



Immuni**FACT**

CROSS-COUNTRY NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT



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Udruga
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Building immunity through critical thinking and fact-checking

CROSS-COUNTRY NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

Spain · Croatia · New Caledonia

Partners:



backslash

Udruga
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Introduction: Purpose, Context and Methodology

0.1 Why This Research Was Conducted

ImmuniFact is an Erasmus+ small-scale partnership in youth (KA210-YOU) led by Conseil de la Jeunesse Territoriale (CDJ Territorial) in New Caledonia, with Backslash (Spain) and Udruga Zaželi (Croatia) as partners. The project's aim is to strengthen the capacity of youth workers in these three territories to help young people navigate disinformation and engage critically with digital content.

This comprehensive needs assessment serves as the evidence base for the entire project. Its findings will feed directly into the design of the Innovative Learning Methodology and the Media Literacy Compass that will be developed as part of the ImmuniFact project, ensuring that both tools are grounded in the real media landscapes, observed vulnerabilities and expressed preferences of the young people and youth workers they are intended to serve.

The starting point is a well-documented gap between how much time young people spend with digital media and how equipped they are to engage with it critically. In the European Union, 97% of young people aged 16 to 29 use the internet every day¹, and for 42% of those aged 16 to 30, social media is now their main source of news on politics and social issues. The European Parliament Youth Survey 2024 found that 76% of young people believe they have been exposed to fake news in the past seven days². In Spain, 85% of citizens are concerned about disinformation or fake news, the highest share in the EU according to the latest Eurobarometer³. In Croatia, 62.3% of young people have never had the opportunity to learn about media literacy, according to a survey by Ipsos for the Agency for Electronic Media and UNICEF Croatia⁴. In New Caledonia, TikTok was formally banned by French authorities in May 2024 during the civil unrest, after the platform was used to spread disinformation and coordinate violent protests⁵.

Against this backdrop, ImmuniFact set out to answer three practical questions through national data collection: What are the actual information habits and media literacy competences of young people aged 18 to 30 in each territory? What barriers do youth workers face when trying to address disinformation in their work? And what does effective practice look like, from both the practitioners' and the young people's point of view?

0.2 How the Research Was Conducted

Data collection followed the same two-method design in all three territories. Each partner ran one survey with young people and one or more focus group discussions (FGDs) with youth workers, using shared instruments adapted to the local language and context.

The survey targeted young people aged 18 to 30 and was distributed digitally through professional youth work networks, social media and community organisations. It covered five areas: information habits and platform use, exposure to misleading and emotional content, self-assessed media literacy skills, trust in information sources, and learning preferences. A total of 211 responses were collected: 54 in Spain, 52 in Croatia and 105 in New Caledonia.

The focus group discussions brought together in total 36 youth work practitioners across the three territories. In Spain, one FGD was held with 12 participants from the Galicia region. In Croatia, two FGDs were held with a total of 12 participants from Zagreb and surrounding areas. In New Caledonia, one FGD was held with 12 practitioners at Vill'Âge Jeunes in Nouméa. Each session combined structured activities with open facilitated discussion and a participatory mapping of barriers and needs.

Using the same instruments across three different national contexts means the findings can be compared in a meaningful way. Where the data diverges between countries, that divergence is treated as a real finding in itself rather than a problem to be explained away.

0.3 How This Report Is Organised

This report is structured in five main chapters. This introduction sets out why the research was done, how it was carried out and what follows. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 present the national findings for Spain, Croatia and New Caledonia respectively. Chapter 4 brings the three datasets together to identify what the countries share, where they differ, and what this means for the design of the ImmuniFact methodology.

Each national chapter covers the same ground: information habits, exposure to misleading and emotional content, self-assessed competences, trust in sources, learning preferences, practitioner observations from the focus group, and a set of priority recommendations for that context.

CHAPTER 1

SPAIN



Chapter 1 — Spain

Partner organisation: Backslash

1.1 Methodology and Data Collection

The Spanish data collection comprised a national survey with 54 young people aged 18 to 30, and one focus group discussion (FGD) held on 30th of April 2026 with 12 youth work practitioners in the Galicia region.

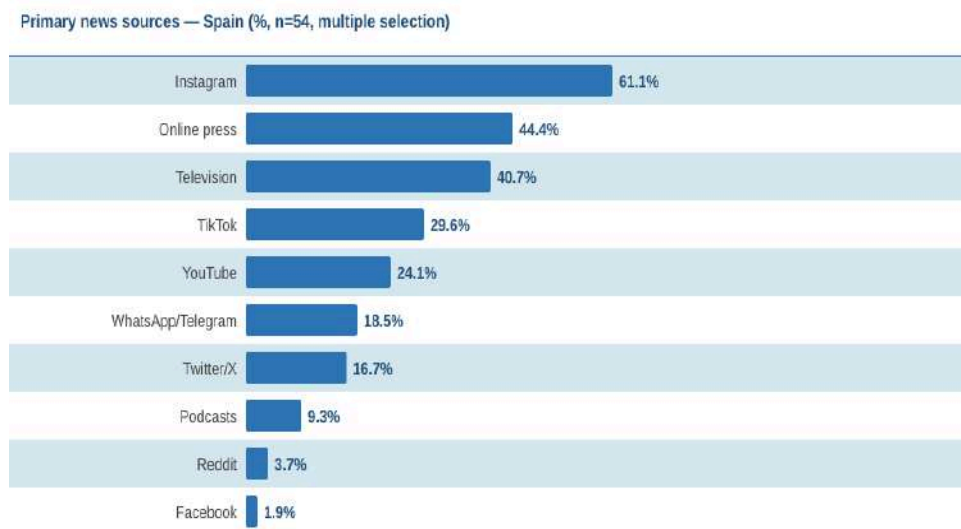
Survey respondents were recruited through national online distribution via WhatsApp groups and professional youth work networks. The sample is predominantly female (81.5%), skews towards the 18 to 21 age bracket (59.3%), and reflects a student-heavy outreach network. The urban-rural split is 80/20, broadly representative of the covered territory. Around 30% of respondents identified with at least one fewer-opportunities profile.

The focus group brought together practitioners from higher education, psychology and mental health, non-formal education community associations, social services and independent volunteers. The session combined a media deconstruction activity using real articles and social media posts with facilitated discussion and a participatory mapping of barriers and needs.

1.2 Information Habits and Platform Use

Instagram is the dominant news channel for Spanish youth respondents (61.1%), followed by online press (44.4%) and television (40.7%). TikTok ranks fourth (29.6%), with a stronger presence among the 18 to 21 cohort. Most respondents combine two to four platforms, producing a fragmented information environment where short-form social content is the common thread. Daily engagement with political or social content was reported by 43% of young people. The 18 to 21 group relies most on TikTok and least on traditional media, while the 26 to 30 group makes comparatively greater use of online press and Twitter.

Practitioners in the focus group added an important layer to these findings. By the time youth workers encounter young people, information habits are already substantially formed: early and unmediated device access means that platform behaviours and trust patterns take shape well before any structured intervention can reach them. They also described what they see as a structural speed mismatch: manipulative content that circulates far faster than adolescent cognitive development can keep pace with.



1.3 Exposure to Manipulative Content and Confidence in Detection

When asked how often they encounter different types of online content, Spanish respondents rated exposure to content designed to provoke strong emotional reactions as the most prevalent experience in their information environment (mean 4.46 on a 1–5 scale, with 83% scoring 4 or 5). By comparison, exposure to misleading information scores 3.70 overall, with the 26 to 30 age group scoring highest (4.14), reflecting either greater actual exposure or improved ability to recognise it in hindsight. Despite this high exposure across both items, confidence in identifying manipulated images or videos is notably lower (mean 2.91) and decreases with age. The youngest cohort (18 to 21) scores slightly higher (3.03) than the oldest (2.43), likely because they grew up inside the visual grammar of digital platforms.

