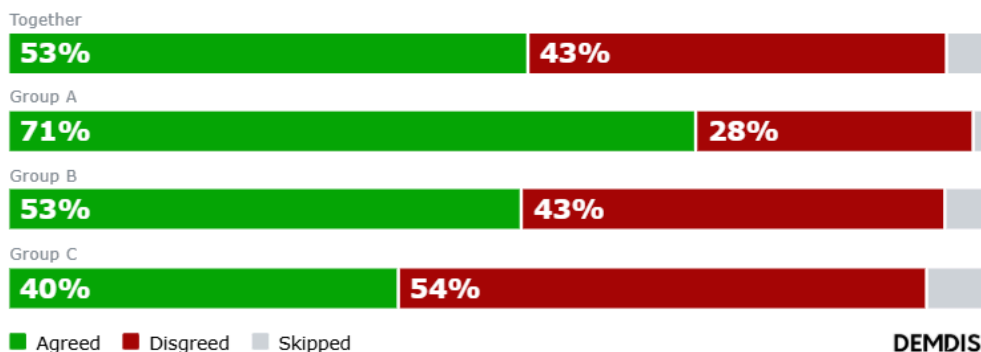
These categories help show the main patterns in a clear way and were also the basis of the thematic groups on the live forum.

At the same time, the discussion showed that these impacts are not felt equally by everyone. Misinformation affects young people in similar ways, but not to the same degree. For some, it is only an occasional annoyance. (2) For others, it affects daily life. (16) Many agree that what they value most - their relationships - has been affected by misinformation at some point. Still, not everyone has lost trust in people they used to be close to, and not everyone has lost trust more broadly in others in their country.



## General Attitudes of 3 Distinct Opinion Groups

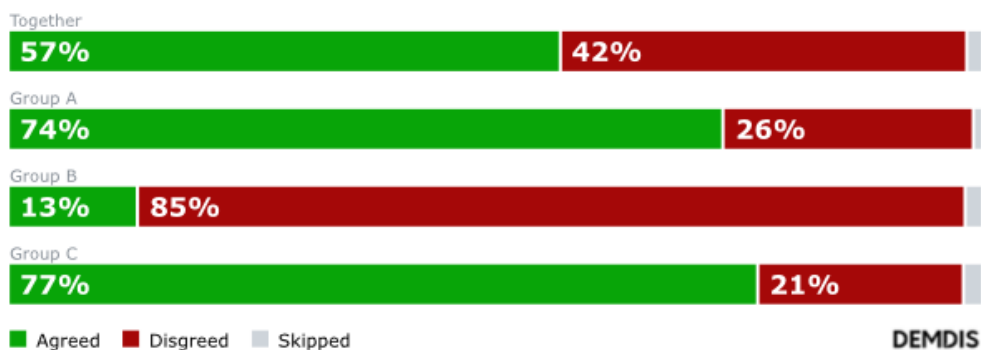
**Generally speaking, I feel I can trust other people in my country.**



**Misinformation has a big influence on my country today.**



**I feel that misinformation has a big impact on my life.**



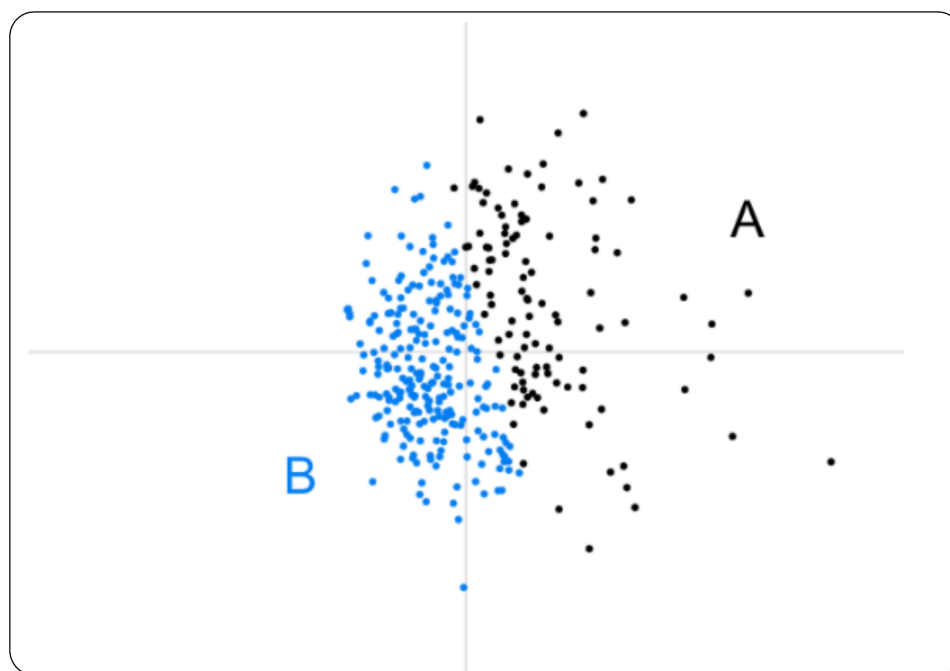
## Overview of the Second Digital Discussion

The second discussion<sup>8</sup> served as the starting point for the live forum. The main question was: *How do we help each other deal with constant misinformation?*

The goal was to crowdsource personal experiences and peer ideas about how young people can support one another when facing misinformation online or in their communities. The focus is on everyday coping strategies, not expert solutions. The results were used for the live forum design.



The resulting<sup>9</sup> opinion group clustering:



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<sup>8</sup> Open from 17. 11. to 17. 12. 2025.

