RAIN.BOW

RAISE AGAINST INTOLERANCE.
NEW BRIDGES ON THE WEB

#RainBowErasmusPlus

State of art of social
and civic competences
and values awareness

BELGIUM

Introduction

As nationalism and xenophobia are increasing in Europe, the RAINBOW project aims to promote social inclusion and positive EU values through the introduction of non-formal education and methods into the school education. The project will create a heterogeneous community who will be trained to carry out European Values campaign and to promote empathy and understanding.

Thanks to the RAINBOW approach each project target group (secondary school teachers and students) will interiorize concepts and strategies becoming able to promote common values and civic competences.

This report is based on the results of two inquiries that have been carried out between May and September in Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Romania and Spain.

Those inquiries were addressed to secondary-level teachers and students from 15 to 18 years old and aimed at studying among others:

- Teachers' awareness of the characteristics of the media processes,
- Teachers' needs of methodological support and teaching materials,
- Teachers' knowledge and competences on civic education,
- Teachers' knowledge on the connection between civic awareness and hate speech and intolerance,
- Students' perception on prejudices, tolerance, civic competences, social media, …
- Students' needs for material.

Those inquiries gathered 1741 answers at the European level (254 from teachers, 1487 from students).

At the national level, Belgium gathered 27 answers from teachers and 221 answers from students.

The present report aims at establishing a full picture of the needs, perceptions and awareness of teachers and learners from Belgium. It also includes an analysis of non-formal methodologies and tools applicable for training on civic education, media literacy and critical thinking in secondary level schools.
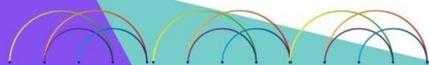
Table of contents

Part 1/ Teachers' perceptions on social and civic education and media processes

Civic and social education in Belgium

In Belgium, there is no elaborated tradition of citizenship education. Only very recently in 2018, the Flemish Parliament approved sixteen key competencies, within which the new education goals had to be formulated and where citizenship education goals became achievable and evaluable. Although the government decides on the level of the attainment goals, *"it remains up to the schools and their umbrella organizations to decide how they will achieve the educational goals. The educational goals for citizenship do not necessarily result in a separate subject for citizenship. These goals—or some of them—can also be achieved through subjects such as history, geography or languages. The GO! education network has the intention to establish a separate subject for citizenship. They have allocated one hour per week to it and would like to double that in the future. The network organization of the Catholic schools (Katholiek Onderwijs Vlaanderen) refers to the common foundation curriculum upon which the curriculum of every subject is based.10 In it, every teacher in every subject is asked to include notions such as respect for each other, self-responsibility, justice, dialogue, social engagement and media literacy. In addition, the network organization of the Catholic schools has decided to design a separate course called Mens en Samenleving ('People and Society').11 Various educational goals and learning objectives are linked to this, such as digital competence and media literacy, economic and financial competences, but also some citizenship educational goals."*

P. Loobuyck (2020) The policy shift towards citizenship education in Flanders. How can it be explained? *Journal of Curriculum Studies,* https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2020.1820081

1. Topics addressed by civic and social education in Belgium

Nearly all teachers (25 in 27) report that they address discrimination in their lessons. Other topics that are reported by a large majority of the teachers include human rights (N=24), political life (N=23), communication and information rights (N=21), children's rights (N=21) and fake news (N=20). Less reported topics include fighting against harassment (N=16), dealing with hateful content (N=15), and online citizenship (N=13). One teacher reports talking about drugs in his/her civic and social education classes.

Figure 1: **Topics adressed by Social and civic education (in absolute frequencies)**
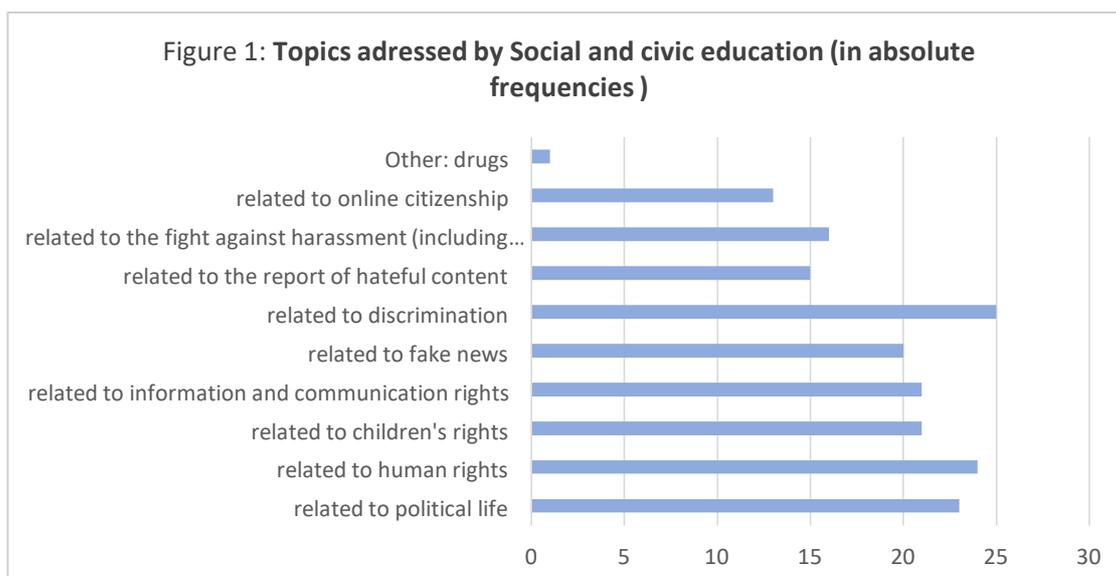
2. Level of sufficiency of the civic and social education provided to pupils

On average, teachers report a 6,41 on a scale from 1 to 10 regarding the level of sufficiency of the civic and social education currently provided to pupils (min = 3, max = 10, std = 1,55). This number suggests that there is room for improvement regarding the amount and/or quality of civic and social education provided to pupils.

3. Current strengths of social and civic education provided to secondary level students

Teachers often refer to the importance of having a strong team of teachers that has a common interest in social and civic education. They also report that integrating the topic in the whole curriculum instead of only one specific course (e.g. in Human and Society) would be a strength. They also underline that it is necessary to adress these topics during the whole year, and not only during one or two specific project weeks. Therefore, it's important to inscribe the importance of social and civic education in the pedagogical project of the school. Lastly, they refer to the need to connect theoretical lessons regarding these subjects to art classes and group talks.

4. Possible improvements that could be implemented

Teachers report that they would welcome more integrated projects, together with even more integration of civic and social education in multiple courses. Several teachers report that social and civic education often remains too dependent on individual initiatives. A school-wide approach is desired. Teachers also mention that principals should be able to enforce the vision surrounding civic and social education if individual teachers lack effort. Principals should also provide support to teachers who want to work on their social and civic education skills. Lastly, teachers mention that a more robust integration of civic and social education in practical activities should be pursued.

5. Teachers' perception of the connections between civic awareness and hate speech

Not one teacher gave a score between 1 and 4 when questioned about the connection between civic awareness and hate speech. 26% (N=7) gave a score between 5 and 7, whereas 74% (N=20) gave a score between 8 and 10. In other words, the large majority of the teachers in our sample believe that there is a powerful association between people's civic awareness and hate speech.

Secondary level teachers' personal and professional use of social media

What's app is social media platform which is used the most by teachers. 85% (N=23) use the app (very) frequently. 77% (N= 18) of the teachers report using Facebook (very) frequently. Youtube is used by 67% (N=18) of the teachers (very) frequently. 52% (N=14) use Messenger, and 48% use Instagram (very) frequently. Linkedin is frequently used by 15% of the teachers. On the other hand, Twitter is only (very) frequently used by two teachers, just like Vimeo. Discord is not used by the teachers.

Teachers use different social media platforms for different activities. Facebook is predominantly used for sharing content such as pictures, songs, etc and for spending spare time. But the platform is also used by teachers to inform themselves and to communicate with family and friends. On the other hand, Messenger is mainly used for communication with friends and family members. They hardly use the platform for other types of activities. Teachers use Instagram to share content, followed by spending spare time and for expressing themselves. What'sapp is mostly mentioned by the teachers as a means to communicate with family and friends and to share content. Twitter is not a frequently used medium. If teachers report to use it, it mainly concerns informing themselves. Like Twitter, Linkedin seems to be less a part of teachers' social media usage. Youtube is predominantly used to watch videos and to inform oneself. To a lesser degree, the platform is also used to share educational content. The use of Vimeo and Discord is negligible.

Figure 2 shows that 10 out of 27 teachers say that they do not use social networks with their students. 11 teachers indicate that they use social media platforms to share educational content and to interact with their students. 9 teachers say that they use social media to work with their students.