Focus group participants provided the structural explanation for what the survey measures. Platform architecture on TikTok and Instagram is designed to maximise emotional response and reinforce existing beliefs before users have developed the tools to question what they are seeing. Young people encounter this content at high volume, from a very young age, and largely without guidance. Practitioners also highlighted decontextualised truth as a particularly difficult vulnerability to address: the most effective misinformation does not invent facts but strips real ones of their context, reframing structural problems as individual failings. Simple fact-checking cannot catch it, because the facts themselves are technically correct.

A further concern raised by practitioners working with adolescents was the normalisation of harmful relational models through social media content. TikTok in particular circulates material presenting controlling and possessive partner behaviour as expressions of love, and young people from around age 15 absorb these models and measure their own relationships against them. This harm does not appear anywhere in the survey data, as young people do not identify it

as a media literacy issue. For practitioners, it is one of the most concrete and observable consequences of unmediated platform exposure.

Statement	Overall mean (1–5)	18–21	22–25	26–30
I often encounter misleading information online	3.70	3.56	3.80	4.14
I have seen content designed to provoke strong emotional reactions	4.46	4.41	4.67	4.29
I feel confident identifying manipulated images or videos	2.91	3.03	2.87	2.43

Respondents rated each statement on a 1–5 scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

1.4 Media Literacy Competences and Trust in Sources

Respondents were asked to rate themselves on five media literacy competencies on a 1–5 scale. Understanding algorithmic influence scores highest (4.31), while the practical habit of checking dates and sources scores lowest (3.35). The 22-to-25 cohort performs strongest across practical competencies. Asked separately to rate their trust in different types of information sources on the same scale, respondents score fact-checking platforms highest (3.61), particularly the 22 to 25 group (4.13), while social media platforms as news sources receive the lowest trust (2.26). However, 61% of respondents use social media as their primary news channel.

Youth workers in the focus group observe this same gap in their daily practice and push further in their analysis. The trust paradox, knowing platforms are unreliable and using them anyway, is not a failure of critical thinking. It reflects structural dependency: there is no equally accessible alternative. More broadly, practitioners noted that high abstract awareness does not translate automatically into behaviour change. Young people can accurately describe how algorithms work while still not checking sources before sharing content. The 26 to 30 group illustrates this clearly: they show the highest accumulated scepticism across almost every source category, yet their practical verification habits are no stronger than younger cohorts.

Practitioners also noted that some young people respond to information overload not by sharpening their analytical tools but by disengaging from the possibility of knowing anything reliably. This generalised cynicism is itself a vulnerability, and one that purely cognitive media literacy approaches are not well equipped to address.

Competence	Overall	18–21	22–25	26–30	Female	Male
Understand algorithmic influence	4.31	4.34	4.27	4.29	4.39	4.12
Recognise emotional manipulation	3.94	3.91	4.07	3.86	3.84	4.38

Compare multiple sources	3.74	3.75	4.00	3.14	3.89	3.00
Verify a source before sharing	3.63	3.56	3.73	3.71	3.70	3.38
Check date and source of content	3.35	3.31	3.53	3.14	3.27	3.88

Source	Overall	18–21	22–25	26–30
Fact-checking platforms	3.61	3.53	4.13	2.86
Local media	3.38	3.34	3.33	3.43
Independent journalists	3.22	3.22	3.28	2.86
Government resources	3.03	3.40	3.28	2.71
National media	2.84	3.12	3.33	2.57
Family and friends	2.77	3.06	3.00	2.57
Social media platforms	2.26	2.38	2.20	1.86
Influencers	1.98	2.19	1.73	1.57

Mean trust scores on a 1–5 scale (1 = no trust, 5 = full trust).

1.5 Specific Vulnerabilities Observed by Practitioners

The following observations come from the focus group and reflect what practitioners see in their daily work with young people. They represent dimensions that any methodology must address even though young people themselves do not always name them as needs.

Beyond the relational content concern described in section 1.3, practitioners flagged the spread of misogynistic and traditionalist gender frameworks through podcasts and social media accounts. This material reaches adolescent boys through algorithmic recommendation and has measurable effects on how they relate to their female peers. Several practitioners also noted the circulation of content promoting extreme expectations of romantic availability and surveillance as normal expressions of care.

A further vulnerability concerns psychological resilience. Practitioners observed that many young people arrive at adulthood without having been given meaningful opportunities to make decisions, experience failure or tolerate frustration. This has direct consequences for media literacy: critical thinking requires the capacity to revise beliefs in the face of new evidence, which in turn requires a degree of psychological security that over-protected young people have not had the chance to develop.

Inclusion gaps are sharpest for young people with fewer economic, social or geographical opportunities, who are more likely to rely on closed messaging environments such as WhatsApp and Telegram groups and have less access to the informal peer and adult networks that can provide support. Young people who have experienced trauma or mental health difficulties are

more susceptible to emotionally manipulative content and less resourced to process it. Those with weak or absent family support structures are particularly likely to form parasocial relationships with influencers, making them more exposed to the harmful models those influencers promote.

1.6 Structural Barriers to Effective Youth Work

Practitioners mapped the barriers they face in the participatory activity. The intergenerational gap was identified as particularly specific to the Spanish context: adults and young people inhabit genuinely different information ecosystems, making shared reference points difficult to establish. This operates in both directions: between parents and children at home and between older practitioners and the young people they work with, and limits the possibility of meaningful dialogue about digital content.

Two psychological barriers were also named explicitly: inflexibility in thinking, where entrenched beliefs reinforced by group identity create resistance to engaging critically with content that confirms in-group values; and the emotional charge of polarised topics, where the affect attached to certain issues makes analytical rather than reactive engagement genuinely difficult. At the systemic level, practitioners named the pursuit of dominance and manipulation by political and economic actors as a structural force that youth workers cannot counter alone. Disinformation is not a technical problem but a political one, and those behind it have a vested interest in keeping media literacy low.

Finally, practitioners highlighted declining reading habits as a foundational problem. Sustained reading builds the attention, narrative comprehension and analytical depth that critical thinking requires. In an environment dominated by short-form content, this habit is declining, and with it, one of the key cognitive tools for processing complex information.

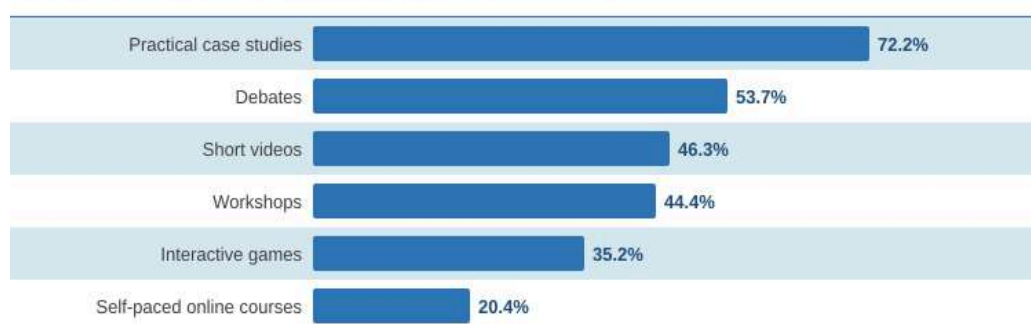
1.7 Learning Preferences and Methodological Needs

When youth were asked to select their preferred learning formats (multiple selection allowed), practical case studies came out on top (72.2%), followed by debates (53.7%) and short videos (46.3%). Workshops (44.4%) and interactive games (35.2%) also score well. Self-paced online courses are the least preferred (20.4%). Asked separately whether they would be willing to join a media literacy programme, 28% said yes, 44% said perhaps, and 28% said no. The high proportion perhaps suggests real latent interest that the right format and framing could convert.

Age differences are meaningful. The 26 to 30 cohort shows notably lower preference for debates (29%) and higher interest in self-paced online courses (43%), suggesting that more autonomous and flexible formats suit those with greater professional and time constraints. Short videos remain consistently preferred across all age groups, reflecting their integration into daily habits regardless of cohort.

Practitioners validated the survey findings and deepened them. They were emphatic that effective work must be anchored in real, recent examples drawn from young people's actual feeds (invented scenarios do not produce the same engagement or learning). They also stressed that emotional connection must precede analytical frameworks: media literacy work that opens with information and logic before establishing empathy tends not to work. Structured debate spaces and peer opinion-building were proposed as high-impact formats, alongside specific work on self-esteem and family engagement as necessary complements to information-focused approaches.