<sup>9</sup> Results of the discussion:

[https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/4d017d77-7490-4e5a-b04c-a21bf0762189/external\\_report?language=en](https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/4d017d77-7490-4e5a-b04c-a21bf0762189/external_report?language=en)

## 3.2. Misinformation Makes Everyday Conversations Risky

Misinformation sometimes pushes participants to speak up and correct false claims. (6) They agree that avoiding facts is not the solution. On the contrary, they believe that facts are essential for verifying misinformation and that oversimplification does not stop its spread.

Because most of them are very active on social media, they see a strong sense of responsibility in our online behaviour. They agree on the need to think before sharing content, to verify information, and to avoid sharing posts just because the algorithm rewards them with attention and likes.

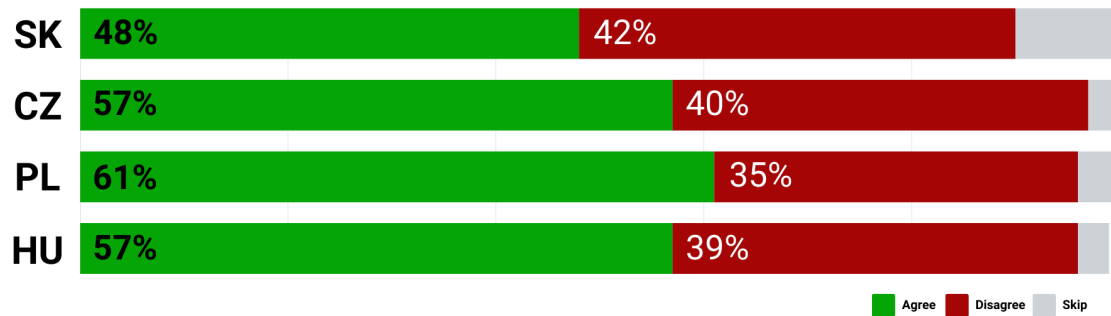
**I believe young people can be part of the solution – by verifying facts and talking openly about them in their communities.**



The participants realise that no one is immune to misinformation. For this reason, they see themselves as a part of the solution. They feel responsible for helping more vulnerable groups – especially seniors – to learn how to recognise reliable online sources and avoid misleading information.

However, constant exposure to misinformation can be exhausting. On some days, they feel confident enough to speak up. (6) On other days, they prefer not to get involved. This fatigue often leads to silence rather than action. Across Hungary, Czechia, and Poland, they largely agree that misinformation discourages us from speaking up.

***“The spread of misinformation sometimes makes me avoid speaking up.” (8)***



### 3.3. Misinformation Disrupts Relationships

Misinformation doesn't stop at the screen; it reaches into everyday lives, most visibly in relationships. Participants often see it in their own families. Many of them feel sad when they see older relatives trust everything they come across online. (24) Misleading content reaches people of all ages on social media. Older relatives may be more affected when these platforms are less familiar to them.

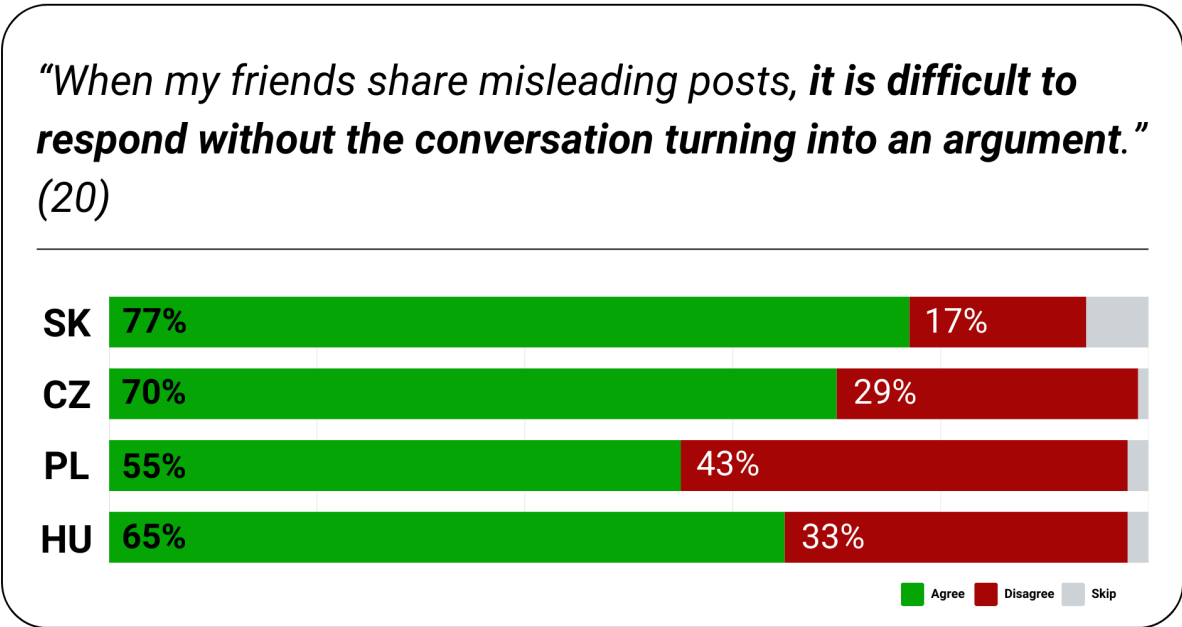
**I feel sad when older relatives believe everything they see online.**



Across the V4, there are differences in how strongly misinformation harms relationships. The loss of trust in people we used to be close to was reported more often in Slovakia and Czechia. In Hungary and Poland, this experience was less common overall. In Poland,



participants more often described that confronting friends who share misleading posts tends to lead to an argument rather than a calm conversation.



