

**Volume 9, Number 1&2, 2023**

## **Redefining Communication Standards in Academia and Society: The Role of Media Competences and Respectful Engagement**

Anca DRAGHICI<sup>1</sup>, Ilie-Mihai TAUCEAN<sup>2</sup>, Valerij DERMOL<sup>3</sup>, Alice BUZDUGAN<sup>4</sup>,  
Nada TRUNK<sup>5</sup>, Caius LUMINOSU<sup>6</sup> and Maria Elena BOATCA<sup>7</sup>

**Abstract** – The Covid-19 pandemic had a positive impact on the accelerated development of the digital capabilities of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) so that they can react adequately to cyber attacks or to the manifestation of negative phenomena we foresee such as the attack on scientific thinking, aggression on digital media and a distortion of public discourse through conspiracy narratives, fake news and hate speech. etc. In recent years, there has been a jump in the level of digital media literacy of university staff and students, which has led to a change in the way internal and external communication is carried out (university - civil society). Behavioral changes in communication were accompanied by the awareness of ethical aspects and regarding the content of the messages conveyed, but also a redesign of the curriculum in the field of communication and academic ethics. This article presents the set of open educational resources created on topics such as democracy and inclusive democratic participation, media literacy and the fight against disinformation and the prevention of aggression in the context of the implementation of the RespectNET project "Respectful communication through the media education network" (Erasmus + project, 2021-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000027578, <https://respectnet.eu/>). The main objective of the paper is to present the impact of RespectNET resources created at the level of HEIs that were intended to provide reliable educational resources for the formation of critical media and communication skills of university members and civil society activists.

**Keywords:** Media literature, communication, education, ethics, respect, democracy, dialogue, civil society, university, RespectNET project.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The acceleration of digitization and the large-scale use of media technologies has caused negative phenomena (fake news, cyberbullying, cyber harassment, sexism, psychological disorders, especially among young people) to spread on a larger scale and produce unwanted effects. In this context, strengthening the involvement of the higher education institutions' community in addressing the new social and environmental challenges is a necessity (for example, through declarations, commitments and professional actions, support for health crisis situations, war situations and refugees, mitigating the effects of changes climate, natural disasters or catastrophes, but also issues related to gender, poverty, accessibility, inclusion and addictions, LGBT discrimination or other small-scale events or phenomena at the local, regional level) [1-4]. Moreover, it can be observed that the current ubiquitous media space has an important impact on the values and principles associated with an employed citizen, shaping his behavior. HEIs students are also citizens of that society where civic commitment and ethical involvement are necessary [4, 5].

Normative values for engagement voting, participation in civic groups is eroding in the context of online advocacy, social protest, liking, sharing and remixing. This new context for the manifestation of civic behavior offers vast opportunities for new and innovative approaches in learning about social-political involvement in the context of new media platforms and technologies, in the AI Era [5, 6].

---

<sup>1</sup> Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania, [anca.draghici@upt.ro](mailto:anca.draghici@upt.ro)

<sup>2</sup> Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania, [ilie.taucean@upt.ro](mailto:ilie.taucean@upt.ro)

<sup>3</sup> International School for Social and Business Studies, Slovenia, [valerij.dermol@gmail.com](mailto:valerij.dermol@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup> SoWiBeFo e. V., Germany, [buzdugan@sowibefo-regensburg.de](mailto:buzdugan@sowibefo-regensburg.de)

<sup>5</sup> International School for Social and Business Studies, Slovenia, [trunknada@gmail.com](mailto:trunknada@gmail.com)

<sup>6</sup> Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania, [caius.luminosu@upt.ro](mailto:caius.luminosu@upt.ro)

<sup>7</sup> Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania, [maria.boatca@upt.ro](mailto:maria.boatca@upt.ro)

The exploration of digital media literacy, as a basic competence for citizenship involved in participatory democracy, becomes a topic that must be addressed in specific academic courses on communication, ethics and integrity, culture and civilization, etc. This type of transversal competences is recognized as being extremely necessary for future specialists with higher education who will have to fully manifest themselves in society [1-6].

The RespectNET project approach and support combines new models of engaged politics and participatory citizenship with frameworks for digital and media education to develop a framework for media education as a core political competence for active, engaged and participatory citizenship [7]. Using the MATRIX OF MEDIA competencies and targeted transmedia campaigns, this discussion shows how universities can model positive discourse and productive exchange with civil society, setting new standards for respectful and effective digital communication.

## II. THE PROJECT CONTEXT

Higher education institutions can use all communication channels to become strong voices of society and important actors in solving the problems faced by civil society. A two-way communication between universities and civil society stakeholders (effective dialogue!) will ensure the truthful, real and professional space for listening, understanding, providing feedback for a respectful communication based on a real and true content, fighting myths, rumors, conspiracy narratives, hate speech and misinformation [1-3].

The present article is related to the activities developed by the international consortium that have successfully implemented the Erasmus+ RespectNET project, RespectNET - Respectful Communication through Media Education Network, (2021-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000027578, <https://respectnet.eu/>). Four partners (Universita Telematica Pegaso, Italy; International School for Business and Social Studies, Slovenia; Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania and Verein für Sozialwissenschaftliche Beratung und Forschung e.V., Germany) have agreed to collaborate for the project implementation, to share their knowledge and experiences to create an innovative and open educational resource for training.