Preferred learning formats — Spain (% n=54, multiple selection)



Willingness to join a media literacy programme: 28% yes, 44% perhaps, 28% no.

1.8 Priority Needs for Spain

- Emotional literacy as a starting point: any methodology needs to engage with how content makes young people feel and build their capacity to recognise emotional manipulation, not just logical fallacies.
- Practical, not just conceptual, media literacy: work needs to move from abstract awareness to practical habits such as checking dates, sources and emotional register before sharing or believing content.
- Explicit attention to toxic relational content: programmes, especially for adolescents, need to address the spread of harmful relationship models on social media as a media literacy issue in its own right.
- Active learning formats: debates, case-study analysis, peer discussion and verification exercises are clearly more effective than passive instruction.
- Inclusion-sensitive design: programmes need to be accessible to young people with fewer opportunities and should not assume digital fluency or prior media literacy knowledge.
- Support for youth workers: practitioners need a shared, tested methodological framework and access to updated resources, case studies and facilitation tools.

- Family and community engagement: effective work does not target individual young people in isolation but engages families, schools and local communities.
- Promoting reading habits: sustained reading builds the analytical depth and attention that short-form content does not, and this should be actively supported within media literacy work.

CHAPTER 2

CROATIA



Chapter 2 — Croatia

Partner organisation: Udruga Zaželi

2.1 Methodology and Data Collection

The Croatian data collection comprised a national survey with 52 young people aged 18 to 30, and two focus group discussions (FGDs) held on 16 and 17 March 2026, with a total of 12 youth work practitioners from Zagreb and the surrounding region.

Survey respondents were recruited through the social media networks of Udruga Zaželi and partner youth organisations, as well as professional youth work networks. The sample leans female (73.1%), with an urban-rural split of 69/31. The largest cohort is in the 22 to 25 age bracket (40.4%). Around 40% identified with at least one fewer-opportunities profile.

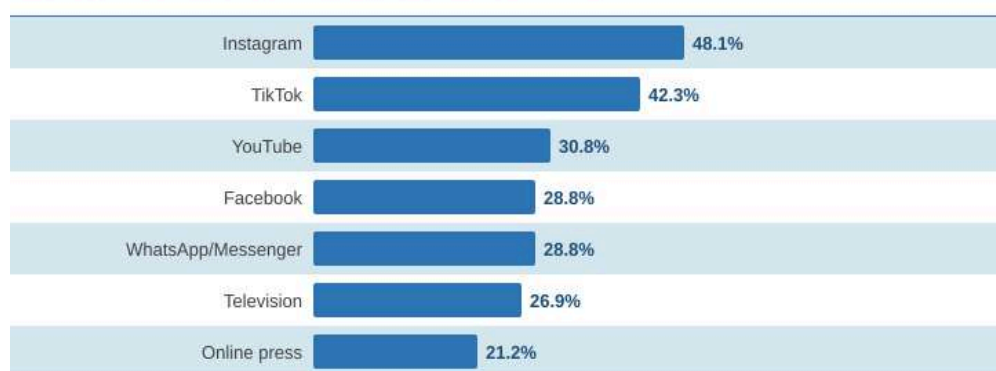
Focus group participants came from civil society organisations working with youth and vulnerable groups, education providers, organisations supporting deaf and hard-of-hearing communities, and youth associations active in media literacy and Erasmus+ youth work. Each session used a structured questionnaire combined with facilitated discussion, covering six thematic areas: challenges in the digital environment, structural constraints, emotional manipulation dynamics, effective methods, inclusion and accessibility, and methodological needs.

2.2 Information Habits and Platform Use

Instagram leads news consumption among Croatian young respondents (48.1%), but TikTok is a close second (42.3%). YouTube (30.8%), Facebook (28.8%) and messaging apps (28.8%) play comparable secondary roles. Television is clearly secondary (26.9%), and online press accounts for only 21.2% of respondents. Around 38% of the youth responding to the survey access political or social content daily.

Practitioners in the focus group flagged a dimension the survey figures alone do not capture: WhatsApp and Messenger function as significant channels for unverified information in Croatia, not through open posts but through forwarded material in private group conversations. This closed-ecosystem circulation is harder to counter than content on open platforms, and it reaches young people across all age groups.

Primary news sources — Croatia (% n=52, multiple selection)



2.3 Exposure to Manipulative Content and Confidence in Detection

When asked young people how often they encounter different types of online content, Croatian respondents rated exposure to content designed to provoke strong emotional reactions as the most prevalent experience in their information environment (mean 4.48 on a 1–5 scale, with 90% scoring 4 or 5). Exposure to misleading information scores 4.00, with the 26 to 30 group reporting the highest exposure (4.50). Confidence in identifying manipulated images or videos is markedly lower (mean 2.73) and decreases with age, with the youngest cohort (18 to 21) scoring 3.05, dropping to 2.33 among the oldest. The gap between very high emotional exposure and limited confidence in detecting manipulated visuals is the single most striking finding in the Croatian survey.

For practitioners, this gap has a concrete and urgent dimension that survey data cannot fully convey. The focus groups described young people accepting AI-generated synthetic videos of the Croatian president and AI-fabricated war imagery as authentic content. Ten of 12 practitioners (83%) identified fear as the dominant emotion that disinformation exploits in their work. They cited specific Croatian cases with documented real-world effects: a false Coca-Cola contamination claim that changed consumer behaviour, COVID-era confusion about mandatory vaccination for young people, and Instagram-driven panic around fabricated TikTok challenges in schools. These are not hypothetical vulnerabilities but patterns practitioners have observed directly.

Statement	Overall mean (1–5)	18–21	22–25	26–30
I often encounter misleading information online	4.00	4.05	3.67	4.50
I have seen content designed to provoke strong emotional reactions	4.48	4.53	4.62	4.17
I feel confident identifying manipulated images or videos	2.73	3.05	2.67	2.33

Respondents rated each statement on a 1–5 scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

2.4 Media Literacy Competences and Trust in Sources

Respondents were asked to rate five media literacy competences on a 1–5 scale. Understanding algorithmic influence scores highest (4.17), while checking dates and sources scores lowest (3.42). The 18 to 21 cohort shows stronger practical verification habits than might be expected, possibly because their platform use is more concentrated and instinctive. The 26 to 30 group scores highest on comparing sources but lowest on visual manipulation confidence.

Asked to rate their trust in different types of information sources on a 1–5 scale, Croatian respondents give fact-checking platforms the highest score of any source category (3.73), the highest trust score across all three national datasets. Local media (3.56) outperforms national media (2.98), consistent with broader data on media trust in Croatia, where proximity and perceived independence matter more than reach. Social media as an information source receives the lowest trust (2.13), while remaining the primary news channel for the majority of respondents.

Practitioners observe this awareness-practice gap directly. Young people can articulate that algorithmic systems shape their feeds and that AI-generated content exists, while simultaneously accepting specific examples of both as authentic. The gap between understanding a phenomenon in the abstract and applying that understanding in the moment, particularly under emotional load, is, in practitioners' experience, where most existing media literacy approaches fall short.

Competence	Overall	18–21	22–25	26–30	Female	Male
Understand algorithmic influence	4.17	4.05	4.24	4.25	4.00	4.58
Recognise emotional manipulation	4.06	4.26	3.86	4.08	4.03	4.08
Verify a source before sharing	3.79	3.79	3.81	3.75	3.76	3.83
Compare multiple sources	3.50	3.37	3.43	3.83	3.50	3.42
Check date and source of content	3.42	3.74	3.24	3.25	3.47	3.25

Source	Overall	18–21	22–25	26–30
Fact-checking platforms	3.73	4.00	3.62	3.50
Local media	3.56	3.58	3.62	3.42
Independent journalists	3.33	3.21	3.43	3.33
Government sources	3.00	2.47	3.43	3.08
National media	2.98	3.05	2.86	3.08
Family and friends	2.94	3.11	2.95	2.67
Influencers / public figures	2.33	2.53	2.19	2.25
Social media platforms	2.13	2.05	2.19	2.17

Mean trust scores on a 1–5 scale (1 = no trust, 5 = full trust).