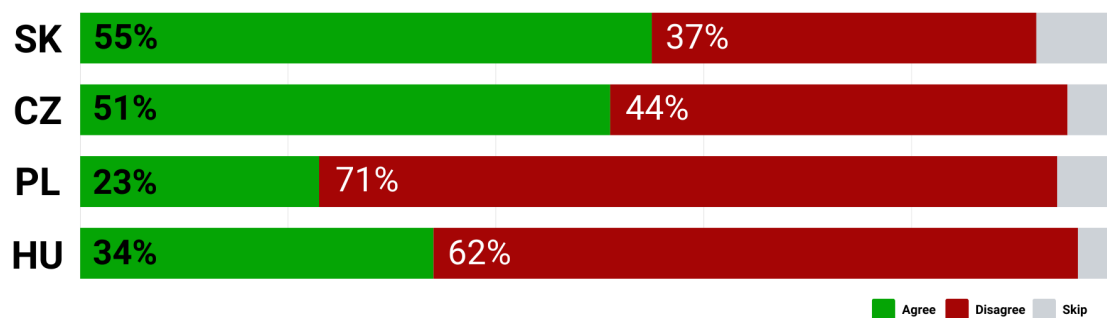
### 3.4. Misinformation Erodes our Trust

Misinformation fuels division and polarisation in our communities. (53) Even when participants correct false claims, it rarely changes people’s minds. (18) This may leave them frustrated and push them further apart. They see people in their communities arguing over stories that are completely made up, yet they still believe them. (28) Over time, trust can weaken, suspicion can grow, and it may become harder to start or maintain conversations across differences.



Still, they do not see this as inevitable. Even in times of division and polarisation, people can come together. The pressure on trust is not the same everywhere, though. In Czechia and Slovakia, losing trust in people they used to be close to is more common. In Poland and Hungary, this seems less common.

***"I have lost trust in people I used to be close to because of misinformation." (11)***



The effects also reach beyond our communities. As a result, young people feel less motivated to engage and take an active role in society. (55)

### 3.5. Misinformation Discourages People from Speaking Up

One of the identified effects of misinformation turned out to be its potential to "poison the well" - introducing enough confusion and fatigue to discourage people from engaging in debate and pushing them to withdraw from certain public arenas.

## **The spread of misinformation sometimes makes me avoid speaking up.**



At the same time, there was a wide agreement that the participants had encountered a situation where they themselves had believed a piece of misinforming news, and this was something that was bound to happen in the information landscape. It would therefore follow that looking for solutions might start not with trying to eradicate all misinformation, but with creating more supportive and open communities (79) that would mitigate the discouraging effect. In many cases, the first step is simply to start a conversation. (39)

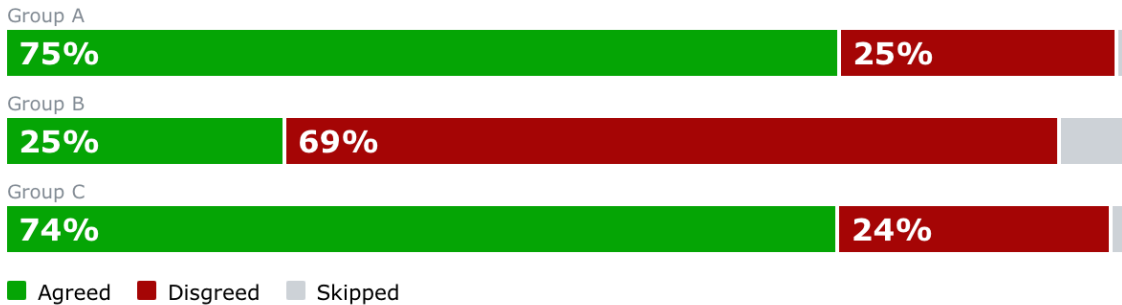
## **I once believed something that turned out to be misinformation. Who didn't? It happens with anyone. It is called trust. Sometimes you trust in the wrong person. It is natural.**



### **3.6. Misinformation Overwhelms our Emotions**

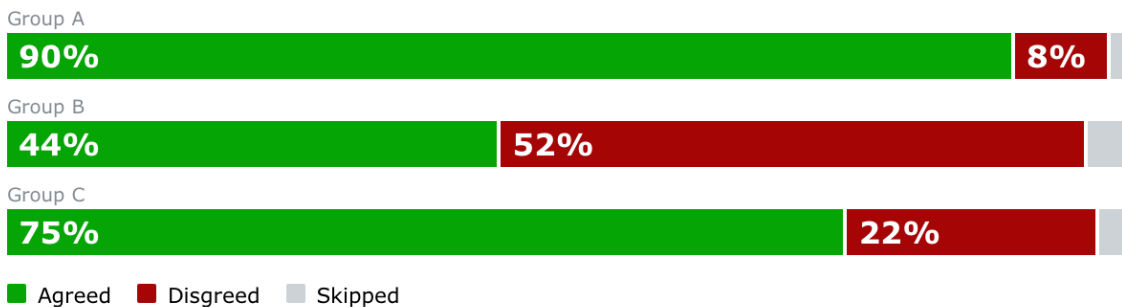
Misinformation spreads so fast that participants often feel it is already too late to correct it. (58) By the time people react, the damage may already feel done. Dealing with this can feel like a never-ending battle, which many may experience as draining. (56) Participants are not fully aligned on how strongly they feel this pressure. Some feel powerless, while others stay confident and still believe they can push back. (7)

## Misinformation makes me feel powerless to influence what happens in my country.



For many, self-protection becomes a practical response. Some change their online behaviour by pausing before sharing or checking sources more often. (41) Others step back because constant checking may be exhausting. For some, this means unfollowing certain profiles or pages altogether. (21)

## I've stopped following certain pages because I got tired of checking what's true and what's not.



Exposure also differs from person to person. Misinformation appears across platforms, but not everyone sees the same content or the same volume. For some, reducing exposure is a way to protect their mental space, while others continue to use social media much as before.