RespectNET project aims to develop a training programme with practices related to a common code of conduct for responsible media use and media communication literacy training multipliers (transmedia campaigns on four actual and challenge topics) as a resource for higher education institutions staff, as well as civil society activists as role models for the young generation [7]. The target groups (addressed by the training programme) are training designers and responsible people in universities (e.g., teaching and research staff, marketing, and ethics responsible

persons), civil society, policymakers, and other stakeholders. The project objectives are as follows:

1. Developing the media literacy of university staff and students to foster a culture of respectful scientific dialogue within the university and as members of the civil society;
2. Increasing the exchange of experiences and interchange with the wider regional civic society to build a knowledge partnership between universities and civil society for a respectful societal dialogue;
3. Develop a code of respectful dialogue in university and (social) media for all university members;
4. More attractive education and training programmes, according to individual needs and expectations, modern, dynamic, committed, and professional environment inside the organization ready to integrate good practices and new methods, including digital capabilities into daily activities;
5. Develop multimedia modules on media competences and respectful communication;
6. Develop a transmedia learning platform on media and communication competences for university members.

All the implemented project activities for dissemination and training were meant to contribute in a wider context to support achieving the project objectives [7]:

(1) Contribution of science to mitigating societal tensions, as expressed in phenomena like conspiracy narratives, hate speech, and cyberbullying;

(2) Consideration of European values in the further internal development of universities and in their collaboration with civil society.

Furthermore, one of the European values that the RespectNET project is planned to carefully address is the related to the multi-dimensional diversity in all its activities. The following (overlapping) target groups have been considered for the project implementation: universities; civil society activists; actors of science communication within universities and civil society; users and producers of social media. The final beneficiaries of the platform of transmedia learning on media and communication competences are university staff, students, and other members of civil society [7]. Furthermore, the main target groups are: (a) higher education teachers, (b) tutors of digital teaching and learning at higher education institutions.

In this challenge context of research, a reliable resource for planning and prioritizing training for critical media and communication competences of university members and civil society activists has been provided, which was based on the matrix of competencies. Furthermore, the created open education resources were made available to different groups of learners in the HEIs partners in the RespectNET project (faculty staff groups, departments staff groups, research centers groups, different groups of students from Bachelor, Master of PhD levels etc.) [7].

## II. THE PROJECT APPROACH AND RESULTS

### A. *The project activities*

The development and implementation process of the project consists of a series of activities as the work packages were defined [7]:

- Project Management and Implementation (Leading by Pegaso Telematic University, Italy) with five project meetings of the consortium members;
- PR1 Matrix of Media Competences and Respectful Communication for University Staff (Leading partner Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania) which consists of desktop research, a collection of good practices, a series of focus groups research and a survey based on a questionnaire. These research activities were focus on defining the matrix of media competences that has been the basis for the training programme structure and content;
- PR2 Multi-Media Modules on Media Competences and Respectful Communication (Leading partner International School for Social and Business Studies, Slovenia) were focuses on the development of four modules: Media competence, Communication with university stakeholders, University-society dialogue and University and science-society dialogue;
- Dissemination and exploiting the training materials and the transmedia campaigns materials during several events as following:
  - C1 International training of civil-socially active students in advanced semesters from partner organizations with multi-media modules (hybrid activity) with a 3 days F2F training in Slovenia + 8h ZOOM over 4 weeks online;
  - C2 International training for university members by civil society activists (hybrid activity) with a 3 days F2F training in Romania + 8h ZOOM over 4 weeks online;
  - Nine Multiplier Events organized in Italy, Slovenia, Romania and Germany with large groups of students and teaching staff involved or having activities in the civil society.

### B. *Details about the project results*

The created training materials are available online and are ready to be used and transferred into HEIs practices, courses or curricula ([https://elearningproject.eu/all-courses/?course\\_catid=99](https://elearningproject.eu/all-courses/?course_catid=99)). “This e-learning platform

was created to host online courses and learning materials created and produced within Erasmus+ projects. All materials available on this platform are considered Open Educational Resources (OER). The site is regularly updated. For most courses, registration is not required; however, it is needed to participate in courses' forums or receive certificates of attendance.”

The trainees are invited to carefully read the “GUIDE ON HOW TO STUDY - Starting and Sustaining Self-Study Success” available on the e-learning platform, at the beginning of each module.

A playlist of created multimedia materials are available on the YouTube channel ([https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7Ij3-xTzrJJzL-cV7-AH-y5\\_GSVPje7p](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7Ij3-xTzrJJzL-cV7-AH-y5_GSVPje7p)). In Table 1 are presented in brief, the content of each training module with relevant information.

The most valuable project results were the RespectNET transmedia campaigns, presented online at: <https://elearningproject.eu/courses/respectnet-campaigns/>. In Table 2 are presented valuable details about the created four transmedia campaigns.

The creators of the campaigns are as presented in the following:

- “The International School for Social and Business Studies (ISSBS) from Slovenia takes us into the interesting world of Artificial Intelligence (AI), investigating its function in university communication. The campaign analyses the intersections between AI and academic discourse through videos, podcasts, infographics, and essays, untangling the complexity.
- University Politehnica Timisoara (UPT), based in Romania, focuses on social equality and multicultural communication, notably in the context of university internationalization. The campaign uses diverse media, such as videos, podcasts, infographics, posters, flyers, articles, and social media posts, to traverse the pathways towards a more inclusive and courteous global academic environment.
- The German partner, SoWiBeFo (Verein für sozialwissenschaftliche Beratung und Forschung e. V.) digs into the critical topic of universities assisting refugees through their third-mission activities. Videos, audiograms, articles, social media postings, graphic posts, and eBooks become the transmedia tools for amplifying support and resilience narratives in the face of relocation.
- The Italian partner, Pegaso Online University (POU), focuses on ecology and environmental conservation inside the university system. Their campaign investigates how educational institutions may support sustainability and environmental consciousness through appealing podcasts and social media posts”.