2.5 Specific Vulnerabilities Observed by Practitioners

The following observations come from the focus groups and reflect practitioner experience with young people across diverse contexts. They extend and deepen the picture provided by the survey.

Social isolation was identified as a specific and measurable vulnerability mechanism. Young people in isolation spend more time on social platforms, and their algorithmic feeds become increasingly homogeneous filter bubbles. This is not simply a correlation: isolation actively produces disinformation vulnerability through the operation of recommendation algorithms. A socially isolated young person is not just more likely to encounter harmful content; the algorithm is more likely to serve it to them.

Practitioners also identified several topics where standard analytical approaches consistently fail to gain traction, because the content engages identity, fear or moral commitment in ways that pre-empt critical processing. These included mental health (particularly when false content concerns the young person themselves), war and political conflict (especially AI-generated war imagery), COVID-era vaccination debates (where bodily autonomy and intergenerational tension remain active even years later), and false humanitarian campaigns that erode willingness to support genuine appeals. The shared characteristic of these topics is that they produce emotional engagement too strong for analytical tools to cut through, unless the emotional dimension is addressed first.

2.6 Structural Barriers to Effective Youth Work

Two barriers were cited equally by half of all practitioners: lack of training, and apparent youth disinterest. The training gap is genuine. Few formal professional development pathways exist in Croatia for the specific competences needed to address contemporary disinformation, particularly around AI-generated content, algorithmic recommendation logic and emotional manipulation techniques. Practitioners rated their own overall preparedness at a mean of 3.64 out of 5, a moderate score that signals competence in general but clear self-identified gaps in these specific areas.

The apparent youth disinterest was consistently reframed by practitioners as a problem of format and framing rather than underlying motivation. This is directly corroborated by the survey: 69% of respondents indicated yes or perhaps to participating in a media literacy programme when it was described as well-designed and accessible. The disinterest practitioners encounter is not resistance to the topic; it is a response to approaches that do not connect with young people's actual concerns and daily experience.

Additional barriers included the difficulty of integrating media literacy into existing programmes with other primary objectives, the absence of validated Croatian-language resources designed

for non-formal youth work contexts (requiring practitioners to adapt foreign-language materials or develop their own), and the sensitivity of the subject matter in certain community contexts.

Inclusion gaps compound these barriers for specific groups. Young people with weaker digital skills (including lower familiarity with English, AI technologies and algorithmic logic) face an additional access barrier to many existing resources. Rural youth have less exposure to diverse perspectives and narrower informal peer networks. Young people who are deaf or hard of hearing face a concrete and immediate gap: Croatian Sign Language interpretation and visually accessible materials are essential for this group and currently underprovided across available media literacy resources.

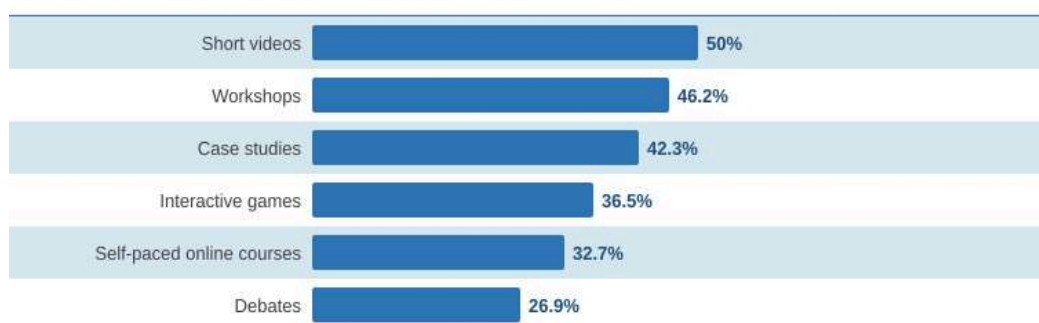
2.7 Learning Preferences and Methodological Needs

When youth were asked to select their preferred learning formats (multiple selection allowed), short videos came out on top (50.0%), closely followed by workshops (46.2%) and case studies (42.3%). Interactive games (36.5%) and self-paced online courses (32.7%) also feature. Debates score lowest (26.9%), which likely reflects a cultural context in which structured debate is less embedded in informal youth education than in some other European settings. Asked separately whether they would be willing to join a media literacy programme, 31% said yes, 38% said perhaps, and 31% said no.

Practitioners validated and extended these preferences from their own experience. Three quarters identified discussion-based work as their most effective method, describing it variously as discussion, open communication and exchange of experiences. This convergence across very different practice contexts is significant: it is a professional observation, not just a preference. Practitioners were also emphatic that analytical materials must come from young people's real feeds, not artificial or invented scenarios, and that combining analysis of concrete examples with open discussion produces the strongest results for both skill-building and emotional processing.

On the question of what an ideal tool would look like, practitioners proposed: a simple verification tool or browser extension for immediate credibility assessment; a curated reference platform combining verified examples and self-check exercises; short explanatory videos matching the visual grammar of the platforms young people use; and in-person training combining games, quizzes and structured peer discussion. Several practitioners explicitly stated that media literacy should be a compulsory component of the Croatian school curriculum, recognising that voluntary out-of-school work has structural limits to its reach.

Preferred learning formats — Croatia (% n=52, multiple selection)



Willingness to join a media literacy programme: 31% yes, 38% perhaps, 31% no.

2.8 Priority Needs for Croatia

- Emotional literacy as a starting point: fear is the dominant emotion exploited in the Croatian context (83% of practitioners), and emotional exposure is the highest-scoring survey item.
- Explicit AI-content recognition component: this is needed urgently, with concrete Croatian cases already producing measurable disinformation effects in public behaviour.
- Dialogue at the centre: structured peer discussion is the single most effective method practitioners identify, and the methodology must build around it rather than add it as a supplement.
- Real, updated Croatian examples: all activities should use content from the actual Croatian information environment, designed for easy updating as new examples emerge.
- Verification as a habit: building on the high trust in fact-checking platforms (3.73), the methodology should embed practical verification exercises that develop a reflex, not just knowledge.
- Accessible design: materials in Croatian; content accessible for deaf and hard-of-hearing youth; no assumption of English fluency or advanced digital skills; deliverable in rural and resource-limited settings.
- Practitioner capacity building: half of practitioners cite lack of knowledge as their main barrier; a tested framework with ready-to-use Croatian-language materials is the most direct response.
- Portability into formal education: practitioners explicitly named school curricula as a missing foundation; the methodology should be designed to work in formal settings as well as youth work contexts.

CHAPTER 3

NEW CALEDONIA



Chapter 3 — New Caledonia

Partner organisation: CDJ Territorial

3.1 Methodology and Data Collection

The New Caledonian data collection comprised a survey with 105 young people aged 18 to 30, and one focus group discussion held on 30 March 2026 at Vill'Âge Jeunes in Nouméa, with 12 practitioners.

While the three national surveys used the same shared instrument, the New Caledonian version included an adaptation to reflect the specific demographic reality of the territory: the urban/rural residency category was extended to include a Rural/Tribal option, representing young people from indigenous Kanak communities in Tribu areas, who make up 21% of the sample. This adaptation was necessary to capture a significant and distinct segment of the youth population whose information access conditions and cultural context differ from those of urban respondents. The sample is predominantly female (67.6%) and concentrated in the 18 to 21 age bracket (53.3%). Around 39% identified with at least one fewer-opportunities profile.

The focus group brought together, during approximately 2.5 hours, 12 practitioners (6 women, 6 men; 6 under 30, 6 over 30) from specialised education, school education, youth work and popular education, the Southern Province and Government of New Caledonia, and associative and community contexts.