What'sapp (N=9), Messenger (N=7), Youtube (N=7) and Facebook (N=6) are the social media platforms that theachers use the most with their students. Other platforms are only mentioned by two or three teachers.

Figure 2 : **Do you use social networks with your students? (in absolute frequencies)**

Figure 3: **Do you work on social media with your students?**
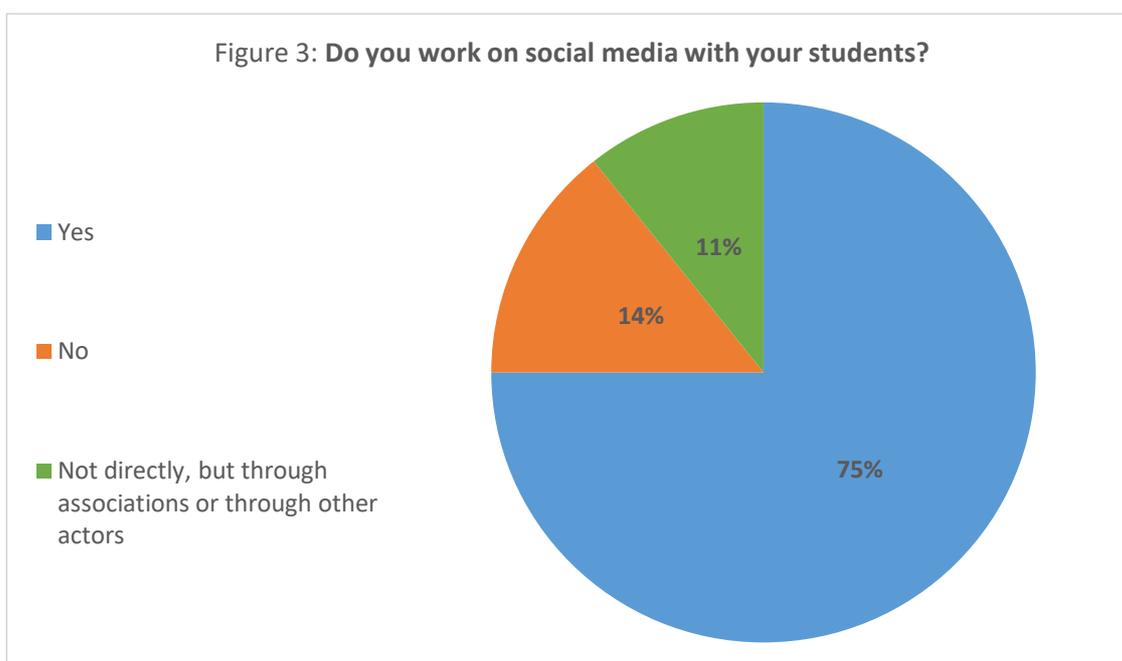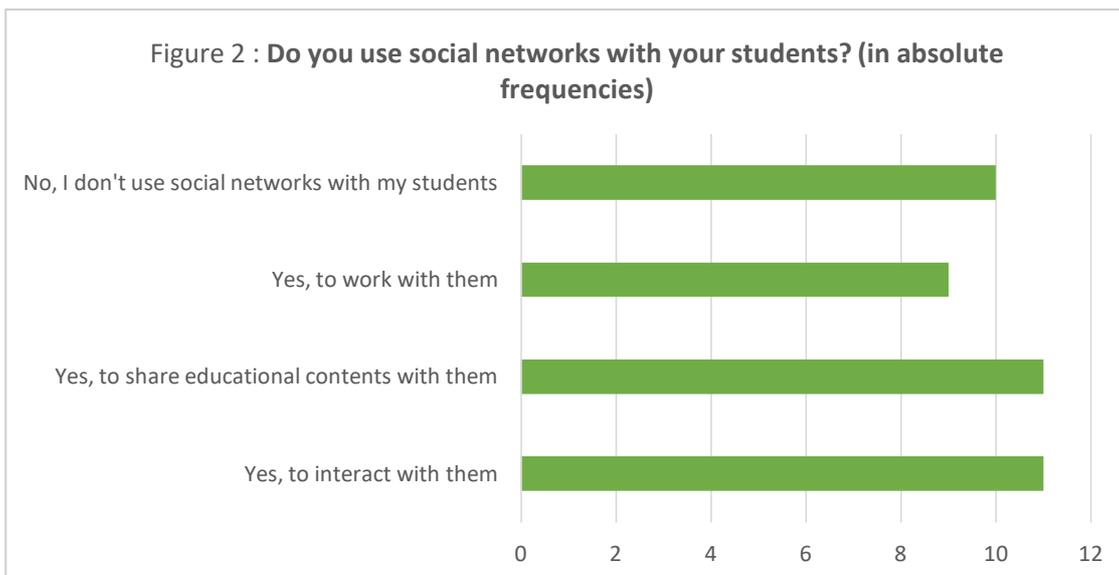
Secondary level teachers' perception of social media and their processes

1. The benefits of social media according to teachers

Nearly all teachers (N=26) report that social media help create networks (for work, studies, etc.). Next, 21 teachers report that social media enables them to inform themselves, facilitates communication, and enables people to be united with other people. Nineteen teachers state that social media entertains, whereas 16 teachers say that social media contributes to fighting isolation. Lastly, only nine teachers indicate that social media promotes the discussion of different opinions (see figure 4).

Figure 4: **In your opinion, what are the benefits of social networks, what do they allow?**

- to engage and unite individuals
- to fight against isolation
- to create a network (for employment, studies, etc.)
- promote the debate of ideas
- to inform and communicate
- to be entertained
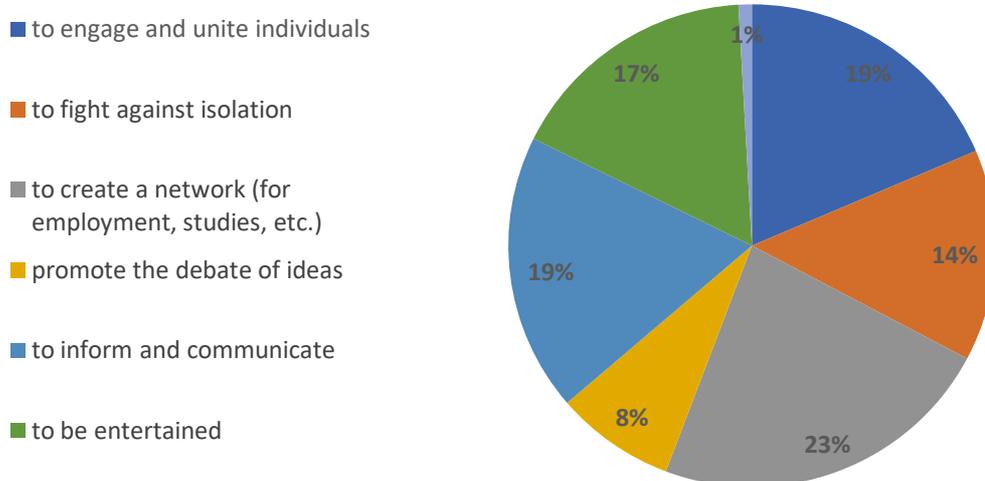
2. Teachers' perception of the connexions between social media and hate speech

We asked teachers to which degree they believe social media facilitate the spread of fake news and violent content. On average, teachers gave a score of 8,48 on a scale from 1 to 10.

When asked why they believe social media facilitate the spread of fake news and violent content, all but one teacher believe that this is due to the instantaneity of shares and comment content. 24 teachers indicate that anonymity is an important reason and 20 out of 27 believe it is due to the vast numbers of users. 19 teachers think that the resonance chamber plays a role. Only a minority of the teachers (N=8) think that it is due to the standardization of content and profiles (see figure 5).