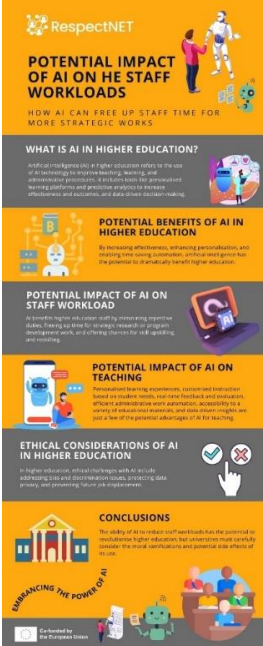
Table 1. Overview of the created ReaspectNET training programme – modules and lessons content (the created Open Educational Resources, [https://elearningproject.eu/all-courses/?course\\_catid=99](https://elearningproject.eu/all-courses/?course_catid=99))

Modules	Aims	Course specific objectives	Lessons
<b>Media competence</b>	Through the course, learners will develop their understanding of how media influences our perception of the world and learn strategies for analyzing and evaluating media content. The course is designed for individuals who want to improve their media literacy skills or for professionals working in fields related to media and communications. It is available online and can be accessed through the eLearning Project website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present theoretical frameworks and backgrounds of communication-related content.</li> <li>• Involve the students in productive discussions to deepen their understanding of the contents and make them connect the theory with their practical experience.</li> <li>• Introduce the students to the basics of the content-related aspects and show them further study possibilities.</li> <li>• Activate students and motivate them to introduce improvements in their everyday work.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contents aspects and technical characteristics of media competence (literacy);</li> <li>2. Media business models and approaches (public media, profit-driven media, state media);</li> <li>3. Social media and its aims (e.g., generating attention, advertising);</li> <li>4. Use of AI in media and media bias.</li> </ol>
<b>Communication with university stakeholders</b>	The course aims to help university staff overcome potential threats of disrespectful communication among university stakeholders. This course aims to give a theoretical background of higher education institutions' communication processes, stressing communication problems and ethical issues leading to poor and inefficient communication and interactions. In the course, various practical approaches are suggested to solve such issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present theoretical frameworks and backgrounds of communication-related content.</li> <li>• Involve the students in productive discussions to deepen their understanding of the contents and make them connect the theory with their practical experience.</li> <li>• Introduce the students to the basics of the content-related aspects and show them further study possibilities.</li> <li>• Activate students and motivate them to introduce improvements in their everyday work.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Media for promotion and advertising of educational and training programmes;</li> <li>6. Internal communication targeting students and staff;</li> <li>7. HEI's communication with external stakeholders and media.</li> </ol>
<b>University-society dialogue</b>	This course covers the theoretical foundations of media competence in University-Civil Society dialogue. We will discuss the role of media in the public sphere, emphasizing the importance of genuine communication for democracy. We will also explore the interdependence of media and democracy competencies and the threats posed by societal and technological developments. The course will highlight the role of universities and civil society in promoting competence development and public deliberation. This course aims to give insight into the foundation of media competence in the concept of deliberative democracy, universities, civil society and media as core actors in the public sphere, as well as main threats to public deliberation and university-civil society cooperation as main mitigation to these threats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present theoretical frameworks and backgrounds of media competencies.</li> <li>• Involve the students in productive discussions to deepen their understanding of the contents and make them connect the theory with their practical experience.</li> <li>• Introduce the students to the basics of the content-related aspects and show them further study possibilities.</li> <li>• Activate students and motivate them to introduce improvements in their everyday work.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. University and Society in Deliberative Democracies;</li> <li>9. Threats to Deliberative Democracy</li> <li>10. What Universities and Civil Society can do about it</li> <li>11. Practical cooperation between Universities and Civil Society</li> </ol>
<b>University and science-society dialogue</b>	This course will explore the complex relationship between scientific research and society. We will discuss how scientific knowledge is generated and communicated and how it shapes our understanding of the world. We will also examine the ways in which scientific research is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster an understanding of the social, economic, and political factors that influence scientific research and how science, in turn, impacts society.</li> <li>• Develop critical thinking skills and a nuanced understanding of</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. The role of dissemination: communicating science to a general public;</li> <li>13. Sharing scientific results as a precondition for</li> </ol>



	<p>influenced by social, economic, and political factors and how it, in turn, impacts society. Throughout the course, we will focus on the role of universities in facilitating dialogue between scientists and society and the importance of engaging with diverse stakeholders in the scientific process. By the end of the course, you will have a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities of science-society dialogue and the role that universities can play in fostering a more inclusive and equitable approach to scientific research. The course aims to promote a more collaborative and inclusive approach to scientific research and equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in science-society dialogue in a meaningful and impactful way.</p>	<p>the strengths and limitations of scientific knowledge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the role of universities as key institutions in fostering dialogue between scientists and diverse stakeholders, including policymakers, community groups, and the public.</li> <li>• Encourage students to engage with diverse perspectives and learn how to communicate complex scientific concepts to different audiences effectively.</li> <li>• Promote an awareness of the ethical, social, and environmental implications of scientific research and how these should be considered in the scientific process</li> </ul>	<p>equitable social growth; 14. Ethics in communication of scientific results to stakeholders: main issues.</p>
--	---	---	---

Table 2. Overview of the created ReaspectNET transmedia campaigns (the created Open Educational Resources, [https://elearningproject.eu/all-courses/?course\\_catid=99](https://elearningproject.eu/all-courses/?course_catid=99))