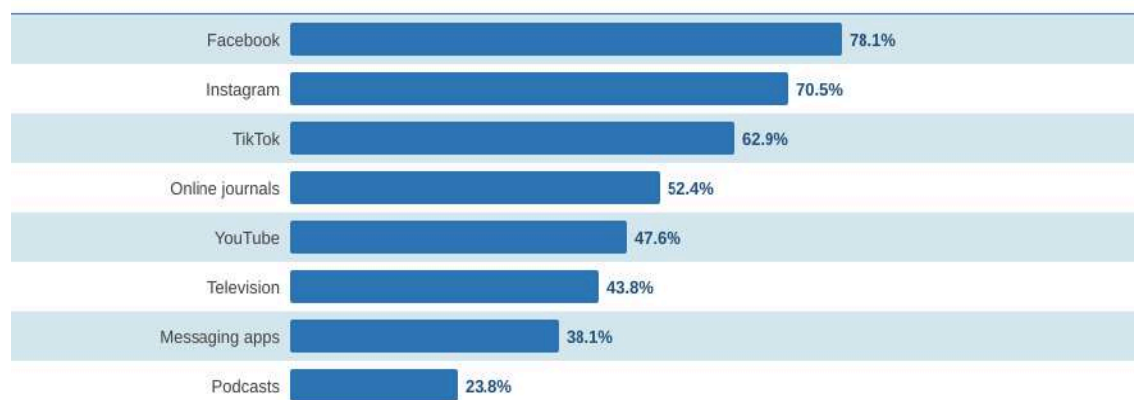
3.2 Information Habits and Platform Use

When young people were asked about their primary news sources (multiple selection allowed), New Caledonian respondents showed a platform hierarchy that differs markedly from the two European national contexts: Facebook leads with 82 mentions (78.1%), followed by Instagram (74, 70.5%), TikTok (66, 62.9%), online journals (55, 52.4%), YouTube (50, 47.6%) and television (46, 43.8%). Facebook's dominance likely reflects the connectivity context of the territory and the specific social media adoption patterns of New Caledonia. In terms of engagement frequency, 30.5% access news daily, 41.9% several times a week and 23.8% occasionally, with only 3.8% rarely. The combined daily-and-several-times figure (72.4%) is the highest across the three national samples.

Practitioners in the focus group added a dimension the survey figures alone do not capture: the role of Facebook pages presenting themselves as information sources without operating within any journalistic or professional framework. The high number of followers, shares and reactions reinforces the perceived credibility of published content regardless of its accuracy. This dynamic compounds the platform hierarchy shown in the survey: Facebook's dominance is not simply a

matter of access habit but of an information ecosystem where non-journalistic community pages function as primary news sources.

Primary news sources — New Caledonia (% n=105, multiple selection)



Frequency: 30.5% daily, 41.9% several times/week, 23.8% occasionally, 3.8% rarely.

3.3 Exposure to Manipulative Content and Confidence in Detection

When asked how often they encounter different types of online content on a 1–5 scale, young people in New Caledonia rated exposure to emotionally provocative content highest (mean 4.37, with 83.8% scoring 4 or 5), consistent in direction with the Spanish and Croatian samples. Exposure to misleading information scores 3.69, with 57.1% scoring 4 or 5. One finding diverges markedly from the other two national datasets: confidence in identifying manipulated images or videos scores 4.18, with 78.1% scoring 4 or 5. This self-confidence is notably higher than in Spain (2.91) and Croatia (2.73).

The focus group provides an important counterweight to the high self-confidence in detection. Practitioners described behaviours that contradict it: partial or occasional verification at best, rapid sharing without systematic checking, and credibility judgements based on social and community signals rather than source quality. Verbatim quotes collected during the session are direct evidence of the gap: “As long as it is passed on by the family, that means it's true”; “The more likes there are, the more it means it's true.” The mechanisms driving disinformation belief in New Caledonia are social and emotional, not primarily visual, which is why high self-confidence in visual detection does not translate into actual protection against misleading content.

Statement	Overall mean (1–5)	% scoring 4 or 5
I often encounter misleading information online	3.69	57.1%
I have seen content designed to provoke strong emotional reactions	4.37	83.8%
I feel confident identifying manipulated images or videos	4.18	78.1%

Respondents rated each statement on a 1–5 scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

3.4 Media Literacy Competences and Trust in Sources

Young people in New Caledonia were asked to rate five media literacy competences on a 1–5 scale. Unlike the Spanish and Croatian samples, where a clear gap exists between abstract awareness and practical verification habits, the New Caledonian results show a narrow range across all five competences: recognising emotional manipulation (4.15), checking dates and origin (4.15) and understanding algorithms (4.13) are nearly identical, with verifying sources (4.00) and comparing sources (3.92) slightly lower. There is no pronounced awareness–practice gap in the self-reported data. The focus group suggests this uniformly high self-assessment reflects overconfidence rather than genuine uniform competence, given the behaviours practitioners describe.

When asked to rate their trust in different types of information sources, young people in New Caledonia place government sources (approx. mean 3.50) and fact-checking platforms (approx. 3.47) highest, closely followed by local and national media. Social media (approx. 2.27) and influencers (approx. 2.19) receive the lowest trust. The relatively high trust in government sources is a notable finding in this dataset, though the survey data does not explain what drives it. The core paradox is nonetheless present: social media platforms are the least trusted source category yet dominate actual news consumption.

Competence	Overall mean (1–5)	% scoring 4 or 5
Recognise emotional manipulation	4.15	73.3%
Check date and source of content	4.15	73.3%
Understand algorithmic influence	4.13	70.5%
Verify a source before sharing	4.00	73.3%
Compare multiple sources	3.92	71.4%

Calculated from response distributions.

Source	Approx. mean (1–5)
Government sources	~3.50
Fact-checking platforms	~3.47
Local media	~3.15
National media	~3.10
Independent journalists	~2.92
Family and friends	~2.86
Social media platforms	~2.27
Influencers / public figures	~2.19

Approximate means estimated from visual distribution in source data.

3.5 Specific Vulnerabilities Observed by Practitioners

The following observations come from the focus group and extend the picture the survey provides into dimensions that self-report cannot capture.

Community trust as a vulnerability mechanism is the most distinctive finding from the New Caledonian focus group. Content shared by family or close community is assumed to be true; likes and shares function as credibility indicators. Because community life holds a central place in New Caledonian society, and trust dynamics rely on identity affiliations and circles perceived as familiar, disinformation circulating within trusted community networks is particularly difficult to counter. Challenging it means challenging the community itself. Practitioners observed that many Facebook pages operating without journalistic standards are perceived as credible specifically because they are culturally and socially familiar.

Information fatigue was named explicitly: some participants described a sense of not knowing which sources to trust at all, a generalised loss of confidence in information as such. As in Spain and Croatia, this cynicism can be more disabling than specific false beliefs.

The focus group also raised a question that goes beyond disinformation in the narrow sense: even when shared content is based on real or verified information, the communication mechanisms on social media generate emotional manipulation, confrontation dynamics and polarisation. As one participant put it: “Talking about negative information has more impact and gets people talking more.” The central methodological challenge in New Caledonia may not be primarily about fact-checking but about the modes of digital communication that platforms reward.

Finally, a notable finding from the facilitation process itself: there was no shared definition among practitioners of key concepts including prebunking, debunking, disinformation, polarisation and emotional manipulation. This conceptual gap limits coordinated professional action and is itself a finding about the state of media literacy infrastructure in the territory.

3.6 Structural Barriers to Effective Youth Work

Institutional representatives in the focus group identified lack of appropriate tools, sensitivity of certain topics, insufficient professional training and the need for locally adapted approaches as the primary barriers. These concerns appear across all three national contexts, but the local dimension in New Caledonia is significantly more acute.

Territorial disparity is the most structurally distinctive constraint. The gap between digital access and resources in Nouméa and in outer communities means that a single methodology will not reach the whole territory. Practitioners noted that this concern can easily dominate discussions to the exclusion of more specific media literacy questions, which itself reflects how central the infrastructure problem is in daily practice.

The absence of a shared conceptual vocabulary among practitioners, as noted above, is a structural barrier of a different kind. It is not about resources or access but about the professional infrastructure needed for coherent, coordinated action. Without shared definitions, practitioners working in different contexts cannot build on each other's work or develop consistent approaches.