Figure 5: **Impact of social media on the spread of fake news and violent content (in absolute frequencies)**
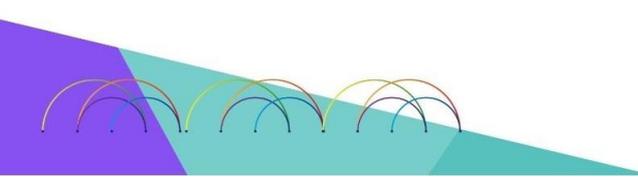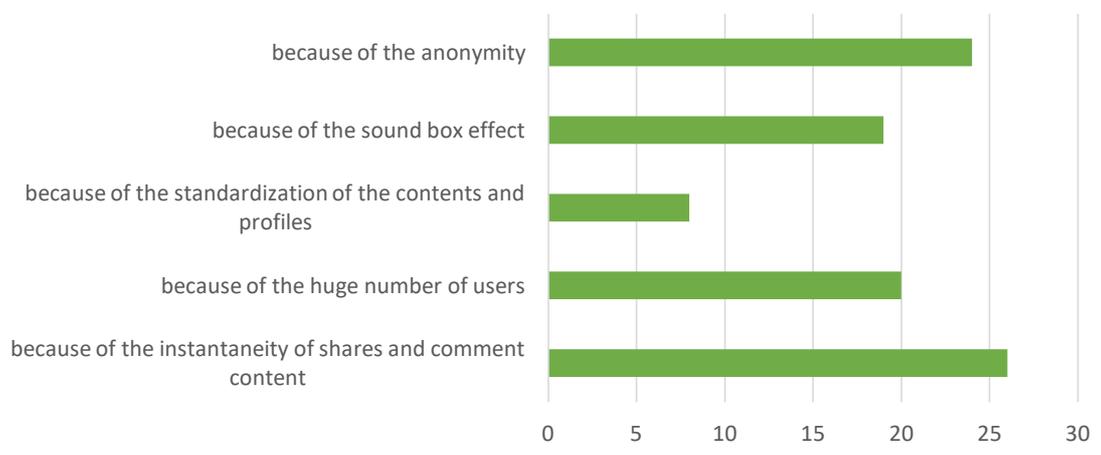
The majority of teachers (56%, N =15) believe that the negative association between activities on social media and the vulnerability of pupils regarding hate speech is moderately strong, compared to 41% (N=11) who believe that the association is strong.

Concerning the spread of violent content, 63% (N=17) believe activities on social media contribute relatively strongly to the vulnerability of pupils compared to 7% (N=2), who believe it has a strong impact. However, about one-third of the teachers (N=8) believe social media activities to hardly contribute to the vulnerability of pupils.

Regarding the spread of complot theories and false information, about one in three teachers (N=9) believes the negative relationship between activities on social media and the vulnerability of pupils is strong. In contrast, 44% (N = 12) believes it's fairly strong. Five teaches (19%) think that the relationship is weak.

Concerning intimidation, 33% (N=9) believe that there is a strong negative association between social media activities and pupils' vulnerability. 41% (N=11) think the relationship is moderately strong, whereas 26% (N=7) believe the association is weak.

Over one in four (26%) believe that the negative relationship between activities on social media and the vulnerability of pupils regarding discrimination is strong. 59% (N=16) indicate that the relationship is moderately strong compared to 15% (N=4) who believe the relationship is weak.

Regarding prejudices, the majority of the teachers (N=15) believe social media activities have a strong negative impact on pupils' vulnerability. Ten teachers (37%) indicate that the relationship is moderately strong compared to two teachers (7%), who think that the relationship is weak.

Concerning the spread of shocking content, 33% (N=9) believe the relationship between social media activities and the vulnerability of pupils is strong. 44% (N=12) think the association is moderately strong, whereas 22% (N=6) indicate the association is weak.

30% (N=8) of the teachers believe that social media activities are negatively associated with the vulnerability of the pupils when it concerns being unhappy. 48% (N=13) think the relationship is fairly strong, while 22% (N=6) assume the association is weak.

Lastly, we questioned teachers about the relationship between social isolation and exclusion and social media activities. 15% (N=4) think that the relationship is strong, while 56% (N=15) believe it to be fairly strong. 30% (N=8) believe the relationship is weak.

3.   Media literacy, the answer to fight against fake news and online hate speech?

We asked teachers whether they believe students' media literacy is sufficient to fight against fake news and online hate speech. On average, teachers report a score of 4,81 on a scale from 1 to 7.

Secondary level teachers' needs of methodological support and teaching materials to tackle civic and social issues

A large majority of teachers (N=21; 78%) state they work on social media usage in class with their students. However, six teachers claim they do not pay (or hardly pay) attention to this subject.

1. State of art of the sufficiency of the existing tools/trainings to work both on civic and social issues and on hate speech and fake news

We asked teachers to report on whether they feel confident enough to work on societal and social topics, especially online. On a scale from one to ten, teachers report a score from 7,15 on average. Regarding teachers' confidence about working with pupils on (online) hate speech and fake news, we notice a similar average score of 7,19.

However, when asked whether enough educational resources and materials concerning these topics are available, the average score drops significantly. On a scale from one to ten, teachers report an average score of 5,81.

2. Some materials that would match the teachers' needs

According to the teachers in our survey, expert interventions (such as journalists, university researchers, Youtubers,...) may be a very effective tool to better their professional practice. Nearly nine out of ten (89%) teachers claim that this would very much or completely satisfy their needs. Educational course packages and educational tools are also strongly advocated by the teachers. Training courses and especially teacher meetings are expected to be less useful to better practice their profession (see figure 6).

21 out of 27 teachers believe that the creation of content such as videos and photos may be effective awareness-raising tools for teaching civic competence. 20 teachers also believe group workshops may be helpful tools. Fewer teachers are convinced about the effectiveness of dedicated training (N=12), the creation of artistic content (N=11) and serious games or educative digital games (N=11). Lastly, only eight teachers believe the creation of pages on social media will be an effective awareness-raising tool (see figure 7).

Figure 6: **What could match your needs? (teachers'point of view, in %)**
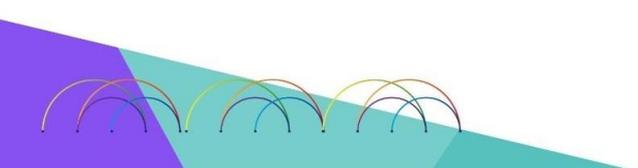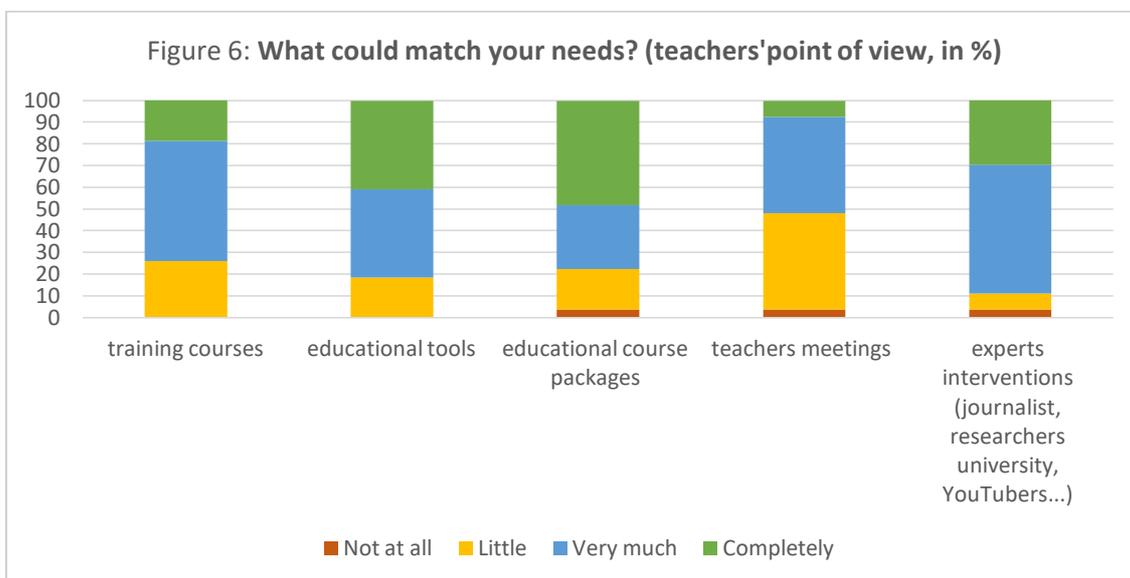
Figure 7: Which kind of tools would be efficient to sensitize students? (teachers' point of view, in absolute frequencies)

Tool	Frequency
workshops (work in groups)	20
dedicated trainings	12
creation of artistic content (comics, theater play,…	11
creation of pages on social media	8
creation of content (video, photo,…)	21
serious games (educative digital games)	11
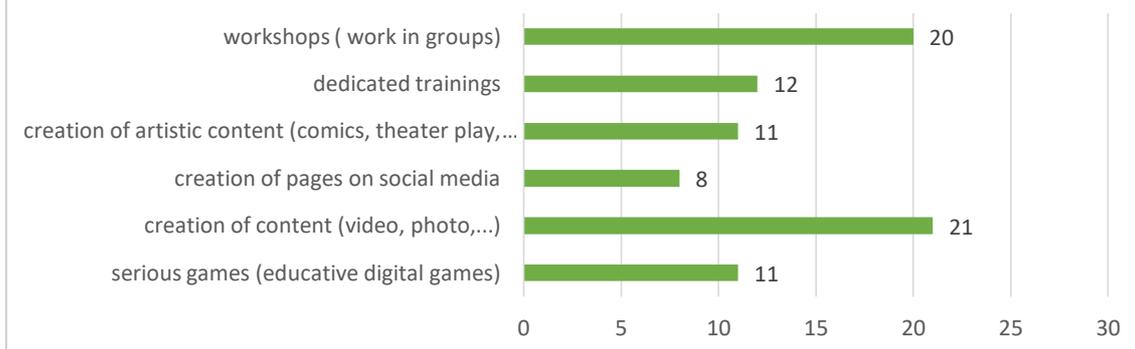
Part 2 / Secondary level students' perceptions on prejudices, tolerance, civic competences, social media

Secondary level students' perception of civic and social competences

1. Being a good adult citizen: what does it mean for students?

The most important characteristic of being a good citizen, according to the students who answered the survey, is to respect the right of people to have a different. 95% of all pupils think it's (very) important. An almost equal share of pupils believes that having respect for different opinions and trusting other people and that taking care of the financial security of your family makes you a good citizen. Nearly nine out of ten students indicate that engaging in personal efforts to protect natural resources is a (very) important aspect of being a good citizen. 85% think that knowing human rights is (very) important.