<p><b>Transmedia Campaigns: Shaping Narratives for Social Impact.</b>” Our course is more than just a set of courses; it is a synthesis of various ideas and efforts, each aimed at catalysing constructive change in our society. We go into the fields of AI in society, social equality, refugee help, ecology and environmental conservation, focusing on exploiting digital media. Let us explore the potential of <b>storytelling</b> across <b>multiple digital channels</b> to communicate knowledge, start important conversations and motivate good action. Welcome to the world of transformational transmedia campaigns!</p>		
<p><b>Learning objectives (by spreading the campaign materials in the HEIs communities):</b></p>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[1] Understand AI’s role in university communication.</li> <li>[2] Explore social equality in university internationalization.</li> <li>[3] Foster inclusivity through various media forms.</li> <li>[4] Examine challenges in universities supporting refugees.</li> <li>[5] Investigate how higher education institutions champion sustainability.</li> <li>[6] Explore ethical considerations in transmedia storytelling.</li> <li>[7] Communicate findings through transmedia campaigns.</li> <li>[8] Develop skills in crafting impactful transmedia campaigns.</li> <li>[9] Understand the strategic use of digital media platforms.</li> <li>[10] Identify effective storytelling techniques.</li> <li>[11] Reflect on the responsible use of digital media for social impact.</li> </ol>		
Campaign title	Objectives and details	Infographics / Visual materials - examples
<p><b>Artificial Intelligence (AI) in University Communication</b></p>	<p>This campaign introduces transmedia-based learning about using AI in HEIs. Several videos, short podcasts, and textual materials are implemented in the campaign.</p> <p>A campaign summary is available in the PDF file below and in the Materials tab, where you can also find German, Italian, and Slovene translations.</p> <p>The individual content elements of the transmedia campaign have been distributed across various media channels, including the eLearning platform Elearningproject.eu, YouTube video and podcast playlists, Facebook and LinkedIn posts and reposts, Spotify, and printed media like stickers, posters, and roll-ups.</p> <p>Target groups from HEIs are invited to join our campaign! Read the below reading for a short overview of the campaign.</p>	

<p><b>Multicultural Respectful Communication</b></p>	<p>This campaign introduces transmedia-based learning about social equality and multicultural communication in the context of university internationalization. Several videos, textual materials, PowerPoint presentations and images are implemented in the campaign. A summary of the campaign is available in the PDF file below and in the Materials tab, where you can also find German, Italian, and Slovene translations.</p> <p>The individual content elements of the transmedia campaign have been distributed across various media channels, including the eLearning platform Elearningproject.eu, YouTube video and podcast playlists, Facebook and LinkedIn posts and reposts, Spotify, and printed media like stickers, posters, and roll-ups.</p>	
<p><b>Representing Environmental Sustainability in the University System</b></p>	<p>This campaign introduces transmedia-based learning about environmental sustainability in the university system. Several podcasts are implemented in the campaign. A summary of the campaign is available in the PDF file below and in the Materials tab, where you can also find German, Italian, and Slovene translations.</p> <p>The individual content elements of the transmedia campaign have been distributed across various media channels, including the eLearning platform Elearningproject.eu, YouTube video and podcast playlists, Facebook and LinkedIn posts and reposts, Spotify, and printed media like stickers, posters, and roll-ups.</p>	<p>A series of podcasts highlights the importance of environmental sustainability awareness in universities. To promote sustainability, the podcasts suggest integrating it into the curriculum, establishing sustainability centres, reducing resource consumption, and using sustainable procurement practices. These efforts have multiple benefits, such as changing mindsets and creating a more sustainable campus environment. In summary, universities can lead the way in promoting environmental sustainability and educating environmentally conscious leaders.</p> 
<p><b>University Third Mission Activities to Support Refugees</b></p>	<p>This campaign introduces third-mission activities to support refugees in higher education. The campaign implements several videos, short podcasts, and social media posts. A campaign summary is available in the PDF file below and in the Materials tab, where you can also find German, Italian, and Slovene translations.</p> <p>The individual content elements of the transmedia campaign have been distributed across various media channels, including the eLearning platform Elearningproject.eu, YouTube video and podcast playlists, Facebook and LinkedIn posts and reposts, Spotify, and printed media like stickers, posters, and roll-ups.</p>	<p>The video below introduces the idea of the university's third mission – beyond teaching and research and dedicating it to societal impact. Innovation, community outreach, and knowledge sharing are essential in addressing real-world challenges.</p> 

## II. THE IMPACT OF THE RESPECTNET TRANSMEDIA CAMPAIGNS – RESEARCH RESULTS

### A. Methodological aspects

The following section analyses the feedback collected via a survey based on a questionnaire on the four RespectNET transmedia campaigns developed by the partners of the RespectNET project. In addition, partners preliminary implemented four focus groups, one per each participating country (Italy, Slovenia, Romania, Germany). They prepared an online questionnaire with 14 questions to assess the content, format, and impact of the four the Transmedia Campaigns about “Shaping Narratives for Social Impact” developed by the project partners <https://elearningproject.eu/courses/respectnet-campaigns/>:

- 1) Artificial intelligence in university communication (ISSBS, Slovenia);
- 2) Multicultural respectful communication (university internationalization) (UPT, Romania);
- 3) Representing the environmental sustainability in the University System (Pegaso University Italy);
- 4) Third Mission Activities to Support Refugees (SoWiBeFo Germany).

The online questionnaire was hosted by ISSBS on the university server.

Each national focus group was invited to give feedback on the campaign from their country. The respondents also had the opportunity to evaluate multiple campaigns. According to the project

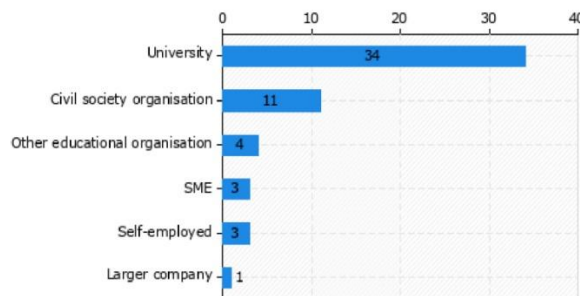
application, each focus group was expected to have 10 members (40 persons overall). However, the online questionnaire was filled in by 60 respondents, showing a pronounced interest in the campaign topics developed by the consortium.