### 3.7. Shared Concerns that Connect Us

Even with these different experiences, participants shared concerns that connected them across the V4. A key shared concern was AI, not as a separate topic, but as a potential amplifier of the impacts they already described. Many felt that false stories spread faster than verified facts because they sound more exciting, and they worried that AI could make this worse by producing convincing and sensational content at scale.

They often named critical thinking as the main defence against misinformation, but they felt a stronger urgency in the AI era. (26) AI may make it harder to tell what is true and what is false. (83) They also stressed that critical thinking alone is not enough. (80) They raised a practical question about skills needed to use AI safely, and where these skills can be learned.

**I feel that if we don't learn to think critically, AI will easily deceive us.**

Together



■ Agreed ■ Disagreed ■ Skipped

They also pointed to social media regulation as part of the response. This was seen as outside their direct control, but important because platform rules shape what people see and share. Without stronger rules and enforcement, misinformation can already feel like a never-ending battle, and AI could make it even harder to keep up.

**Big tech companies are partly responsible for employing independent fact-checkers and protecting users againstst disinformation.**

Together



■ Agreed ■ Disagreed ■ Skipped

### 3.8. What do the Digital Modules Tell Us

Across the V4, false information is seen as a major issue, but the main differences are within countries, not between them. In every country, young people are divided in how powerless they feel in the face of misinformation. Some feel they can still influence what happens, while others struggle to see how they can make a difference. But it is a positive sign that in every country there are young people who do not feel powerless.

This shows that responding is possible, and it points to a shared task. Schools, social media platforms, and governments must do their part, because they shape the information space. At the same time, young people also have a role, because their everyday choices online and in their communities affect what they amplify and what they challenge. So what does this role look like in practice?

## 4. From Impact to Response

Section by Tereza Richtáriková

### 4.1. Why Impact Mapping is not Enough

If we wish to understand the problem we are facing, impact mapping is imperative. There is, however, a point when it stops being sufficient, and that point is the beginning of the search for practical solutions.

Much like anybody else, young people are prone to disillusion when they feel their voice is not being listened to, which is why we need to move past the understanding of the problem towards finding actionable steps. An agency-centered design prioritizing practical solutions the attendees can implement in their day-to-day life mitigates the need for external powerholding stakeholders. Instead it functions as a grassroots initiative, removing the need for political buy-in that plagues many initiatives.

When we understand harm, the next logical step is to identify reductions or responses and seek the return of the agency that is widely perceived as lacking. The result is a flexible, immediate, and above all accessible model that offers insight and empowers at the same time.



Photo by Ola Ozimek

## 4.2 From Digital Space to Live Forum

While the digital components of the overall design aimed to map the problem, the design of the live event prioritized two connected goals:

1. Gain Common Understanding of the major impacts of misinformation on our lives and communities (What is it and what it does)
2. Create peer to peer recommendations on **what we can actually** do in our lives.

### 4.2.1. Selecting the Participants

The success and relevancy of participatory models depend heavily on the quality of their sortition process. Taking into account the streamlined design of the forum, the group participating in the live event was formed by combining two following subsets:

1. Participants of the online discussion (24)
2. Top 6 Ambassadors (6)

Registration for the sortition was available to each participant of the digital discussion that had voted for at least 35 statements. The registered participants were later chosen in a live-streamed lottery according to following criteria:

1. Country of residence
2. Gender

Age was not chosen as a relevant marker due to the nature of the youth forum (standard applied age range of 17 to 30 years of age). The four partner countries were represented equally. The resulting matrix contained eight cohorts (four nationalities and two genders). The cohorts were filled by [live-streamed lottery](#) process and yielded 24 participants out of 98 registered. The forum went ahead with 23 attendees in this category.<sup>10</sup>

The six Ambassador participants were chosen according to the scoreboard tracking the number of participants their affiliate links had brought into the digital discussion. The action-oriented design connected representativity with the willingness to engage and ensured both a wide range of voices and the ability to amplify them outward.

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<sup>10</sup> One of the participants didn't arrive although he accepted the invitation. Without any prior notice and further communication we weren't able to fill the last slot on the spot.

#### 4.2.2. The Value of Face-to-face Dialogue

As outlined above, the shift from mapping to empowerment and solution building was the pivotal moment of both the design and the physical manifestation of the forum. The digital components are indispensable for a wide-ranging, efficient data collection and mapping, but the search for solutions will never be complete without the element of face-to-face deliberation. This is all the more important for young people, whose fluency in the digital realm is generally taken for granted. Despite this, it is becoming increasingly clear that physical presence and the ability to connect outside the strictly appointed tasks of the forum design is absolutely indispensable to functional dialogue, cooperative solution-making and civic engagement at large. If we aim for empowerment, it remains necessary to have one's ideas confronted in a respectful, productive environment. The specific design steps of the recommendation crafting require social connection and peer learning.

