



Baltic Engagement
Centre for Combating
Information Disorders

BECID

CO-CREATED BALTIC YOUTH MIL HACKATHON SERIES

D4.5: FINAL REPORT ON T4.5

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INTRODUCTION

The Baltic Engagement Centre for Combating Information Disorders ([BECID](https://becid.eu)) is a network of experts working to combat information disorders and promote media literacy in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The Baltic [EDMO hub](https://edmo.eu) brings together 4 research organizations: the University of Tartu (UTARTU from now on), Tallinn University (TLU), Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (ViA) and Vytautas Magnus University (VMU). Additionally, we work with 4 IFCN-certified fact-checkers: Delfi Meedia (EE), Re: Baltica (LV), Delfi (LV), and Delfi (LT), whose work is amplified by an associated partner, the Latvian TV channel Vidzeme TV. The Media and Information Literacy (MIL from now on) work package is led by the Baltic Centre of Media Excellence (BCME), a non-profit organization focused on MIL with thirteen founding members cooperating in Latvia and beyond. As of February 2025, BECID connects 72 individuals from 9 organizations.

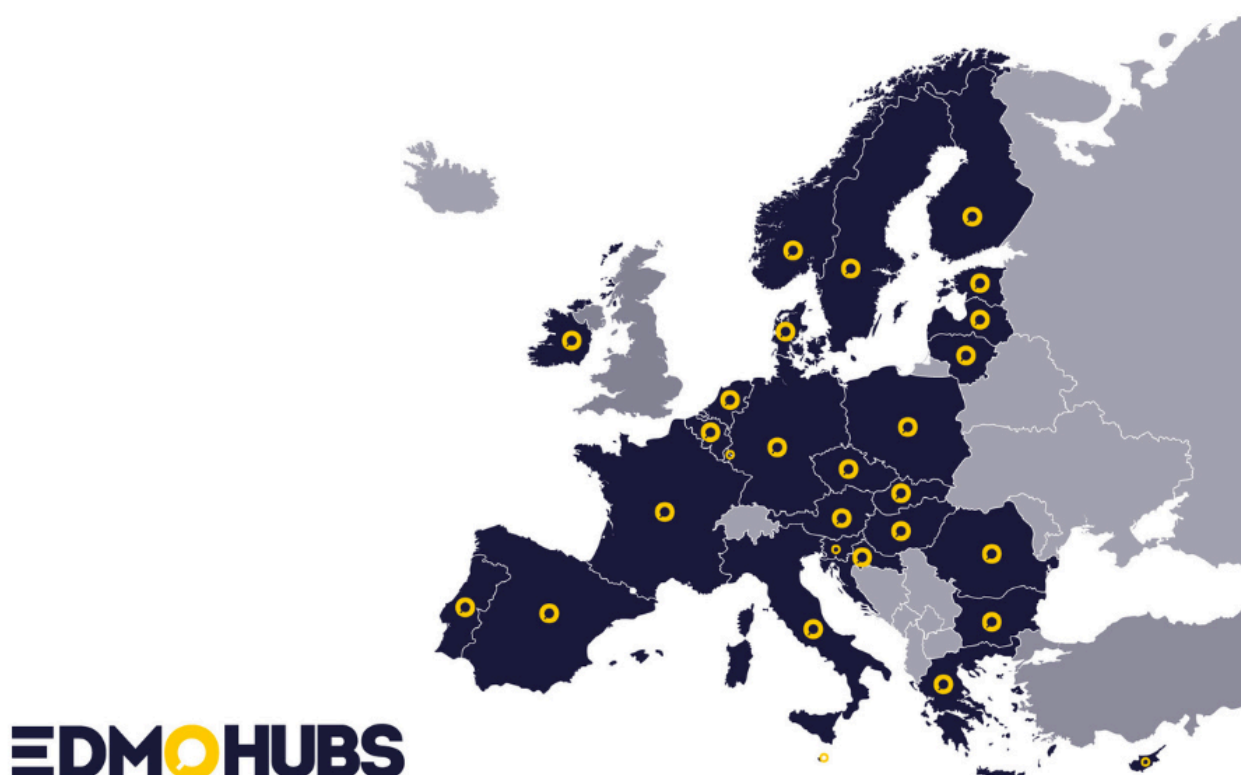


Figure 1. EDMO network. Visit edmo.eu to learn more about EDMO Hubs.

Media literacy and critical thinking are increasingly recognized as essential skills for youth in the Baltic countries—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In an era of rapidly evolving digital

landscapes and the spread of misinformation, these competencies are crucial for young people to critically evaluate information, engage responsibly with media, and develop informed perspectives.

The Baltic countries have made significant strides in integrating digital competence into their national education systems. Digital literacy is embedded in the curriculum, with a strong emphasis on problem-solving, analytical thinking, and responsible media consumption. Students are introduced to technology early, gaining hands-on experience with robotics, coding, and artificial intelligence. Virtual reality and other innovative tools are also used across subjects, enhancing learning engagement and digital awareness.