Parents and community members raised the difficulty of supporting young people around these issues without breaking dialogue, particularly when content touches on politically or culturally sensitive community dynamics. Any media literacy approach that is perceived as aligned with one side of a community or political division closes down the conversation before it begins. This is the most specific structural constraint in New Caledonia and the one with the least equivalent in the other two national contexts.

Inclusion was raised in the focus group from the angle of territorial disparities and from the specific perspective of deaf and hard-of-hearing people, highlighted by one of the co-facilitators. The observation extends to all people who are distant, marginalised or insufficiently taken into account in standard approaches: the methodology must integrate inclusion by design, not by adaptation.

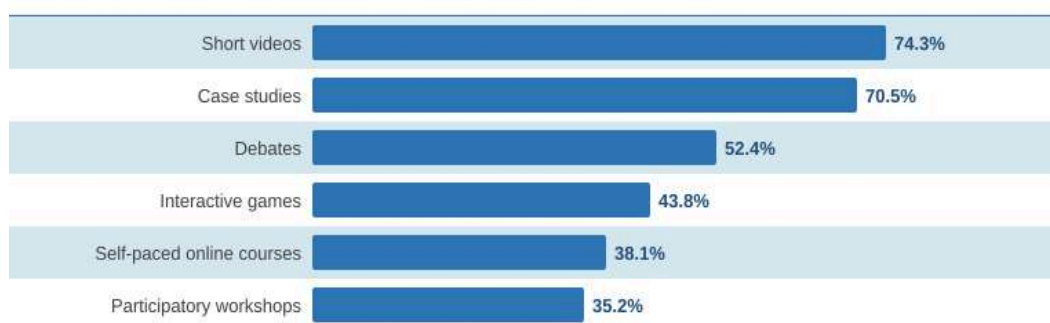
3.7 Learning Preferences and Methodological Needs

When asked to select youth preferred learning formats (multiple selection allowed), short-form videos came out clearly on top (74.3%), followed by case studies (70.5%), debates (52.4%), interactive games (43.8%), self-paced online courses (38.1%) and participatory workshops (35.2%). Asked separately about willingness to join a media literacy programme, 23.8% said yes, 35.2% said perhaps, and 41% said no. The 41% explicit disinterest is the highest across the three national samples, pointing to a real barrier in how media literacy is framed rather than in the underlying relevance of the topic.

Practitioners in the focus group independently proposed formats that align closely with survey preferences: games and role-playing, analysis of real content, guided debates, visual and digital tools, and collective reflection time. They were consistent in rejecting approaches that are too theoretical or guilt-inducing. Two specific methodological needs emerged from the focus group that do not appear in the survey: first, the need to build a shared conceptual vocabulary before any analytical activity; second, the need for facilitation approaches explicitly designed to maintain pedagogical neutrality in a politically sensitive context.

Practitioners also identified co-construction with young people as both ethically important and practically necessary for relevance. A methodology developed externally and imported without community input will not connect with the specific cultural and social realities of different communities across the territory.

Preferred learning formats — New Caledonia (% n=105, multiple selection)



Willingness to join a media literacy programme: 23.8% yes, 35.2% perhaps, 41% no.

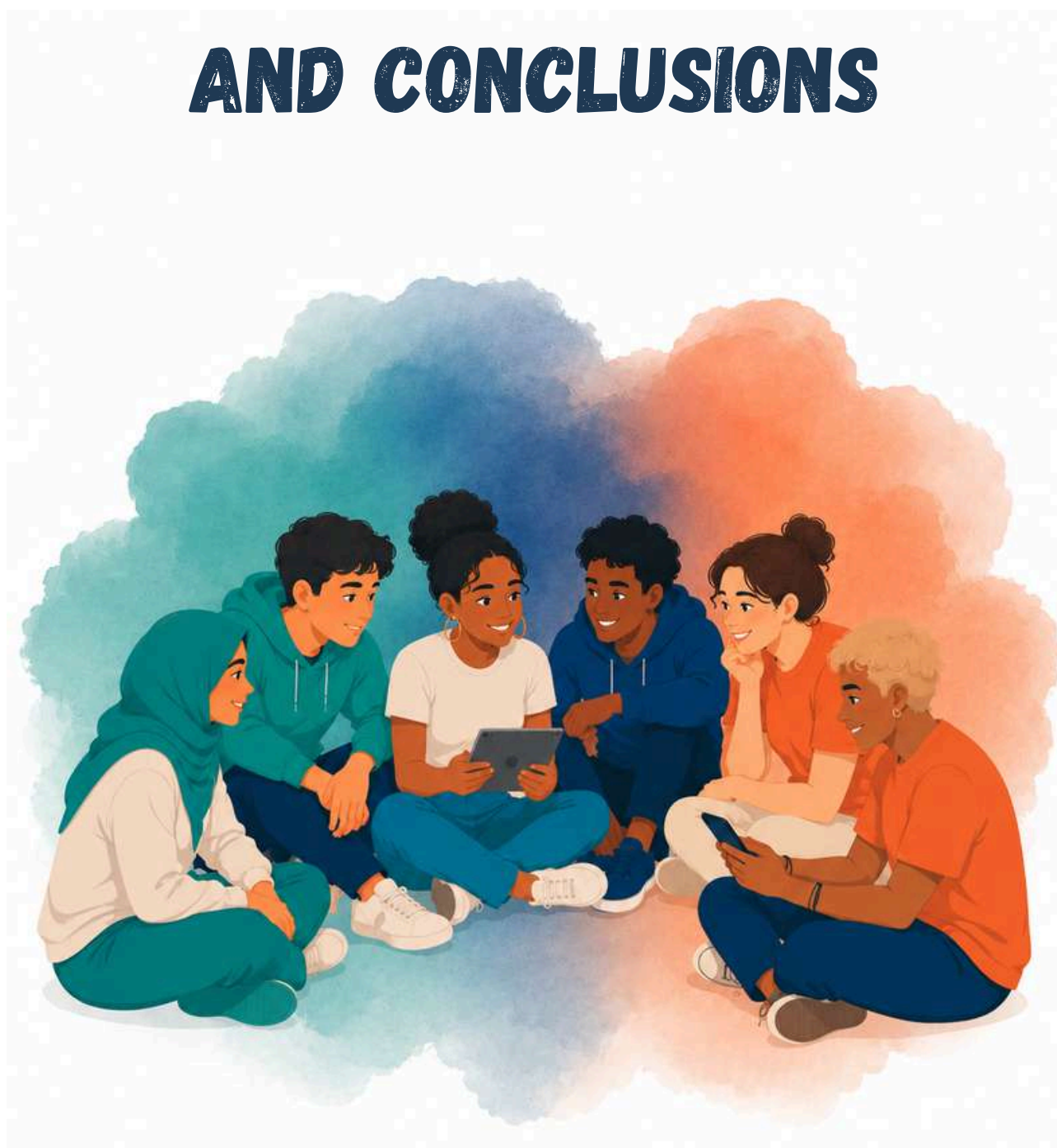
3.8 Priority Needs for New Caledonia

- Political and community neutrality as a non-negotiable design requirement: media literacy work must be explicitly non-partisan and designed so that it cannot be read as aligned with any community or political position. Building trust comes before any analytical work, and the methodology must make its neutrality legible.
- Shared conceptual vocabulary as a starting point: before any analytical activity, the methodology must establish accessible shared definitions of disinformation, emotional manipulation, polarisation, prebunking and debunking. This is not a warm-up but a foundational component.
- Community trust mechanisms as the primary vulnerability to address: the most distinctive finding in New Caledonia is that credibility is determined by who shares content, not what it contains. The methodology must address this social and emotional mechanism directly, not only the technical dimensions of verification.
- Emotional literacy and real local examples: consistent with the other two national contexts, starting with emotional connection and using actual New Caledonian content are the most effective entry points.
- Engagement strategy for the resistant cohort: with 41% of respondents explicitly stating disinterest in formal media literacy training, formats that embed learning in familiar and engaging activities are particularly important.
- Infrastructure-adaptive design: materials and activities must function with variable digital connectivity and mixed device access, including outer communities.
- Facebook-first platform literacy: Facebook dominates news consumption (78.1%); platform-specific literacy work must address Facebook dynamics alongside TikTok and Instagram.