In the following there will be presented the research results on the perception of the transmedia campaigns.

### B. Research results: Perception about the RespectNET campaigns

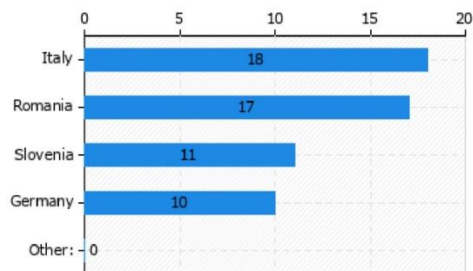
The first four questions are introductory. They describe the institution of the focus group members, their country, their work area and the campaign they evaluated. Of the 56 respondents to this question, 34 participants belong to a university. 11 persons are members in a civil society organization, 4 are involved in other educational organizations, 3 are employed in SMEs, 3 are self-employed, and 1 respondent works in a larger company (Fig. 1). 58 persons chose to name their country: the highest number of respondents (18) come from the country of the project lead Italy, 17 persons are Romanian, 11 participants live in Slovenia, and 10 are German residents (Fig 2).

As shown in Fig. 3, 57 participants in the focus group answered this questions. Most of them work in a university. 37 % of the respondents are university teaching staff, 19 % are university non-teaching staff, and 5 % are top-level university members. 2 % are students. 21 % of the respondents are professionals, 12 % belong to the civil society and 4 % of the participants (2 persons) have other work areas: one person works in public administration and another is a doctoral student.



What institution do you come from? (n = 56)

Fig. 1. Institution of the respondents



What country do you come from? (n = 58)

Fig. 2. Country of the respondents

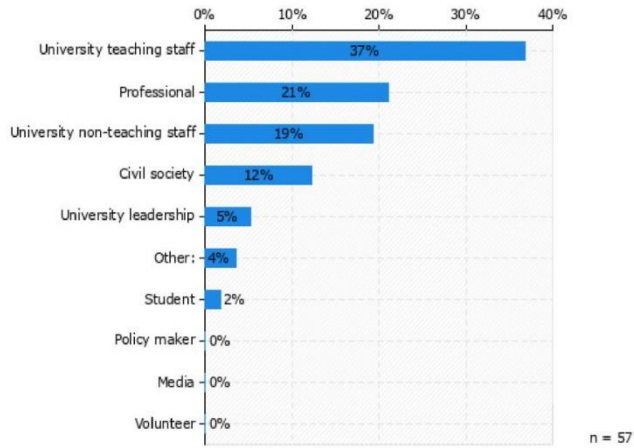


Fig. 3. Working area of the respondents

**Which transmedia campaign do you select for evaluation? (n = 66)**  
Multiple answers are possible

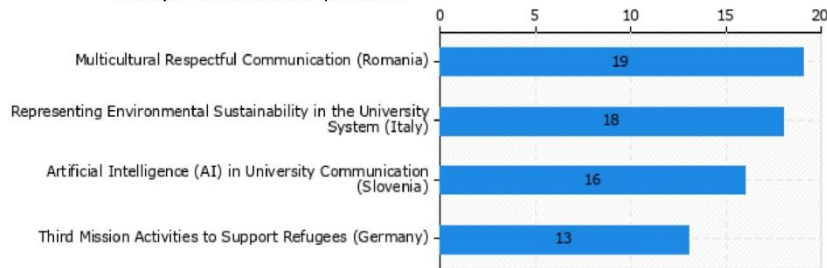


Fig. 4. Transmedia campaigns selected for evaluation.

**Please evaluate the following aspects of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) in University Communication (ISSBS, Slovenia) campaign against the stated criteria. (n = 15)**

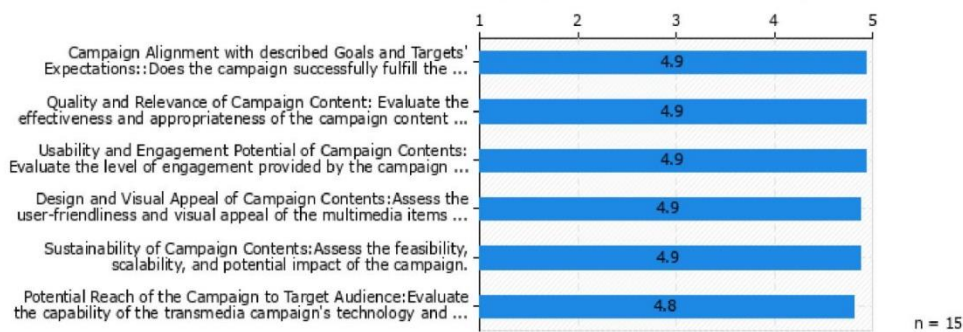


Fig. 5. Feedback collected for the transmedia campaign developed by ISSBS, Slovenia

**Please evaluate the following aspects of the Multicultural Respectful Communication (UPT, Romania) campaign against the stated criteria. (n = 19)**