The following topics are considered by a larger share of students as being not (at all) important for being a good citizen are: engaging oneself for actions that help people in developing countries (25%), actively joining actions to protect the environment (29%), peaceful protests against laws that are unjust (42%) and learning about the history of one's country (35%). Interestingly, especially topics related to politics and political engagement are rated as not important for being a good citizen. Being a member of a political party is rated as not (at all) important by more than 90% of students. Engaging in political discussions is dismissed by 85% of the students. Following political issues in newspapers, televisions or the internet is not (at all) important for nearly half (48%) of the students in our sample.

2. Students' awareness of social and civic competences

Social and civic competences are defined, among others, as solidarity, fighting against discrimination, civic engagement, the right of and access to information. We asked youngsters to indicate the degree to which they think it is necessary to educate young people to civic and social competences. The results suggest that the students in our sample are firmly convinced of the necessity of this type of education. On average, students give a score of 7,98 on a scale ranging from one to ten.

We also asked students to report whether they had been sensitized to social and civic competences (see figure 8). 195 out of 221 students indicate that they have had some social and civic education at school. Other social contexts seem to be less fruitful places for this type of education. Only 74 students report that they have been sensitized to social and civic competences in the family, and only 51 students report this to be the case among friends. 17 students refer to volunteering activities and ten students to their sports clubs. Five students claim that they have not been sensitized at all to social and civic competences.

Figure 8: **Have you already been sensitized to social and civic competences?**

- Yes, at school
- Yes, by my family
- Yes, by my friends
- Yes, in my sports club
- Yes, during volunteering activities
- No

5% 1% 3% 14% 55% 21%
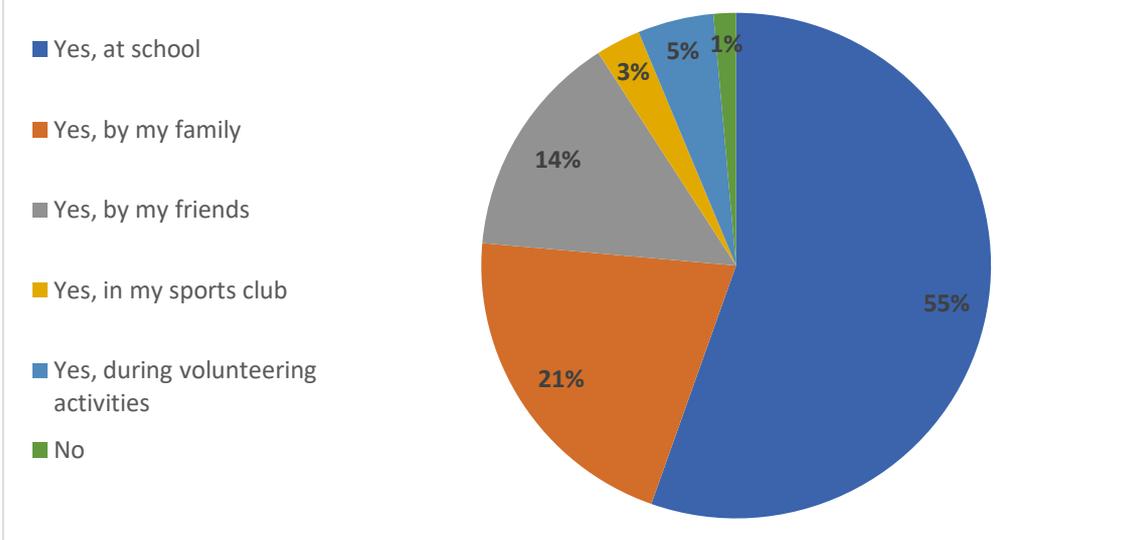
When asked whether students believe that they have benefited from this type of awareness-raising experience, only 107 out of 221 report that they understand discrimination situations better (see figure 9). 72 students say they try to avoid discrimination situations now and 61 claim that they know better how to protect themselves and others. However, 45 students say that they don't know whether they have benefited from social and civic educational experiences and seven believe that it was useless.

Figure 9**: Did you benefit from this experience? (in absolute frequencies)**
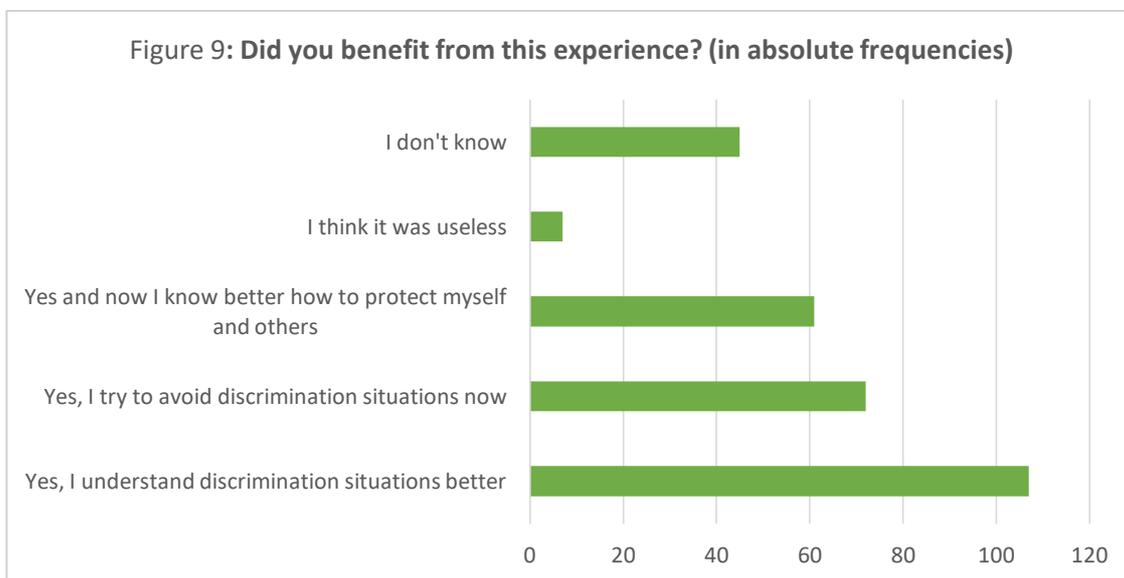
3. Students' suggestions to improve social and civic education in Belgium

We asked students to say something about the benefits and possible improvements regarding civic and social education in their country. The Belgian students predominantly point out a need of a better understanding of how the world works. They believe that understanding may lead to positive actions, such as people helping each other more, less discrimination and/or racism, better interactions, more respect for people with different origins, nationalities, religions or

opinions. Some students also refer to more knowledge about the national history (also the less favorable episodes, such as Belgian's colonization history), current problems in Belgian society, and a better understanding of rights and duties as a Belgian citizen.

Several students indicate that more attention should be paid to social and civic education at school. Rather than a couple of lessons in one or more courses or one or two projects, they would prefer a more integrated and continuous effort to teach students about these topics. Some students also propose a new obligated course such as philosophy or an elective course about Belgian politics. They also refer to the need to learn how to express, discuss and listen to other opinions instead of focusing on knowledge alone.

But a significant number of students reported that they did not have anything to respond to this question and/or that they don't have an opinion or a clue on what to respond.

We also asked students to indicate which type of awareness-raising actions may be effective in their opinion (see figure 10). 20% of given answers state that the creation of content such as videos or photos may be important tools for civic and social education. The creation of social media pages is also ticked off by about half of the studens (N=108). Less popular, but still reported by a significant number of students are the creation of artistic content such as comics, theatre plays, music (N=73), workshops (N=74) and serious games (N=55). Only 33 students recommend dedicated training. Lastly, 23 students think that none of these actions are effective tools.