#### 4.2.3. Working with Realistic Situations

The physical presence of the participants and their direct confrontation offer a chance at sharing real-life concerns in a safe environment that fosters learning. This grounds the discussion in lived experience, which makes it difficult to dismiss an opposing opinion out of hand and leads towards a careful examination of both commonalities and differences. The sense of cooperation despite potential disagreements leads to empowerment and enhances agency.

This corresponds strongly with the founding idea of the forum as a grassroots, decentralized and self-empowering design. Participation based on experience creates engaged citizens and expands the effects of the forum far beyond its immediate goals.

#### 4.2.4. From Shared Experience to Peer Solutions

The basis in experience, besides being empowering, allows for cooperative strategy-building. The potential facilitated pushback or a discussion leads to refinement of both ideas or stances and the final recommendations, allows for precise targeting and raises limit awareness. The resulting consensus, which has been very tangibly negotiated and cooperatively built, lends certainty to participants and relevance to the recommendations. The process guarantees final outcomes that are consensual, actionable and grounded in a strong sense of ownership.



## 4.3. Thematic Responses to 5 Identified Impacts Areas

The design of the live forum was based on five thematic groups according to the results of the first digital discussion, titled *How does misinformation affect daily life and communities?* and supported by the tentative solution-finding of the second digital discussion titled *Don't panic, organize. How do we help each other deal with constant misinformation?* The following groups were identified on the basis of the main impact areas outlined in section 3:

1. Engage or Disengage
2. Trust, Confusion & Sense-Making
3. Supporting Others Without Preaching
4. Participation, Voice & Withdrawal
5. Emotional Self-Protection

When selecting participants for the groups, the following criteria were taken into account:

1. declared topic preference<sup>11</sup>
2. even distribution of partner participants among the groups
3. even distribution of the four nationalities among the groups

The goal of the facilitated group discussions was to produce one to three actionable recommendations suitable for everyday experience, with the possibility of additional short overview of their actionability and limits. The slight difference in the format of the output reflects the individual group results.

### 4.3.1. Group 1: Engage or Disengage

The goal of this group was to understand how misinformation strains personal relationships and to co-create realistic ways to communicate, set boundaries, or disengage without escalating conflict or harming relationships.

Recommendation 1: **Prepare for debate**

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<sup>11</sup> The polling for preference was done in a dedicated WhatsApp group set up for communication between the organizers and the attendees.

Preparation includes awareness of the environment and the presence of limits, the sourcing of information and preparation of strategy and arguments. It is good to be aware of the tone one is using and to consider our own motivation for engaging. If the boundaries are crossed, it might be good to disengage and potentially revisit the discussion later.

Recommendation 2: **Be aware of the environment**

Awareness of the environment includes consciousness of one's debate partner, their background and the shared connection. If the atmosphere turns charged or was not suitable for discussion in the first place, it is important to know when to quit.

#### 4.3.2. Group 2: Trust, Confusion & Sense-Making

Group 2 aimed to clarify how misinformation creates confusion and erodes trust, and co-create simple peer habits for navigating uncertainty, information overload, and competing claims.

Recommendation 1: **Break the social media bubble, have real world conversations**

Recommendation 2: **Do not be afraid to acknowledge your mistake and change your opinion, (or not have an opinion) .**

Recommendation 3: **Scroll consciously**

When engaging with content, it is important to evaluate the three following categories:

- Credibility of the author: experience, education, emotional intelligence
- Content: generalization, appeal to emotions, respectful language, sources, certainty (100% sure?)
- Fact-checking, using other sources: comments, google lens, science

#### 4.3.3. Group 3: Supporting Others Without Preaching

Group 3 focused on understanding why some people (often seniors, but not only) are more exposed to misinformation and on co-creating respectful, realistic ways to offer support while protecting dignity and trust.

Recommendation 1: **Step in their shoes**

The group stressed the importance of trying to understand the other side's point of view and creating an environment of understanding rather than hostility. It was further noted that this doesn't always work.

#### Recommendation 2: **Airplane mask**

The participants noted that it is imperative to help oneself before helping others, especially in situations that feel overwhelming. Disengaging and leaving the conversation is sometimes necessary.

#### Recommendation 3: **Teach how to fish**

The group recommended that when coming across new info, it is important to consider context and intention. It was also acknowledged that this is a long-term, non-linear and time-consuming solution.

### 4.3.4. Group 4: Participation, Voice & Withdrawal

The goal of Group 4 was to understand how misinformation discourages participation and self-expression, and co-create safer, lower-cost ways for young people to stay engaged without burning social capital or exposing themselves to harm.

#### Recommendation 1: **Keep your responses factual and source the argument**

The group added the reasoning that this keeps the engagement from becoming emotional and personal, and pointed out a limitation when one doesn't feel confident in the facts.

#### Recommendation 2: **Understand the other side and focus on commonalities**

The stated reasoning behind this recommendation is that this makes the other side feel heard and helps keep the engagement focused on the topic. The group pointed out a limitation that this will not work if the other side is aggressive and violent, which complicates finding common points.

#### Recommendation 3: **Accept the limitations of your knowledge, keep learning**

The group based the recommendation on the reasoning that there is no limit on knowledge and that information might change, therefore it is important to refresh it. This might be complicated by limited access to information and by exhaustion.

#### 4.3.5. Group 5: Emotional Self-Protection

Group 5 set out to understand the emotional impact of misinformation and co-create healthy coping habits that protect well-being while maintaining a realistic level of engagement and awareness.

##### Recommendation 1: **Take a break from social media, report and block the posts**

The group recommended that this be used when one feels overwhelmed. The recommended step helps to feel grounded and focus on important tasks. The stated limitation was time.