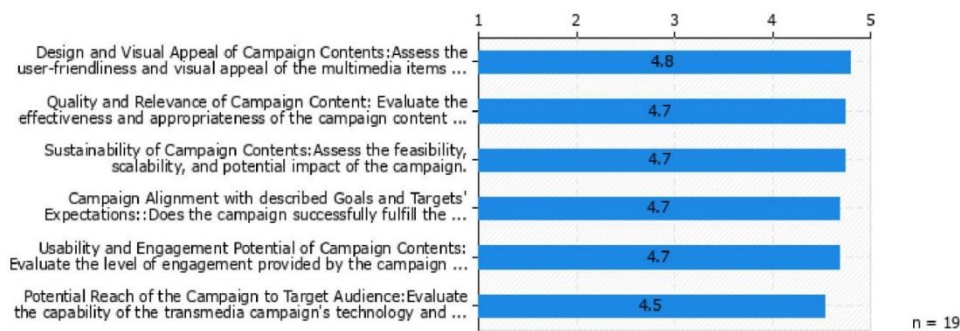


Fig. 6. Feedback collected for the transmedia campaign developed by UPT, Romania



**Please evaluate the following aspects of the Representing Environmental Sustainability in the University System (POU Italy) campaign against the stated criteria. (n = 17)**

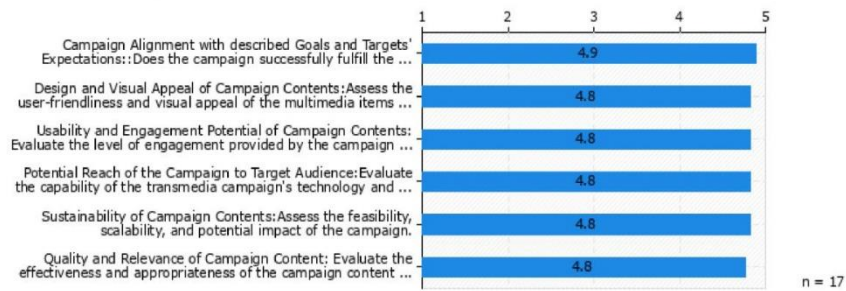


Fig. 7. Feedback collected for the transmedia campaign developed by POU Italy

**Please evaluate the following aspects of the Third Mission Activities to Support Refugees (SoWiBeFo, Germany) campaign against the stated criteria. (n = 13)**

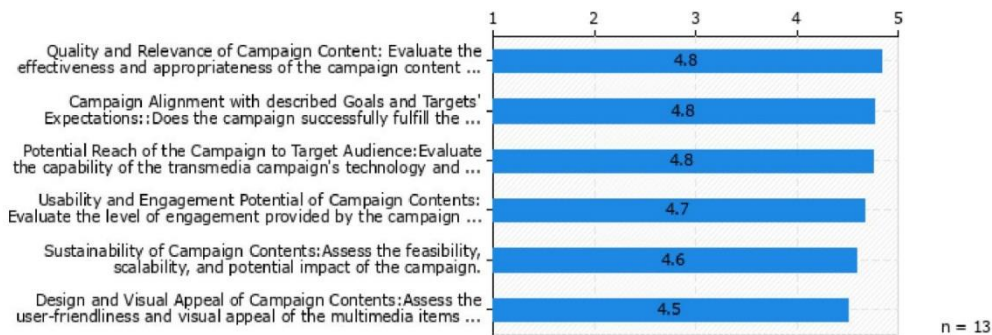


Fig. 8. Feedback collected for the transmedia campaign developed by SoWiBeFo Germany

As described in Fig. 4, multiple answers were possible to this question. Overall, the four transmedia campaigns were analyzed 66 times as follows:

- 19 responses referred to the campaign from Romania: Multicultural Respectful Communication;
- 18 responses were about the Italian campaign: Representing Environmental Sustainability in the University;
- The Slovenian campaign: Artificial Intelligence (AI) in University Communication was analyzed 16 times;
- The German campaign: Third Mission Activities to Support Refugees was evaluated by 13 persons.

Regarding the **transmedia campaign designed and developed by ISSBS, Slovenia**, the first set of questions invites participants to assess the campaign against stated criteria on a Likert scale (5 = Very much; 4 = rather much; 3 = to some extent; 2 = a little; 1 = not at all). As can be seen from Fig 5, 15 persons answered the first set of questions as follows:

- Campaign Alignment with described Goals and Targets' Expectations: Does the campaign successfully fulfill the objectives outlined in the project application and meet your expectations? 4,9 points;
- Quality and Relevance of Campaign Content: Evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the campaign content for the target audience: 4,9 points;

- Usability and Engagement Potential of Campaign Contents: Evaluate the level of engagement provided by the campaign contents for the target audience: 4,9 points;
- Design and Visual Appeal of Campaign Contents: Assess the user-friendliness and visual appeal of the multimedia items within the campaign: 4,9 points;
- Sustainability of Campaign Contents: Assess the feasibility, scalability, and potential impact of the campaign: 4,9 points;
- Potential Reach of the Campaign to Target Audience: Evaluate the capability of the transmedia campaign's technology and techniques in reaching the intended target audience: 4,8 points.

All 15 respondents declared they would highly recommend the transmedia campaign to peers and colleagues (100 %). Overall, the participants praised the crucial relevance of the selected topic for the campaign. They recommend encouraging universities to produce similar campaigns as a dialogue with students and civil society (among others). They also suggest giving more advice to universities about producing similar campaigns. Another recommendation is to continue the discussion started by the Slovenian campaign about AI.

The recommendations for improvement highlight the clarity and usefulness of the Slovenian campaign. Some participants recommend promoting the campaign and disseminating the content among the

stakeholders and NGOs. A recommendation is to improve some visual aspects of the videos on the website. Another suggestion is to translate the campaign into Slovenian language. Additionally, they suggest incorporating interactive elements like quizzes, polls, or immersive experiences.