Figure 10: **Which kind of awareness-raising actions would be effective? (in absolute frequencies)**

Others; 12
None of these actions; 23
Serious games; 0
Creation of contents (photos, videos…); 126
Workshops; 76
Creation of artistic content (comics, theater play, music…); 76
Trainings; 34
Creation of artistic content (comics, theater play, music…); 76
Dedicated pages on social media; 109
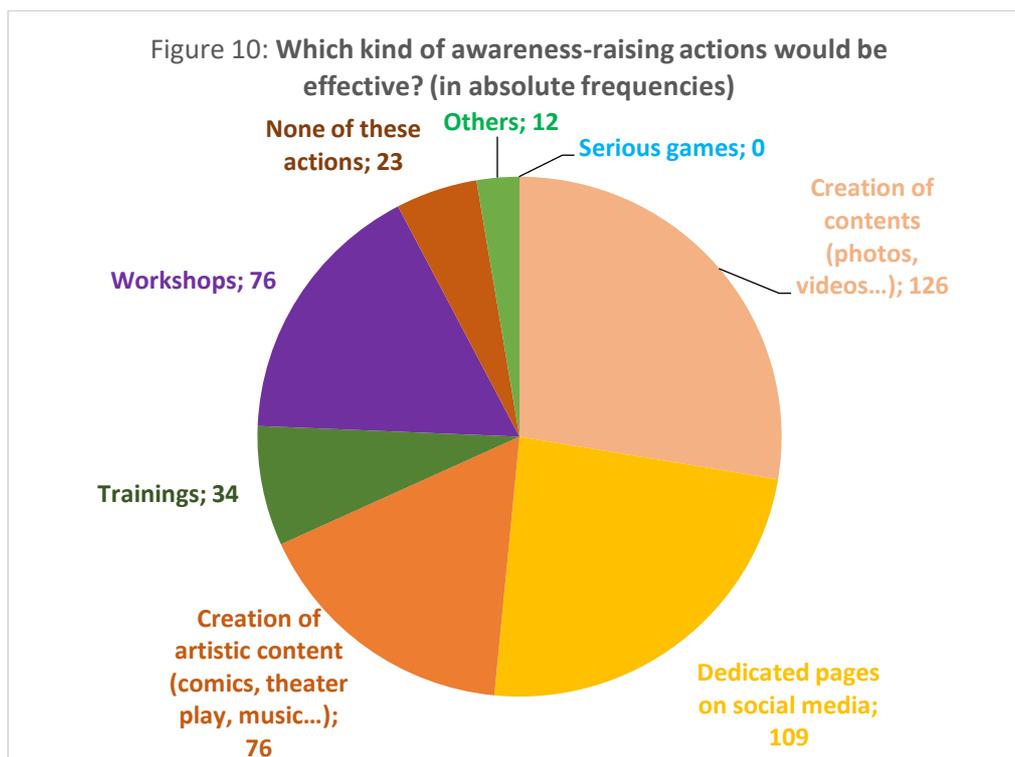
When asked whether students have suggestions of their own regarding awareness-raising actions, most students generally refer to the necessity to pay attention to these topics at school. Some students give specific suggestions such as inviting people to give testimonials, setting up a research project and presenting the results, online quizzes and sessions with invited speakers. Two pupils also claim that such type of actions should not only be directed to young
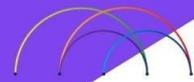
people. Adults also need to be more sensitized to this type of education (e.g. through info commercials on television).

Secondary level students' experience and perception of discriminations

### 1. Have you ever been discriminated against or witnessed discriminations?

A majority (54%) of the students report that they are discriminated sometimes. 12 students (6%) indicate that they have been discriminated against frequently (often or daily). 41%, however, say they have never felt discrimination.

100 students report that they believe that their physical appearance was a reason for being discriminated against. Next in line are age (43 students), gender (37 students), surname (22 students). Less frequently mentioned reasons are the family situations (17 students), real or supposed belonging to a nation (14 students), ethnic background and sexual orientation (13 students) and political opinions (12 students). Last on the list are living place and religion (10 students), morals (9 students), skin color (8 students), race (5 students), economic situation (4 students) and handicap (3 students).

2. Why do people discriminate against others?

Students were asked to indicate possible reasons for discrimination against people. The participants could choose amongst multiple answers. According to the students in our sample, people discriminate against others predominantly because of ignorance (see figure 11). 138 students out of 221 ticked off this option. Next, 105 students believe that close-mindedness is a reason for discrimination, followed by 100 students that think misunderstanding is a cause. 94 students indicated that fear is a reason for discrimination.

Figure 11: **Perceived reasons for discrimination (in absolute frequencies)**
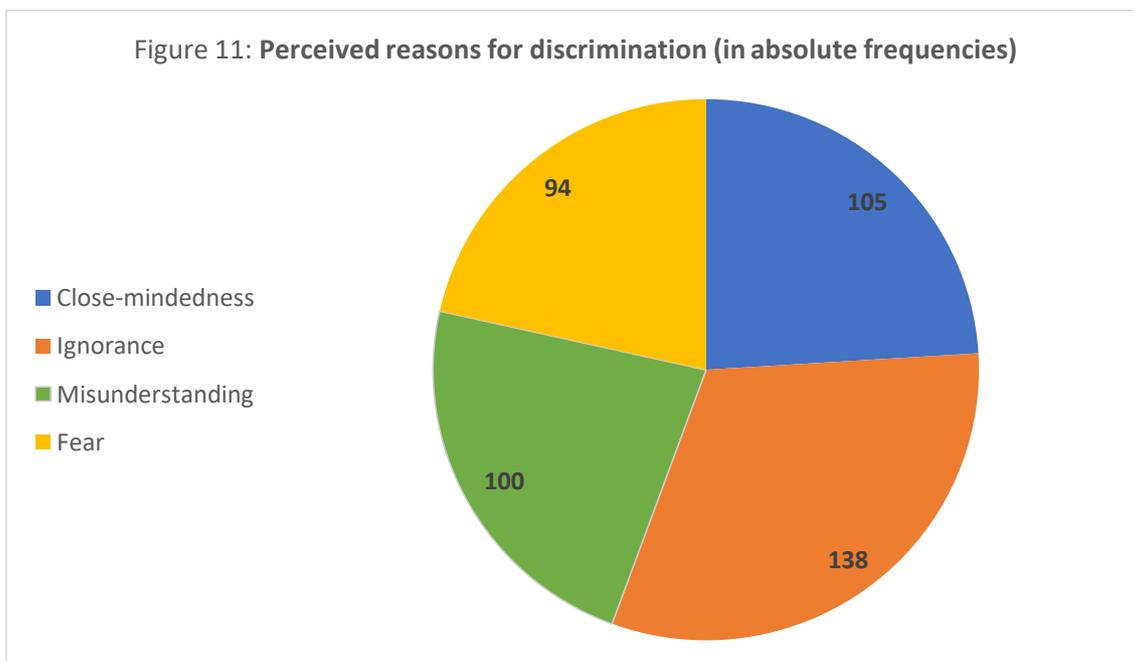
Students were also given the possibility to report other possible reasons. A number of students refer to a feeling of superiority. Therefore, they are more prone to belittling others and making them feel inferior. Some students also state that some people want to pretend that they are

tough or cool. Another set of pupils think that people discriminate because they are very insecure about themselves or because they feel bad and therefore want to hurt others too. Some students refer to fear of being excluded from their peer groups or to the upbringing of people. Other reasons are jealousy, stupidity, poor judgments and lack of logic, hate, anger and racism.

Secondary level students' experience with social media, fake news and violent content

## 1. Students' use of social media

The majority of the pupils (41%) spend between three and five hours a day on social media. 35% report using social media between one and three hours a day. Nearly one in five (19%) state that they spend over five hours a day on social media. Only 5% of the students say that they use social media for less than one hour a day.

With regards to the frequency of use, differences are present between types of social media (see figure 13). The share of people reporting to use social media very often is highest for Snapchat (61%), Instagram (59%), Youtube (43%), Messenger (43%) and Tiktok (30%). On the other hand, only 15% of the students report to use Facebook and Twitter very often. What's app is only reported to be used very often by 14% of the students. Discord (71%) and Twitter (59%) have the highest share of pupils reporting never using these platforms.