- French-language resources and practitioner capacity building: practitioners need validated tools in French, accessible without specialist media literacy expertise, and including facilitation guidance for politically sensitive contexts.
- Inclusive design by default: the methodology must integrate inclusion from the outset, not as an adaptation, addressing territorial disparities, digital access inequalities and specific audience needs, including those of deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

CHAPTER 4

CROSS-COUNTRY ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS



Chapter 4 — Cross-Country Analysis and Conclusions

4.1 What the Three Territories Share

Across three very different territories, the needs assessment found a strikingly consistent set of patterns. The degree of convergence is itself a substantive finding: the core dynamics of how young people relate to digital information are shaped more by the transnational architecture of social platforms than by national or cultural difference. The platforms are the same everywhere; so are the vulnerabilities they create.

Emotional manipulation is the norm, not the exception

In all three countries, exposure to emotionally provocative content is the most prevalent experience in young people's information environments. Spain scores 4.46 on a 1–5 scale (83% scoring 4 or 5), Croatia 4.48 (90%), and New Caledonia 4.37 (83.8%). Focus groups in all three contexts confirm this from the practitioner side: platform architecture is designed to provoke emotional response before users can apply critical filters, and the volume and speed of emotionally charged content is a structural condition of young people's daily information environment. Young people are not occasionally exposed to emotionally manipulative content; they live inside it. Any methodology that does not put the emotional dimension at the centre will miss the most important point.

Knowing and doing are not the same thing

When asked to rate five media literacy competences on a 1–5 scale, the Spanish and Croatian surveys show a consistent awareness-practice gap: understanding of algorithmic influence is the strongest self-rated competence (Spain: 4.31, Croatia: 4.17), and the practical habit of checking dates and sources is the weakest (Spain: 3.35, Croatia: 3.42). The New Caledonian data does not replicate this pattern in the same way: all five competences score within a narrow range (3.92 to 4.15), with checking dates (4.15) and recognising emotional manipulation (4.15) scoring as highly as understanding algorithms (4.13). The pronounced gap visible in the Spanish and Croatian data is absent. This may reflect a genuinely different competence profile, or it may reflect overconfidence in self-assessment, a question practitioners in the focus group are better placed to answer. In Spain and Croatia, youth workers observe this gap daily, and media literacy work that focuses only on awareness will leave the most important competence gap untouched.

Younger does not mean less capable with visual content

On the same 1–5 scale, confidence in identifying manipulated images or videos is low in both the Spanish and Croatian samples (2.91 and 2.73, respectively) and decreases with age in both. New Caledonia diverges from this pattern: confidence in visual detection scores 4.18, considerably

higher than in Spain and Croatia. Whether this reflects genuinely greater detection capacity or a higher degree of self-assessment confidence is an open question; either way it constitutes a meaningful difference that the methodology design should account for. In the Spanish and Croatian samples, the youngest cohorts (18 to 21) show slightly stronger intuitive recognition, likely because they grew up immersed in the visual grammar of digital platforms.

Young people know social media is unreliable and use it anyway

When asked to rate their trust in different types of information sources on a 1–5 scale, Spanish and Croatian respondents give social media platforms the lowest trust score of any source category (Croatia: 2.13, Spain: 2.26). The New Caledonian survey confirms the same low-trust positioning for social media qualitatively. Yet social media remains the primary news channel for the majority of respondents in all three territories. This is not a failure of knowledge. Young people understand perfectly well that these platforms are unreliable. They use them because they are the most accessible option available and there is nothing equally convenient to replace them.

Active, participatory formats are preferred across the board

In all three countries, respondents prefer active and participatory formats over passive instruction: practical case studies, workshops, debates and short videos consistently outperform self-paced online courses. Focus group practitioners independently arrive at the same conclusion from their practice experience. Both sides of the learning relationship point towards the same methodology.

Fact-checking platforms are trusted

Fact-checking platforms are the most trusted source category across all three national samples. In Spain, the 22 to 25 group scores them at 4.13; in Croatia, the overall mean is 3.73. In New Caledonia, they appear in the high-trust tier alongside government sources and local media. This consistent finding is directly actionable: there is an existing appetite for verified information that a methodology built around verification practice can connect with.

4.2 Where the Three Territories Differ

The shared patterns above make a strong case for a common methodological core. The differences below make an equally strong case for adapting how that core is applied in each context.

Dimension	Spain	Croatia	New Caledonia
Dominant platform	Instagram (61%)	Instagram (48%) + TikTok (42%)	Facebook (78%)
AI-generated content	Not a dominant practitioner concern	Acute and documented (president, war imagery)	Not discussed explicitly in FG; community trust mechanisms are the primary vulnerability
Toxic relational models	Central practitioner concern (adolescent harm)	Present but not dominant theme	Not specifically flagged
Debate format preference	High (53.7%)	Low (26.9%)	Moderate, context-dependent
Government source trust	Low (2.71 for 26-30 group)	Moderate (3.00)	High (approx. 3.50)
Key inclusion dimension	Trauma, family structure, geography	Disability (deaf/hard-of-hearing), isolation, rural	Indigenous Kanak communities, Tribu areas
Political sensitivity	Moderate	Moderate (COVID, Ukraine)	High; political neutrality is an explicit design requirement
Main practitioner training gap	Identified but not the dominant constraint	Explicitly dominant (50% cite lack of knowledge)	Shared conceptual vocabulary identified as foundational gap

Spain presents several country-specific dimensions. The most visible is the explicit practitioner concern about toxic relational content: controlling partner behaviour, surveillance and isolation presented as expressions of love circulate on TikTok and are absorbed by adolescents from around age 15. Youth workers describe this as one of the most immediate and measurable harms they observe, yet it does not appear in the survey data at all. Young people are not naming it as a media literacy issue even as they are absorbing its models.

The intergenerational gap is identified as specific to the Spanish context. Adults and young people inhabit genuinely different information ecosystems, making shared reference points difficult to establish both between parents and children and between older practitioners and the young people they work with. This limits the possibility of meaningful dialogue about digital content and makes informal media literacy support structurally harder to deliver.

The Spanish focus group also produced several methodological proposals that are specific to this context and not captured elsewhere in the cross-country data. Practitioners stressed the importance of intervening before adolescence, because information habits and trust patterns are substantially formed before youth workers typically reach young people. Structured self-esteem work and active family engagement were proposed as necessary complements to information-focused approaches, recognising that resilience to manipulation depends on psychological foundations that content-based work alone cannot build. Fostering reading habits

was identified as a foundational practice for developing the sustained attention and analytical depth that short-form content does not cultivate. Practitioners also proposed structured digital disconnection, particularly in the family context, as a deliberate methodological tool to create the reflective distance that critical thinking requires.

Finally, the spread of misogynistic and traditionalist gender content through podcasts and algorithmically recommended social media was flagged as reaching adolescent boys with measurable relational effects. This strand connects to the toxic relational models concern and points to a dimension of media literacy work that most existing frameworks do not address.

Croatia's most distinctive dimension is AI-generated content as a documented present reality rather than a future risk. Cases involving synthetic video of the Croatian president and AI-fabricated war imagery have already produced real belief change and behavioural effects in the population. A methodology designed for Croatia that does not explicitly address AI-generated content will be incomplete from the outset. Ten of 12 practitioners (83%) identified fear as the dominant emotion exploited by disinformation in their work, and the fear mechanism is particularly effective when content is visually realistic.

The training gap in Croatia is the most explicitly quantified of the three national contexts. Half of all practitioners cite lack of knowledge as a primary constraint, and practitioners rate their own overall preparedness at a mean of 3.64 out of 5. The gap is specific: it concerns AI-generated content, algorithmic recommendation logic and emotional manipulation techniques rather than media literacy in general. This points to a targeted capacity-building need alongside the methodological framework.

Social isolation was identified as a specific vulnerability mechanism: young people in isolation spend more time on social platforms and their feeds become increasingly homogeneous filter bubbles, actively compounding the underlying social condition. This mechanism is particularly acute in Croatia and has no direct equivalent in the Spanish focus group data.