##### Recommendation 2: **Be self aware of your triggers, approach with clear mind**

The group recommended this step when receiving new information or stepping into an argument, and stated the reasoning of (presumably retaining) objectivity. The group also acknowledged the limitations of difficult emotional regulation in the immediate situation or the lack of time to emotionally regulate, and also lack of patience.

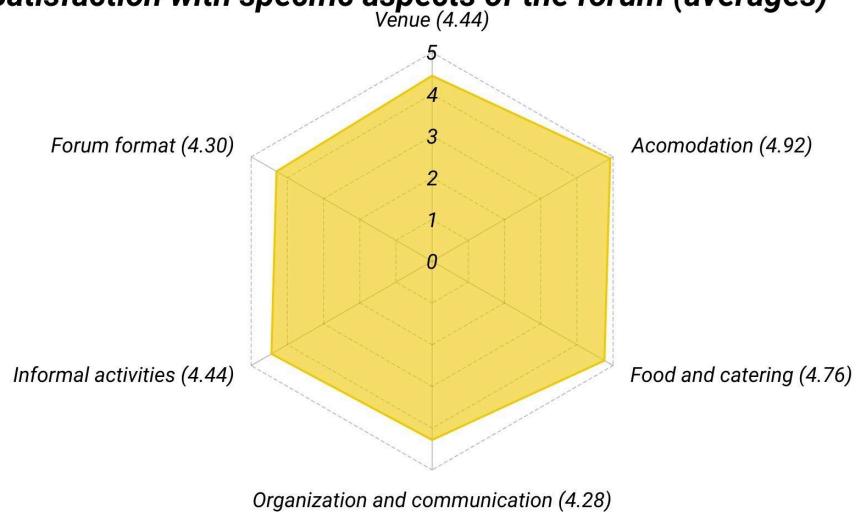
## 4.4. Feedback Aggregations

In the follow-up to the live forum, a feedback form was sent to the participants, collecting 25 responses out of 29 attendees. This section is dedicated to aggregations of the feedback.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Participants overall rating of the forum (averages)***



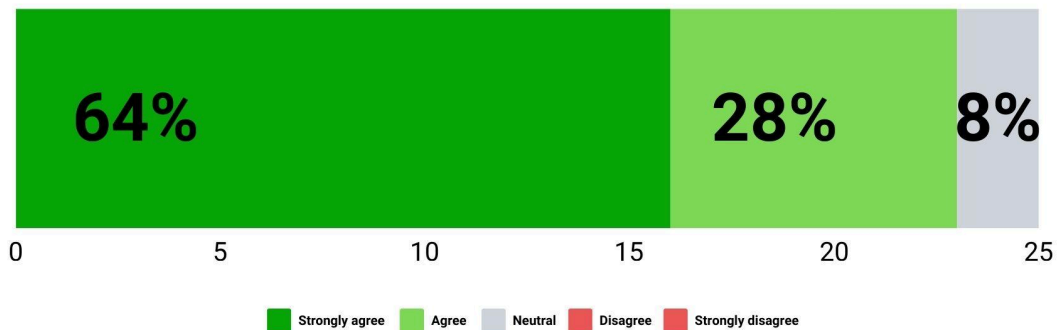
### ***Satisfaction with specific aspects of the forum (averages)***



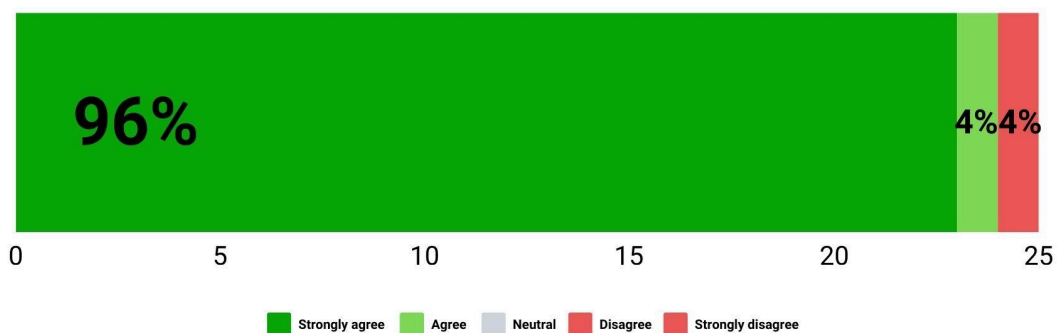
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<sup>12</sup> The overall ratings of the forum were evaluated on a scale of 1 - 5 (5 being the highest).