Figure 12: **How much time do you daily spend on social networks?**

- ■ Less than one hour
- ■ Between one and three hours
- ■ Between three and five hours
- ■ More than five hours

Figure 13: **Which social media do you use? (in %)**
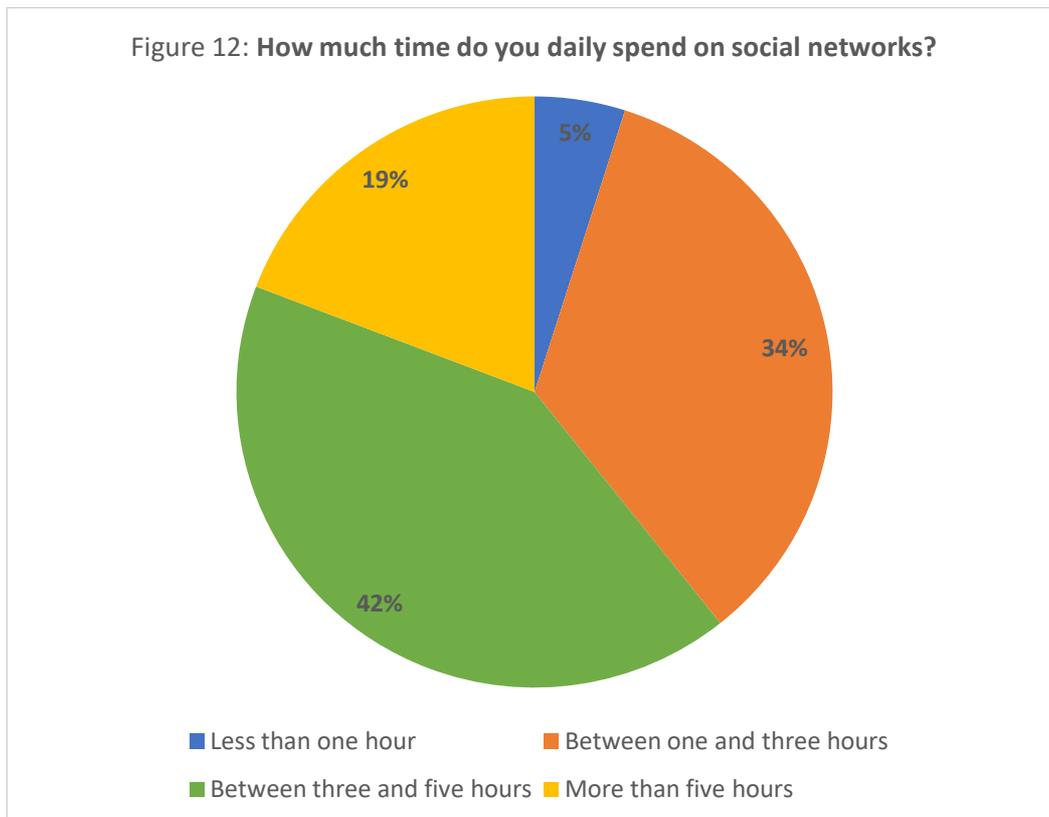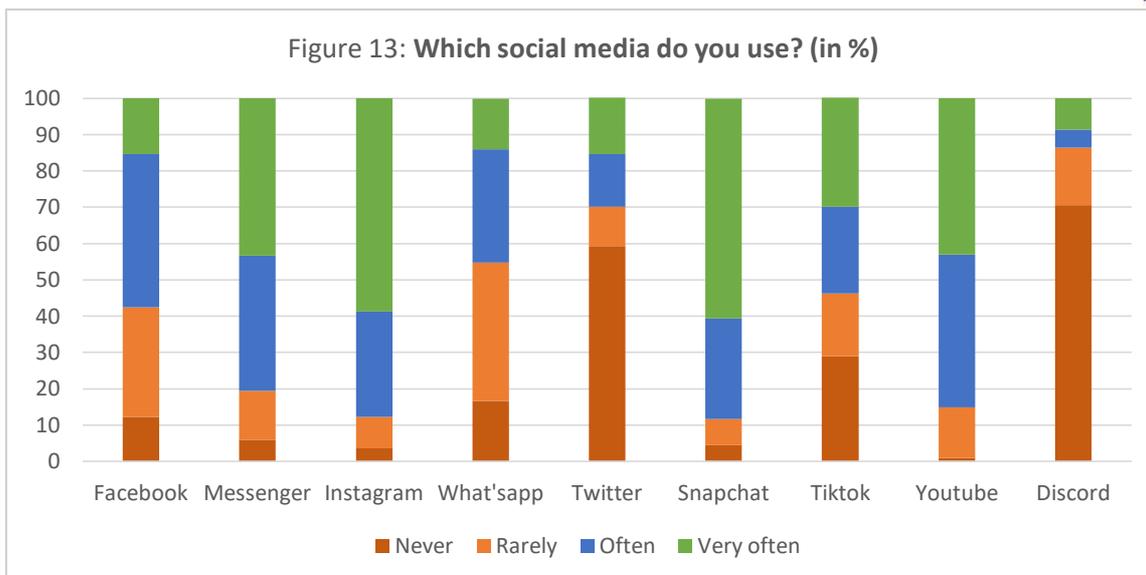
Students also appear to use different types of social media platforms for different reasons. Facebook is predominantly used by students to inform themselves. On the other hand, Messenger is mainly used to communicate with family and friends, to share content and to communicate with teachers. Instagram is predominantly used to share content with others and to spend free time. What'sapp is mainly used to communicate with family and friends. If Twitter is used, it's predominantly to spend spare time and to inform oneself. Snapchat is mainly used to communicate with family and friends but is also often used to share content with others and to spend free time. Youtube is used to watch videos and to spend free time. The same is true for Tiktok, but fewer students seem to use this forum compared to Youtube. Discord is not often used by students, but if so, the main reason to use it is to communicate with family and friends or teachers.

2.   Students' experience with fake news, online hate speech and discriminations

58% of the students report that they have witnessed violent situations on social media, compared to 24% that indicate that they have been a victim of violent situations. Nearly one in five (18%) say that they have never faced violent situations on social media (see figure 14).

Figure 14: **Have you ever been confronted to violent situations on social media? (hate speech, harassment, threats…)**

- Yes, I've faced some 24%
- Yes, I've witnessed some 58%
- No 18%
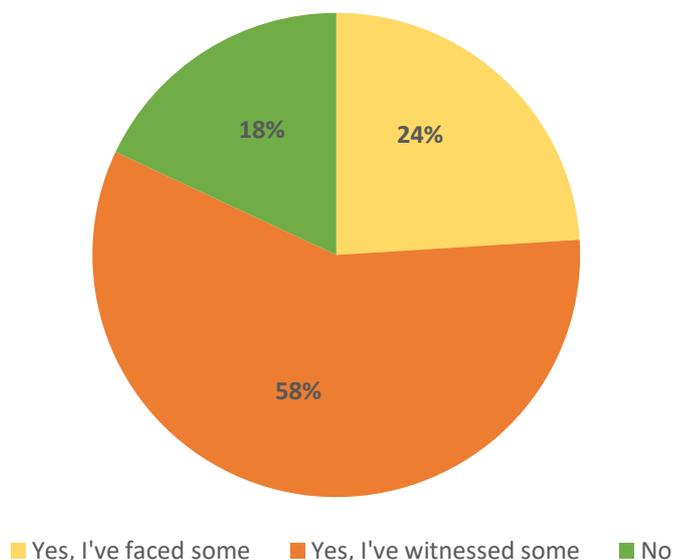
Nearly all students (96%) claim that they have never posted an insulting picture or text about someone on the web (see figure 15). In contrast, only 21% report that they never witnessed someone posting an insulting picture of a specific group (migrants, women, LGBT+ people,…). 38% even indicate that they have witnessed this five times or more. One in five students claims that friends have been the victim of this kind of violent situation on the web. Regarding their own experiences, only 7% of the students report that someone has posted an insulting picture or text about them on the web compared to 89% that have never been confronted with this type of situation.

Figure 15 : **How often did the following situations happen during the last 3 months? (in %)**

- Never
- Once
- 2 to 4 times
- 5 times or more
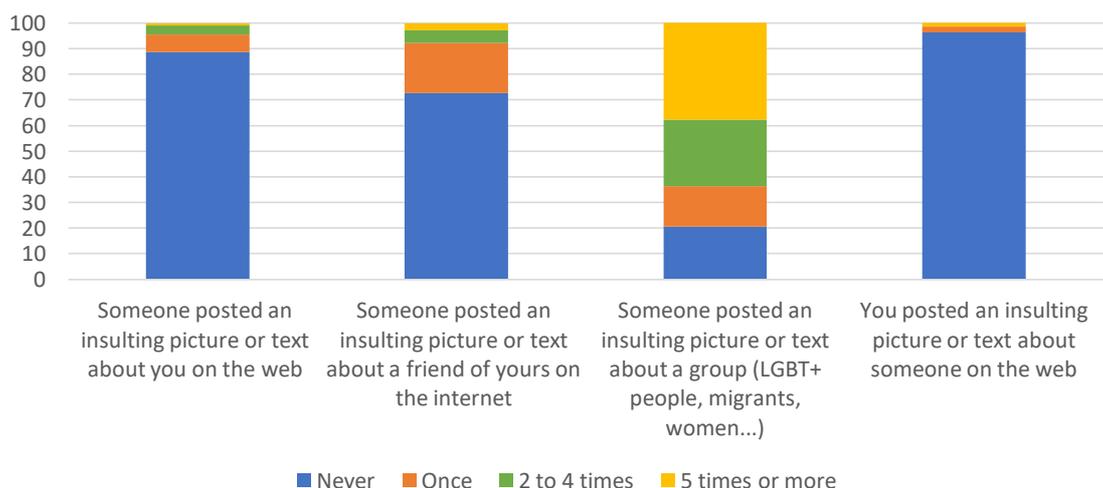
When asked whether they were prepared to describe a violent situation that they have experienced on the web, many students reported that they would rather keep this type of experience to themselves. However, they would report it if they believe that someone will get hurt or if it concerns a subject that they think is very important. They would tell their parents and/or the police, depending on the severity of the situation.
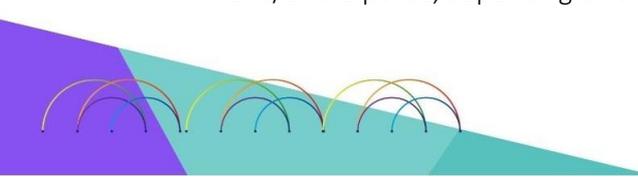
Students that give general examples of violent situations on the web often refer to insulting responses to the Black Lives Matter movement or, in contrast, police violence (the survey took place after the violent murder of George Floyd), racist comments (e.g. regarding the headscarf) and hate comments regarding LGBT+ people. Some students also mention that overweight or slightly heavier persons often get insulting comments on their posts. Personal situations that are mentioned included death threats and personal harassment.