Regarding the **transmedia campaign designed and developed by UPT Romania**, 17 persons assessed the campaign prepared by UPT Romania. The first set of questions uses the Likert scale for analyzing the campaign against the stated criteria (5 = Very much; 4 = rather much; 3 = to some extent; 2 = a little; 1 = not at all). As can be seen from Fig. 6, 19 persons answered the first set of questions as follows:

- Design and Visual Appeal of Campaign Contents: Assess the user-friendliness and visual appeal of the multimedia items within the campaign: 4,8 points;
- Quality and Relevance of Campaign Content: Evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the campaign content for the target audience: 4,7 points;
- Sustainability of Campaign Contents: Assess the feasibility, scalability, and potential impact of the campaign: 4,7 points;
- Campaign Alignment with described Goals and Targets' Expectations: Does the campaign successfully fulfill the objectives outlined in the project application and meet your expectations? 4,7 points;
- Usability and Engagement Potential of Campaign Contents: Evaluate the level of engagement provided by the campaign contents for the target audience: 4,7 points;
- Potential Reach of the Campaign to Target Audience: Evaluate the capability of the transmedia campaign's technology and techniques in reaching the intended target audience: 4,5 points.

The 18 respondents would strongly recommend (89 %) or advocate (11 %) the transmedia campaign from Romania to others. Overall, the participants agreed that the campaign supports the internationalization process of the university. A recommendation is to introduce the materials in the educational process and for preparing international student mobilities. The respondents mentioned the diversity of topics, formats, and material support used (integrating digital and non-digital material) as a positive aspect. They highlighted the practical guide to academic mobility ethics as strongly positive. Among the recommendations for improvement, the participants mentioned the need to promote the campaign within the university (among others, on the Instagram channel).

Another suggestion is to translate the materials into the Romanian language. Another recommendation was to connect this campaign to initiatives with similar topics within the university (like International Week). Another suggestion was to approach the campaign actively for implementation.

Regarding the **transmedia campaign designed and developed by POU Italy**, 19 focus group participants evaluate the campaign prepared by project lead POU Italy. The first set of closed questions uses the Likert scale (5 = Very much; 4 = rather much; 3 = to some extent; 2 = a little; 1 = not at all). As can be seen from Fig. 7, 17 persons answered the first set of questions as follows:

- Campaign Alignment with described Goals and Targets' Expectations: Does the campaign successfully fulfill the objectives outlined in the project application and meet your expectations? 4,9 points;
- Design and Visual Appeal of Campaign Contents: Assess the user-friendliness and visual appeal of the multimedia items within the campaign: 4,8 points;
- Usability and Engagement Potential of Campaign Contents: Evaluate the level of engagement provided by the campaign contents for the target audience: 4,8 points;
- Potential Reach of the Campaign to Target Audience: Evaluate the capability of the transmedia campaign's technology and techniques in reaching the intended target audience: 4,8 points;
- Sustainability of Campaign Contents: Assess the feasibility, scalability, and potential impact of the campaign: 4,8 points;
- Quality and Relevance of Campaign Content: Evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the campaign content for the target audience: 4,8 points.

All 17 persons would recommend the campaign prepared by POU “very much” (76 %) and “to some extent” (18 %). Only one person would recommend the campaign “a little” (6 %). Overall, the participants highlight the effective presentation of the highly relevant topic and the attractive graphical presentation. One person focuses on innovative communication means and formats aiming to reach a broad audience and support social equality in higher education. Among the suggestions for improvement, the participants recommend integrating the campaign into other social media formats (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram). A respondent suggested publishing new materials and content periodically. Another person recommended focusing more on clear pronunciation in English for non-native speakers. Another focus group member suggested looking for overlapping content in the developed material and reducing redundancies. A few respondents considered not needing any improvement to the highly qualitative material.

Regarding the **transmedia campaign designed and developed by SoWiBeFo Germany**, 10 respondents assessed the campaign prepared by the NGO SoWiBeFo Germany. The first set of questions gives options for answers on a Likert scale (5 = Very much; 4 = rather much; 3 = to some extent; 2 = a little; 1 = not at all).

As can be seen from Fig. 8, 13 persons answered the first set of questions as follows:

- Quality and Relevance of Campaign Content: Evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the campaign content for the target audience: 4,8 points;
- Campaign Alignment with described Goals and Targets' Expectations: Does the campaign successfully fulfill the objectives outlined in the project application and meet your expectations? 4,8 points;
- Potential Reach of the Campaign to Target Audience: Evaluate the capability of the transmedia campaign's technology and techniques in reaching the intended target audience: 4,8 points;
- Usability and Engagement Potential of Campaign Contents: Evaluate the level of engagement provided by the campaign contents for the target audience: 4,7 points;
- Sustainability of Campaign Contents: Assess the feasibility, scalability, and potential impact of the campaign: 4,6 points;
- Design and Visual Appeal of Campaign Contents: Assess the user-friendliness and visual appeal of the multimedia items within the campaign: 4,5 points.

All 13 respondents would recommend the campaign prepared by SoWiBeFo to others very much (83 %) and to some extent (17 %). Most respondents highlighted using different formats to reinforce a clear message as highly effective. The participants perceived the topic (empowerment of refugees to find their voice and reach out to the public) as very positive. Another positive element was involving the refugee community while adding innovative digital methods of communication. Another participant considered that the campaign highlights the importance of universities as a societal actor. A first recommendation was that civil society organizations adopt the campaign and integrate it into their regular activities. Another recommendation was to include more scientific information and additional readings. Other suggestions were to have more routine in some technical parts and develop longer podcasts and videos on the topics selected and sharing good practices from other universities. Another respondent considered that no improvements are needed.