***"Participating in the forum made me feel more empowered to engage in similar discussions in the future"***

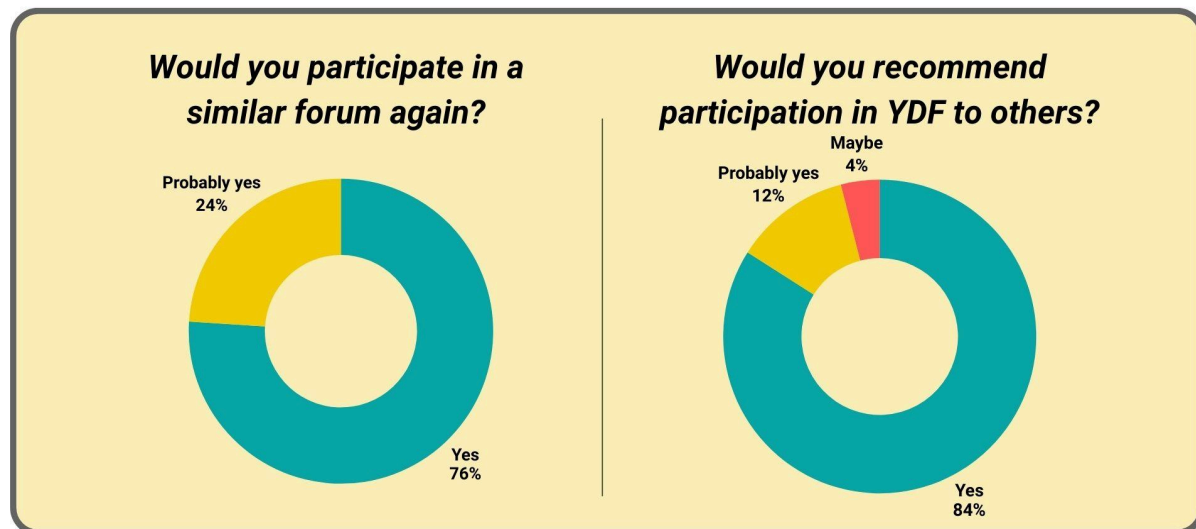


***"The forum created a safe and respectful space for dialogue"***





A section asked about the willingness to participate in a similar forum or to recommend the format to others:



#### 4.4.1. Narrative Feedback

The feedback form also offered an open answer space for written evaluation and suggested improvements.

##### **What was the most valuable part of the live forum for you?**

*"The opportunity to work together with a group of engaged and active peers on a topic that in one way or another is a part of everyone's regular life; the opportunity to make connections and express myself, and hear other opinions."*

*"When everyone had the opportunity to share their own ideas in small groups. I think with this bigger number of participants it was a great choice."*

*"The informal activities were organized really well, but the discussions were more valuable for me. My facilitator did a good job and I felt that everybody had an opportunity to express their opinion thus enriching our discussion. I feel that topics like misinformation in the online world are not widely discussed among my peers. I am glad that you brought up this topic."*

### **What would you improve in future editions of Youth Dialogue Forum?**

*"I would have welcomed a practical workshop on the topic—specifically, how to handle disinformation in practice, how to identify and explain it to others, and how to work with this topic in our communities, rather than just discussing it and giving subjective recommendations."*

*"I would have a second live meeting which could be a reliable check on the usage of the first forum's results. It would be useful if there's more data and personal stories."*

*"I would make the forum last for at least one more day, possibly also adding in presentations from participants preparing for the topic, thereby enhancing the focus on peer-to-peer communication."*

## 5. Conclusions

Section by Michal Horský

Youth Dialogue Forum 2025 made visible that misinformation is not only an information problem, but a relational, emotional, and systemic challenge that young people navigate every day.

The digital mapping brought us clarity. Across 1,533 participants and more than 43,000 votes, strong patterns emerged. Misinformation strains conversations. It creates confusion and weakens trust. It discourages participation and, for some, leads to withdrawal. Yet the differences that matter most are not between countries, but within them. In every country, some young people feel powerless - and others do not. Disengagement is therefore not a fixed condition. It is shaped by context, experience, and design.

The hypotheses were only partially confirmed. Misinformation is widely perceived as having a strong impact on trust and on public life. But a higher perceived impact does not automatically mean lower willingness to engage. Many participants who feel the pressure most strongly still believe in responsibility and action. The tension lies not between caring and not caring, but between fatigue and agency.

Digital mapping alone would not have been enough. It identified patterns, but it could not test them. The live forum translated patterns into meaning. Face-to-face dialogue allowed participants to confront real situations, refine their thinking, and craft recommendations as lifehacks together. The shift from impact mapping to peer-level response was decisive. Understanding harm together rebuilds agency.

The five thematic groups converged around realistic and relational strategies. Empathetic approach. Willingness to disengage when limits are reached. Acceptance of one's own fallibility. Conscious self-protection. Many of these conclusions emerged independently across groups. Empathy appeared more often than confrontation. Participants focused less on defeating others and more on sustaining relationships. The result was not a catalogue of grand reforms, but a set of actionable strategies for everyday life - ideas on what we can actually do.

At the same time, one systemic insight surfaced repeatedly. The architecture of social media platforms favors polarizing and emotional content on which the spread of misinformation relies. The young people recognized that algorithms reward outrage and

simplification. While most recommendations stayed at the peer level, participants were clear that platform design and AI amplification influence what is realistically possible. The tension between personal responsibility and systemic conditions remains a key challenge for democratic resilience.

Feedback from participants reinforces the value of the format. Small-group dialogue, equal speaking space, and the combination of digital and live components were named as the most meaningful aspects. Some asked for longer engagement and more practical training which signals readiness for deeper participation when the process feels fair and purposeful.

YDF 2025 did not resolve systemic problems. What it demonstrated is modest, but powerful at the same time. Even within a fragmented information environment, young people are more than capable of careful reflection, disagreement without escalation, and co-creation. Meaningful dialogue across borders is possible. Agency can be strengthened when participation is thoughtfully designed.

The forum confirms a simple but demanding insight: disengagement is not a natural state. It is often the outcome of a poorly designed environment. When those spaces change, so does participation.

YDF 2025 therefore strengthens our belief that innovative combinations of CivTech and face-to-face dialogue can bridge digital mapping with real-world co-creation. When participation is structured, rewarding and grounded in lived experience, it produces both insight and ownership. It engages the disengaged and invites in those who feel unheard.

Designing those spaces well is the core mission of DEMDIS. The second edition of YDF once again demonstrated that thoughtfully designed participatory models can function as a new layer of democratic practice. The potential of democratic innovation remains far from exhausted.

Our work continues.

Thanks to all who made this year's edition of YDF possible.