On average, students are very convinced that social media facilitate the spread of fake news. On a scale from one to ten, students report a score of 9,04 on average. We also asked students to indicate whether they believe that social media facilitate the spread of violent posts. On a scale from one to ten, students, on average, give a score of 8,84. In other words, the students in our sample strongly believe in the possible negative side effects of social media.

Secondary level students' awareness about the characteristic of the media processes in the digital era

Regarding students' trust in institutions, groups or information resources, clear differences are found. Parents, school, the army, police, court, institutions like justice, health and the European institutions enjoy a high level of trust. On the other hand, information resources such as websites, traditional media (television, newspapers,…) are distrusted by a large share of the students in our sample. But the institutions that are trusted the least are political parties and social media platforms.

Figure 16 : **How much do you trust the following insitutions, groups or information resources? (in %)**

Appendices

Teachers

Figure 17: **Gender**

Figure 18: **Teaching experience**
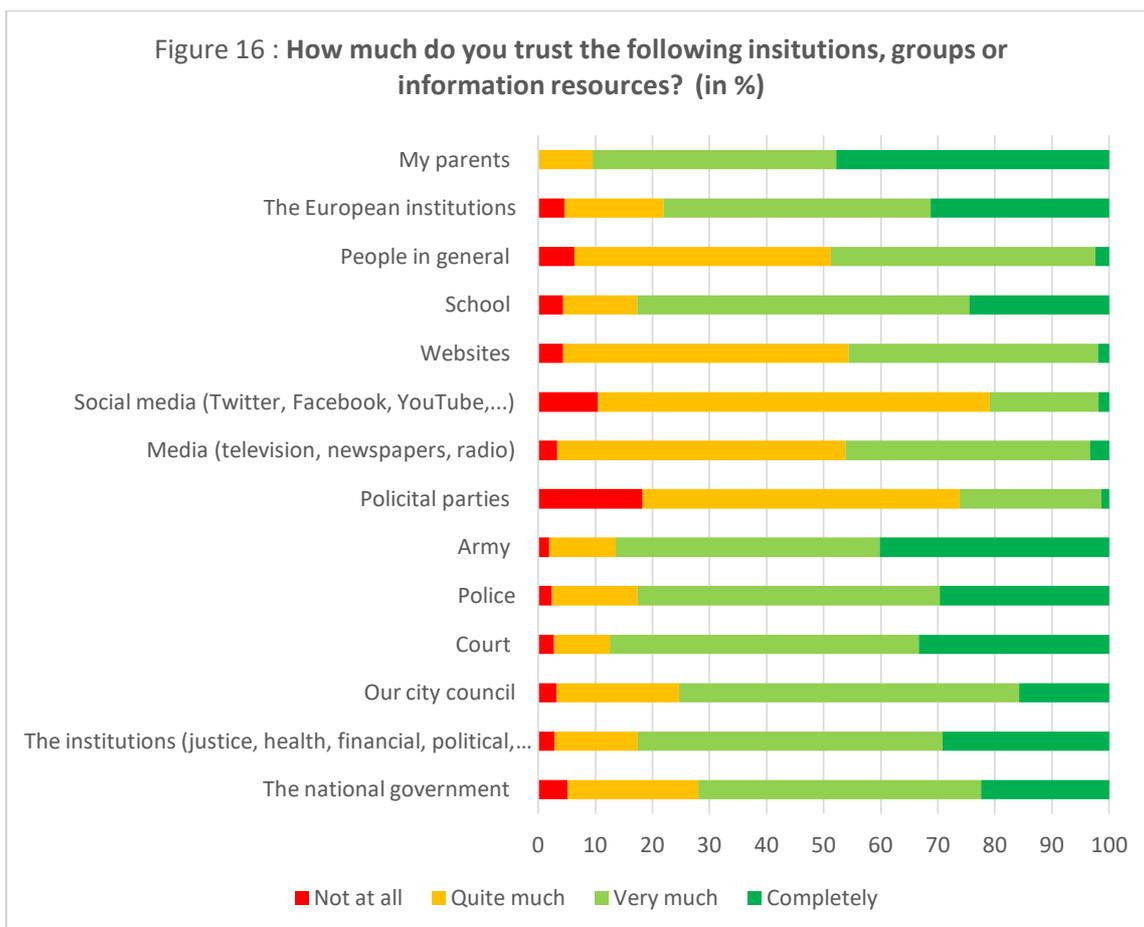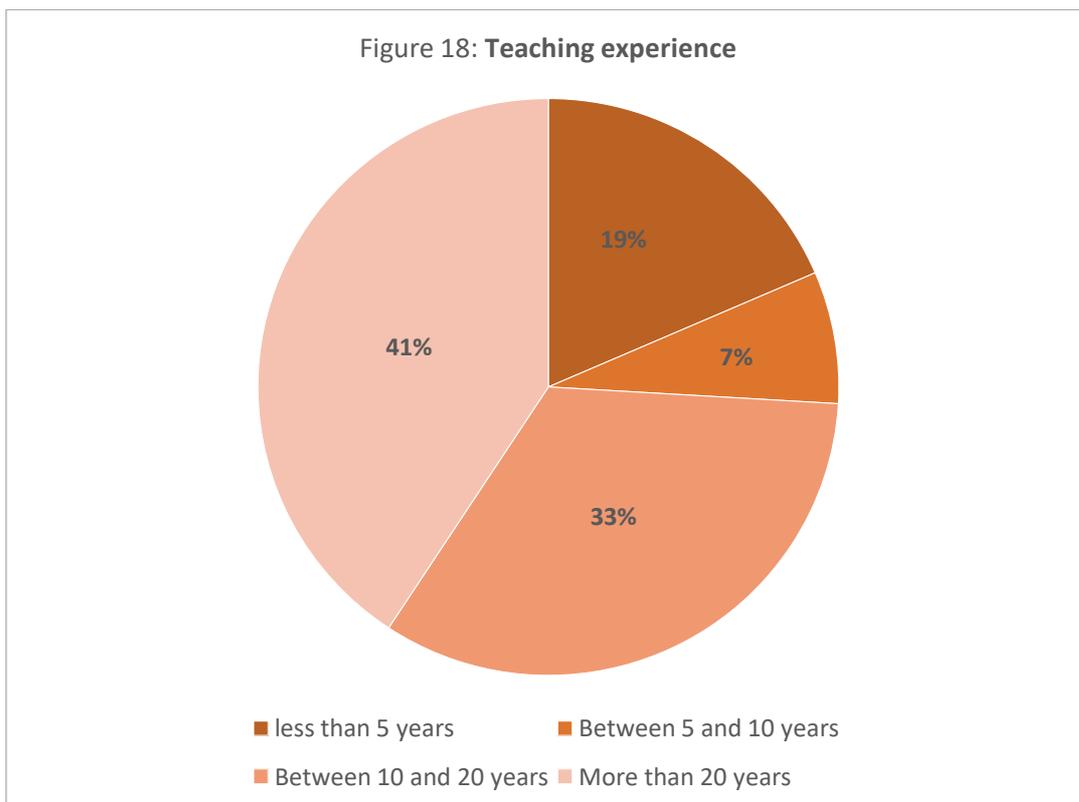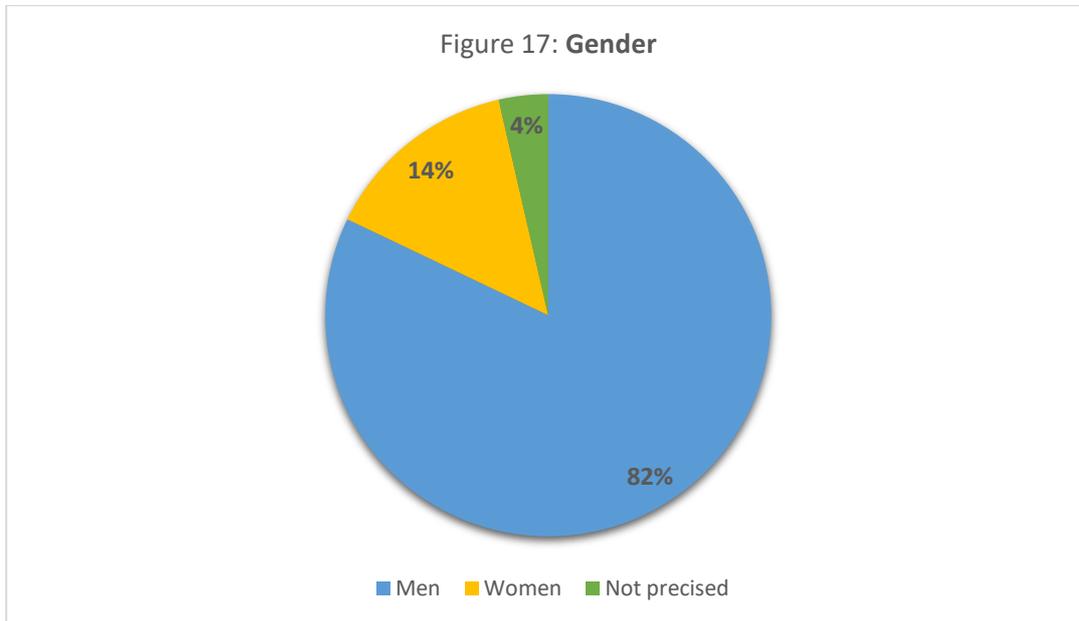
85% (N=23) of the teachers are women. 15% of the (N=4) teachers are men. Five teachers have been teaching five years or less. 2 teachers have been teaching between six and ten years. Nine teachers have between 11 and 20 years of teaching experience. Lastly, 11 teachers have been teaching over 20 years.