The accessibility dimension is equally concrete: Udruga Zaželi's primary mission includes deaf and hard-of-hearing youth, for whom Croatian Sign Language materials and visually accessible content are not optional adaptations but essential infrastructure currently underprovided across available media literacy resources.

In New Caledonia, three country-specific dimensions stand out. The first is the community trust mechanism identified in the focus group: credibility is determined primarily by who shares content rather than what it contains. Content shared by family or close community is assumed to be true; likes and shares function as credibility signals. This adds a specifically social and relational dimension to the awareness-practice gap that has no direct equivalent in the Spanish or Croatian data. The second is the absence of a shared professional vocabulary: practitioners working in the field do not share definitions of key concepts including prebunking, debunking, disinformation, polarisation and emotional manipulation. This is a structural barrier to coordinated action that precedes all others. The third is the political sensitivity of the context: the 2024 civil

unrest and platform restrictions are not background but the immediate frame within which practitioners work. The focus group also surfaced a broader question relevant beyond this territory: does the central challenge lie only in disinformation, or also in the modes of digital communication that social platforms reward regardless of the factual status of what is shared?

4.3 What This Means for the ImmuniFact Methodology

Based on the integrated analysis across all three territories, the following cross-national priorities should shape the ImmuniFact Innovative Learning Methodology and the Media Literacy Compass.

1. Establish a shared conceptual framework first

Before any analytical or practical activity can be effective, the methodology must establish a shared vocabulary: what disinformation means in practice, how it differs from opinion or selective framing, what prebunking and debunking involve, and what emotional manipulation and polarisation look like in real content. The New Caledonia focus group showed that practitioners working in the field do not share these definitions, and the Spanish and Croatian data point to the same gap at a less explicit level. Without this foundation, the rest of the methodology risks working in different directions depending on who is facilitating and where. This is not a warm-up exercise but a structural first component of every session.

2. Start with emotion

The methodology should open with activities that surface and name emotional responses to content before introducing any analytical framework. Emotional manipulation is the structural norm of young people's information environments in all three territories, and emotional intelligence is both the most underaddressed competence and the most consistently effective entry point identified by practitioners across the three national focus groups. This applies equally to the design of prebunking scenarios: exposing young people to weakened versions of manipulation tactics will only build genuine immunity if the emotional dimension of those tactics is part of what is practised, not only the technical identification.

3. Build habits, not just knowledge

The gap between understanding that verification matters and actually verifying is the central challenge confirmed by all three national datasets. Activities must be designed to build behavioural habits: checking dates, cross-referencing sources, pausing before sharing. Repetition, simulation and immediate practice work better than instruction. The goal is a reflex, not a concept. This has a direct implication for the Media Literacy Compass: if the assessment relies primarily on self-report questions, it will replicate the self-assessment inflation visible in the New Caledonian data and the awareness-practice gap visible in the Spanish and Croatian data. The Compass should include scenario-based items that test applied behaviour, not only self-perceived competence.

4. Use real content

All activities across all three contexts must use real, recent examples from young people's actual information environments. Invented scenarios do not produce the same engagement or learning. Materials need to be designed for regular updating, since the specific examples that connect with young people change quickly, particularly as generative AI capabilities evolve. Country-specific example libraries, maintained by each partner, should be part of the methodology package.

5. Put dialogue at the centre

In Spain, structured debates and peer discussion are the most valued learning formats. In Croatia, three quarters of practitioners identify discussion as their most effective method. New Caledonian practitioners independently named participatory discussion as essential. The methodology must be built around facilitated peer dialogue, with analytical content serving as input to discussion rather than as the end point of the activity. Individual worksheet tasks have limited effectiveness for these competences and this age group.

6. Progress through stages

The methodology should move through three identifiable levels: identifying obvious emotional manipulation; recognising selective reframing and decontextualised truth; and understanding the systemic incentive structures behind disinformation, including algorithms, political interests and commercial motivations. This progression maps onto the competence levels the survey data shows and creates a coherent developmental arc across sessions. It also aligns with the five competence categories the Media Literacy Compass will assess: recognition, verification, algorithmic awareness, emotional literacy and responsible behaviour.

7. Address AI-generated content explicitly

What is a fast-emerging concern in Spain is already a lived reality in Croatia, and given the platform restrictions of 2024, a documented risk in New Caledonia. The methodology needs a component specifically addressing how AI-generated images, video and audio are produced and how to approach them critically, combined with emotional and contextual scepticism rather than presenting recognition as a purely technical skill.

8. Design for inclusion from the start

Inclusion cannot be retrofitted. Across the three territories, the most vulnerable young people are both the hardest to reach and the most exposed to disinformation harm. Materials must not assume digital fluency, English proficiency, stable internet access or prior media literacy knowledge. The methodology and the Compass should be designed with diverse audiences in mind from the outset, with adaptation guidance built in for practitioners working with specific groups or in resource-limited settings.

9. Support the practitioners

In Croatia, half of practitioners identify their own lack of knowledge as a primary barrier. In Spain and New Caledonia, practitioners ask for tools they can use without specialist prior expertise. The facilitation guidelines in the methodology must function as professional development infrastructure as well as delivery support: providing conceptual background, step-by-step facilitation guidance, and ready-to-use materials that let practitioners work confidently without needing to be media literacy experts first. This requirement is most acute in New Caledonia, where the shared vocabulary gap means facilitation guidance cannot assume baseline familiarity with key concepts.

10. Build for flexibility

The methodology must work in schools, universities, community associations, youth centres and volunteer-led settings, in urban and rural environments, in multiple languages and with variable digital infrastructure. A modular design with clear time and resource requirements will support the broadest possible uptake and the most consistent delivery across the three territories and beyond.

11. Include a strand on relational and identity-based content

The Spanish focus group makes the strongest case for this: polarising narratives operate through selective reframing, not outright lies, making structural context invisible and individual failure visible. A dedicated component on toxic gender norms, generational stereotypes, identity-based disinformation and harmful relational models is a clear gap in most existing approaches. The New Caledonia focus group adds a further dimension: community trust mechanisms, where content is credible because of who shares it rather than what it contains, are a primary vulnerability that operates through social and emotional channels. A methodology that addresses only the analytical dimension of media literacy will leave this unaddressed in contexts, like New Caledonia, where community dynamics shape what people believe.

12. A note on age range and intervention timing

Activities 4 and 5 are designed for young people aged 18 to 30. The needs assessment data, particularly from the Spanish and Croatian focus groups, consistently identifies 14 to 17-year-olds as the age range where information habits and trust patterns are most actively forming and where intervention would be most preventive. This tension between the project's target group and the optimal intervention window is a known limitation. The methodology should be designed with adaptation to younger age groups explicitly in mind so that partner organisations can extend its use beyond the formal project target group where local conditions allow.

4.4 Final Observations

This needs assessment set out to document what young people and youth workers actually experience in three distinct digital media landscapes. What it found is not three separate problems requiring three separate solutions, but one set of structurally produced challenges with three contextually specific expressions.

The architecture of engagement-maximising social platforms creates emotionally saturated information environments in New Caledonia, Spain and Croatia alike. The gap between awareness and practice is consistent across all three national datasets. The trust paradox, using platforms you do not trust because there is nowhere equally accessible, describes young people's situation from three different countries and realities. And the practitioner community in all three territories is asking for the same thing: a coherent, evidence-grounded methodology that acknowledges the emotional and relational dimensions of media literacy, uses real content, puts dialogue at the centre, and is accessible enough to be used by practitioners without specialist prior expertise.

ImmuniFact has a strong and coherent foundation to build on. The most important design choices are already implied by the data: start with emotion, build habits through practice, use real examples, create space for peer dialogue, and treat inclusion not as a constraint on ambition but as the condition that makes impact possible for the young people who need it most.

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The following sources are cited in the Introduction (section 0.1) of this report. All other data cited in Chapters 1 through 4 derives from the primary data collected through the ImmuniFact needs assessment: the three national surveys and the focus group discussions conducted in Spain, Croatia and New Caledonia in early 2026.

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ImmuniFact: building immunity through critical thinking and fact-checking

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