## 6. Annex

### 6.1. National Reports from the Digital Discussions

#### 6.1.1. The First Digital Discussion

Czech Republic

[https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/fc35b11e-6560-4b51-a75d-437d38deb2d4/reports/ydf\\_cz\\_national\\_report?language=en](https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/fc35b11e-6560-4b51-a75d-437d38deb2d4/reports/ydf_cz_national_report?language=en)

Hungary:

[https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/fc35b11e-6560-4b51-a75d-437d38deb2d4/reports/ydf\\_hu\\_national\\_report2?language=en](https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/fc35b11e-6560-4b51-a75d-437d38deb2d4/reports/ydf_hu_national_report2?language=en)

Poland:

[https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/fc35b11e-6560-4b51-a75d-437d38deb2d4/reports/ydf\\_pl\\_national\\_report1?language=en](https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/fc35b11e-6560-4b51-a75d-437d38deb2d4/reports/ydf_pl_national_report1?language=en)

Slovakia:

[https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/fc35b11e-6560-4b51-a75d-437d38deb2d4/reports/ydf\\_sk\\_national\\_report1?language=en](https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/fc35b11e-6560-4b51-a75d-437d38deb2d4/reports/ydf_sk_national_report1?language=en)

#### 6.1.2. The Second Digital Discussion

Czech Republic:

<https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/4d017d77-7490-4e5a-b04c-a21bf0762189/reports/czreport?language=en>

Hungary:

<https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/4d017d77-7490-4e5a-b04c-a21bf0762189/reports/hureport?language=en>

Poland:

<https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/4d017d77-7490-4e5a-b04c-a21bf0762189/reports/plreport?language=en>

Slovakia

<https://www.themis.demdis.sk/conversations/4d017d77-7490-4e5a-b04c-a21bf0762189/reports/skreport1?language=en>

## 6.2. Ranked AOI Voting in the Topic Selection process

Score	Data	Elo Rating
69	Fake news, real effects: How misinformation spreads in local contexts.	1115
67	Critical thinking in the age of AI. Tackling stupidization.	1093
66	radicalization (unfulfilled needs of youngsters, not really existing school's democracy, communication and social skills...)	1093
64	What unites us more than diversify? Political future of trans border cooperation.	1086
63	Us vs. them: How does polarization manifest in your life?	1063
62	Media & AI: How can media literacy and AI in media shape what we trust and how we engage?	1083
61	Living online: Does the digital world connect us or divide us?	1060
59	Who can speak for you? (Rethinking representative democracy)	1073
55	Activism vs. Burnout: How can we stay engaged without burning out?	1040
54	AI & the future of work: What are we being prepared for?	1020

## 6.4. Live Forum Framework

### 1. Group 1 - Engage or Disengage (Choosing Battles)

**Action type:** Deciding whether to engage, and when to walk away

**Sub-goal:** Understand how misinformation strains personal relationships and co-create realistic ways to communicate, set boundaries, or disengage without escalating conflict or harming relationships.

**Main guiding question:** When does engagement help, and when does it cost more than it gives?

**Guiding questions:**

- How does misinformation change everyday conversations with family and friends?
- When is engagement helpful, and when is disengagement healthier?
- What practical communication moves reduce conflict while staying honest?

### 2. Trust, Confusion & Sense-Making

**Action type:** Making “good-enough” judgments under uncertainty

**Sub-goal:** Clarify how misinformation creates confusion and erodes trust, and co-create simple peer habits for navigating uncertainty, information overload, and competing claims.

**Main guiding question:** What helps us act responsibly when we’re unsure and overwhelmed?

**Guiding questions:**

- What makes it hardest to know what to trust today?
- How do emotions and overload affect our judgment?
- What everyday rules or habits help us decide what is “good enough” information?



### 3. Supporting Others Without Preaching

**Action type:** Offering support without moralizing, patronizing, or escalating

**Sub-goal:** Understand why some people (often seniors, but not only) are more exposed to misinformation and co-create respectful, realistic ways to offer support while protecting dignity and trust.

**Main guiding question:** How can we help without turning into the problem?

**Guiding questions:**

- Why do we perceive some groups as more vulnerable to misinformation?
- Where are the limits of our personal responsibility?
- How can we intervene in ways that preserve dignity, trust, and relationships?

### 4. Participation, Voice & Withdrawal

**Action type:** Remaining present without full confrontation

**Sub-goal:** Understand how misinformation discourages participation and self-expression, and co-create safer, lower-cost ways for young people to stay engaged without burning social capital or exposing themselves to harm.

**Main guiding question:** How can we stay visible and engaged when debate feels unsafe, pointless, or exhausting?

**Guiding questions:**

- How does misinformation affect our willingness to speak up or participate?
- What makes debates feel pointless or exhausting?
- What alternative forms of engagement feel safer and more meaningful?

### 5. Emotional Self-Protection

**Action type:** Regulating emotions so misinformation doesn't run our lives

**Sub-goal:** Understand the emotional impact of misinformation and co-create healthy coping habits that protect well-being while maintaining a realistic level of engagement and awareness.

**Main guiding question:** How do we stay informed without becoming exhausted or cynical?

**Guiding questions:**

- What emotions does misinformation most often trigger in us? (Can we recognise misinformation based on our emotional response?, how do you recognise you are overwhelmed with your emotions - how do we experience emotions?)
- How do emotional reactions shape how misinformation spreads? (How to be proactive instead of reactive? Define the steps from recognising the emotions to controlling, how reactive behavior look like?)
- What practical habits help us stay informed without burning out

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Visegrad Fund

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