Students

Figure 19: **Age of the participants**

- 19 years old; 1%
- 18 years old; 7%
- 12 years old; 23%
- 17 years old; 23%
- 13 years old; 0%
- 14 years old; 9%
- 16 years old; 15%
- 15 years old; 21%

Figure 14: **Gender**

- 1%
- 33%
- 66%

■ Men ■ Women ■ Not precised
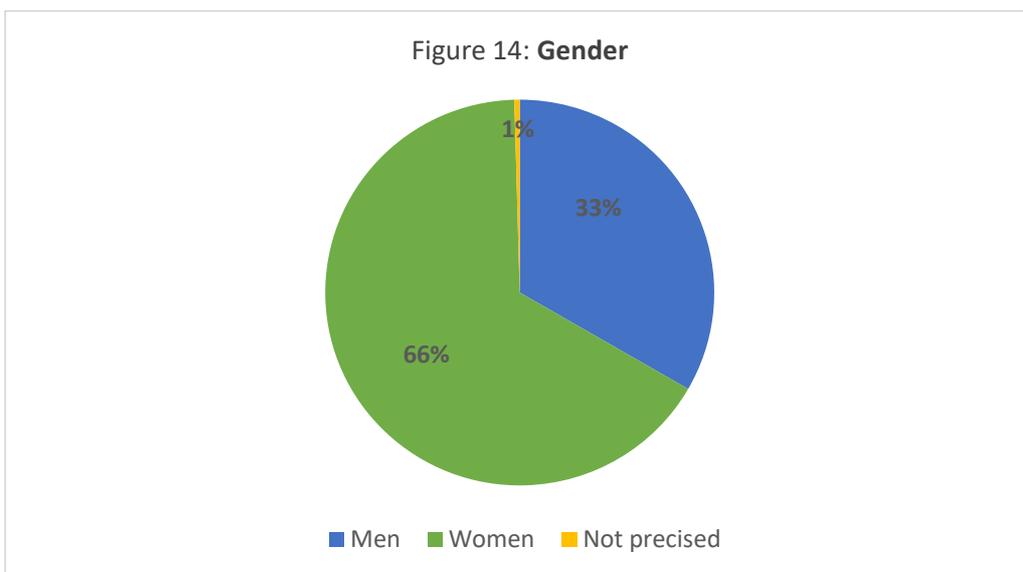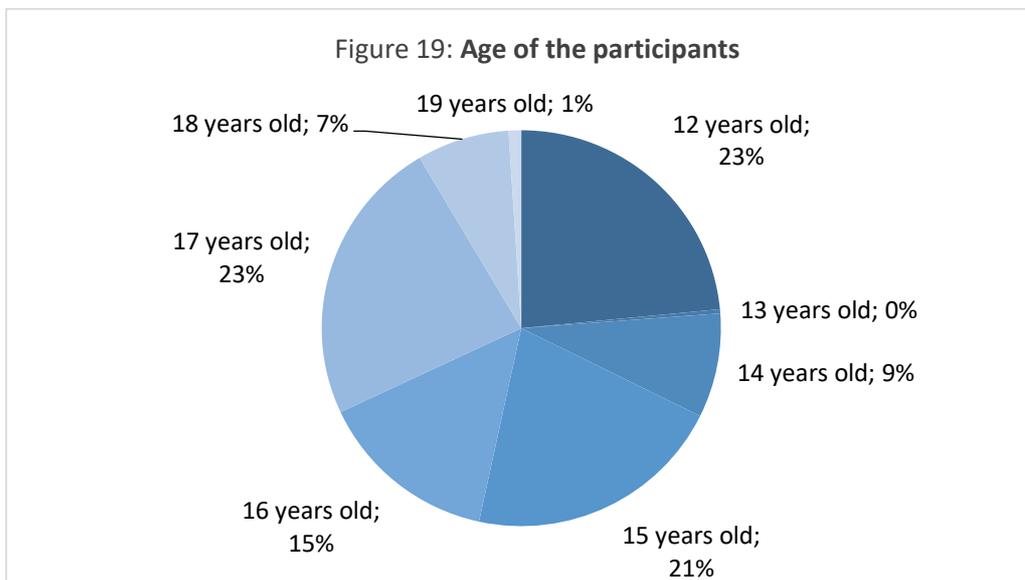
Figure 15: **Number of inhabitants in your "City"**

Legend:
- from 50 to 200
- from 200 to 500
- from 500 to 1000
- from 1000 to 5000
- from 5000 to 10 000
- from 10 000 to 20 000
- from 20 000 to 50 000
- from 50 000 to 100 000
- from 100 000 to 200 000
- from 200 000 to 500 000
- over 500 000

Pie chart values: 6%, 7%, 18%, 4%, 14%, 44%, 3%, 2%, 1%, 0%, 0%
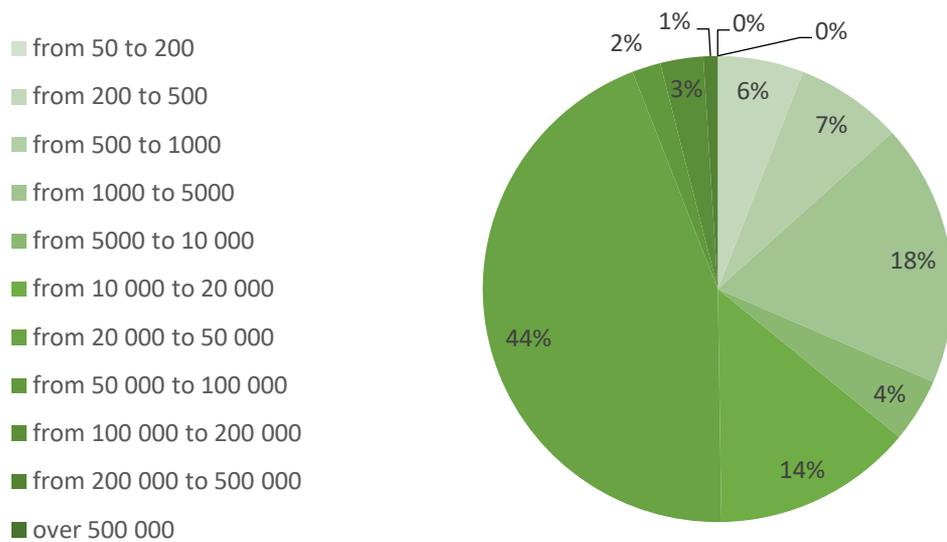
66% of the students (N = 146) are girls compared to 34% (N=74) boys. The students' age ranges from 13 year old to 19 year old. Most students (N=67) are 17 years old. 40% of the students live in a city of 20000 to 50000 inhabitants. 16% of the respondents live in a city of 1000 to 5000 inhabitants. 13% of the students live in a city of 10000 to 15000 inhabitants. The rest is unequally divided over larger cities and smaller villages.