As a final remark of the collected feedback from the respondents, based on the overall comments, the focus group members from the four countries suggest making the four campaigns available on the project website and the four institutional web pages. They recommend creating presentations about preparing similar campaigns and using the campaigns as educational material in university courses. Another recommendation is to simplify the text in some materials, as it is difficult to follow. The focus group members highlighted the transmedia campaigns as helpful channels for learning and strengthening the communication between universities and civil society.

Thus, the four campaigns reached their goals. They develop innovative material and disseminate it in different formats with a prospective high impact.

Finally, Overall, the focus group members perceived the four transmedia campaigns as channels for learning and strengthening the respectful communication between universities and civil society. They highlighted some positive aspects but also had some recommendations for improvement. A summary with the most relevant suggestions and comments on the four transnational campaigns is presented below:

- Make the four campaigns available on the project website and the four institutional web pages;
- Create presentations about preparing similar campaigns and encouraging universities to produce such material as a dialogue with students and civil society;
- Use the campaigns as educational material in university courses;
- Simplify the text in some materials, as it is difficult to follow;
- The topics selected are highly relevant for universities and society;
- Continue the discussion started by the campaigns;
- Disseminate the campaigns through diverse social media channels (Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter etc.). Promote the campaigns within the organizations and connect them with similar initiatives (like International Week);
- Improve some visual aspects of the videos on the website;
- Translate the campaign into the national languages of the partner universities;
- Incorporate some interactive elements (like quizzes, polls, immersive experiences, etc.);
- The diversity of topics, formats, and material support (integrating digital and non-digital material) is a positive aspect;
- Focus more on clear pronunciation in English for non-native speakers in some of the materials produced;
- Include more scientific information and additional readings;
- Develop longer podcasts and videos on the selected topics and share good practices from other institutions.

Based on the recommendations of the respondents from the collection of feedback on the transmedia campaigns, changes and improvements will be made to them to exploit them in the future, during the sustainability period of the project.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL REMARKS

The approach and the results presented because of the implementation of the ReaspectNET project have a high degree of generalization and interest for all

universities, European HEIs and not only. The open educational resources created and the materials of the respectful communication campaigns have proven particularly attractive for their assimilation in training programs, courses in the field of communication, ethics and academic integrity, culture and civilization, sociology, multimedia, etc., for different groups of students, from different specializations (e.g., economics, engineering, communication, multimedia, etc.). As a result, we recommend this approach of total or partial transfer of RespectNET materials in the practice of the university educational space to obtain positive effects in the university third mission by improving the dialogue between HEIs and actors of their community or civil society, in general.

As a result of the positive results of the research on the perception of a large group of trainees who got acquainted with the training materials and especially with those of the campaigns, we are convinced that the sustainability of the project is ensured and is reliable. Thus, the results of the implementation of the RespectNET project will help different university communities, in the coming years, to raise awareness and adopt ethical communication practices and to identify which skills need to be improved (especially among students or younger staff). In addition, the research findings presented will help define the skills to understand and respond to anti-scientific, conspiratorial narratives and encourage reasoned, evidence-based communication through essential skills of effective science communication. The research presented highlighted a common ground of competency areas that are needed but not sufficiently developed in the project's partner organizations and countries.

Using the defined matrix of media competencies and targeted transmedia campaigns, this article and the presented research activities, have discussed and demonstrated how universities can model positive discourse and productive exchange with civil society, setting new standards for respectful and effective digital communication.

Based on the results, the feedback obtained in the numerous dissemination activities, training and workshops dedicated to different groups of potential users of the RespectNET results, recommendations were formulated for the assimilation, integration and exploitation of the RespectNET training program in the specific contexts of HEIs. Future trainers will have to focus on explaining the foundations of democracy (in the new post-pandemic but also European socioeconomic context) and on the civic skills needed by members of higher education institutions to improve dialogue with civil society actors. At the same time, RespectNET training and propaganda materials will provide explanations of the concept of civic

mindedness, based on the debates on individual rights and the rights of civic participation, as understood by current theories of democracy at the European level.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The content of the presented article is related to the activities developed for the implementation of the RespectNET project – “Respectful Communication through Media Education Network” (Erasmus +, KA2 Strategic Partnership project, 2021-1-IT02-KA220-HED-000027578, <https://respectnet.eu/>) which was co-financed by the European Commission. Thus, the European Commission’s support to produce this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Mihailidis, P., & Thevenin, B. (2013). Media literacy as a core competency for engaged citizenship in participatory democracy. *American behavioral scientist*, 57(11), 1611-1622.
- [2] Kahne, J., Lee, N. J., & Feezell, J. T. (2012). Digital media literacy education and online civic and political participation. *International journal of communication*, 6, 24.
- [3] Garcia, A. G., McGrew, S., Mirra, N., Tynes, B., & Kahne, J. (2021). Rethinking digital citizenship: Learning about media, literacy, and race in turbulent times. *Educating for civic reasoning and discourse*, 319-352.
- [4] Mirra, N., McGrew, S., Kahne, J., Garcia, A., & Tynes, B. (2022). Expanding digital citizenship education to address tough issues. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 103(5), 31-35.
- [5] James, C., & Cotnam-Kappel, M. (2020). Doubtful dialogue: how youth navigate the draw (and drawbacks) of online political dialogue. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 45(2), 129-150.
- [6] L. J. Splitter, “The Imperative of Reasonableness: Democracy and Education” in *Identity, Reasonableness and Being One Among Others: Dialogue, Community, Education* (L. J. Splitter eds.), 211-290, Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2023.
- [7] RespectNET (2021), The project proposal, Respectful Communication through Media Education Network, Erasmus +, KA2 Strategic Partnership project, 2021-1-IT02-KA220- HED-000027578.