Despite these efforts, several challenges remain: **Gaps in Research and Data** – Studies on youth media literacy in the region lack depth and consistency, making assessing students' needs difficult. Without comprehensive research, the development of targeted educational initiatives is hindered. **Insufficient Teacher Training** – While media literacy is gaining prominence, many educators lack the necessary training to integrate it effectively into their teaching. Regular and systematic professional development programs are needed to ensure teachers are equipped with up-to-date knowledge and pedagogical strategies. **Lack of Educational Resources** – The absence of comprehensive, standardized methodological materials poses a significant challenge. Teachers often lack structured lesson plans, case studies, and interactive tools to facilitate engaging media literacy education. **Varying Levels of Digital Access** – While urban schools often benefit from advanced technology and digital tools, rural areas may experience disparities in access. Ensuring equal opportunities for all students, regardless of location, remains a crucial goal. **The Need for Cross-Sector Collaboration** – Strengthening cooperation between educational institutions, media organizations, policymakers, and civil society can lead to more effective media literacy strategies and initiatives. Joint efforts can help create engaging programs, educational campaigns, and interactive learning experiences that resonate with youth.

To tackle these challenges, BECID strives to develop teacher training and high-quality educational resources, as well as foster collaboration among key stakeholders. These efforts are essential in equipping the next generation with the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate the complexities of the digital world with confidence and responsibility. The Youth MIL Hackathon, organized in collaboration with media organizations across all three Baltic countries, was a vivid example of how to achieve this

goal by directly involving young people and the media, with the youth themselves becoming creators of MIL content.

This report is the deliverable for Task 4.5 (T4.5 from here on), with contributions from five of the BECID partners: UTARTU, UAB Delfi, AS Delfi, Ekspress Meedia, and BCME. The task aimed to create innovative and engaging MIL content for youth, produced by the youth themselves. The project nurtured a new generation of media content creators by organizing a collaborative media course and hackathon across all three Baltic countries. In the first half of the event, experts, including investigative journalists involved in WP3—led a series of hands-on workshops covering critical thinking, media logic, ethics, fact-checking, visual literacy, and mobile journalism, including social media marketing. These sessions provided participants with essential skills and insights into the media landscape. The second half of the event transitioned into the time-constrained hackathon, where participants were challenged to create relevant MIL content tailored for young audiences. The content was designed for distribution through platforms most commonly used by youth, addressing important topics such as health, the environment, immigration, and more. A jury then evaluated and selected the best pieces of content production, recognizing outstanding creativity and impact.

To achieve T4.5 goal, all partners were involved in recruiting and selecting participants, developing a training program, conducting MIL training in each Baltic country, and organizing a joint MIL Hackathon (Mediathon) in Riga.

1. MEDIA TRAINING IN DELFI NEWSROOMS IN ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA

On January 18, 2025, expert-led training sessions were held at DELFI newsrooms across Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia as part of the T4.5 activities. The training attracted up to 60 young participants (aged 18–23) and focused on key skills such as critical thinking, fact-checking, mobile journalism, data visualization, and social media marketing. These sessions equipped attendees with valuable insights into the media landscape and essential tools to prepare for the upcoming Hackathon (Mediathon) in Riga, Latvia.

Participation in the national training sessions was a key prerequisite for youth to take part in the Mediathon. Conducted in national languages, these sessions provided participants with a deeper understanding of the media landscape and the principles of creating high-quality media content. To ensure effective recruitment, media organizations in Latvia and Lithuania, along with UTARTU in collaboration with Ekspress Meedia in Estonia, managed the application process and participant selection. The lead partner of T4.5, BCME, facilitated the process by providing all necessary information – including participant requirements, event schedules, task descriptions, and application details – on its [website](#). Information was published also [here](#).



Figure 2. A visual graphic shared on the project partners' social media platforms to attract participants for media training and the Mediathon.

1.1. Training in Estonia

Participants for the training in Estonia were chosen through the the University of Tartu students' game [MIL in the MAIL](#). In November, about 1400 young people from across Estonia participated in the game which taught players how to navigate information overload more effectively.

During the game, participants completed daily tasks – distinguished news from opinion, identified AI-generated images from real photos, and verified the accuracy of statements – and successfully solving them revealed three codes that unlocked the doors of three different Omniva parcel lockers. The first participant to open the correct parcel locker, got a mystery box. The exact locations of the surprise boxes remained a mystery until the evening when they were announced on social media.



Figure 3. Screenshots of the MIL in the MAIL game.

“Our goal is to prevent young people from falling victim to scams,” said Roman Valt, a student of economics and journalism. “Although the main focus of the game was

educational, it felt like a treasure hunt, as participants were so dedicated that they tried to open all Omniva parcel lockers across Estonia even before the locations were revealed.”

The most active participants received bonus prizes, including an exclusive invitation to a training day at the editorial office of Delfi Estonia. In January, 16 young people from all over the country were introduced to the basics of fact-checking and investigative journalism and gained an overview of the daily operations of a media house.



Figure 4. Participants in Estonia gained an overview of the daily operations of a media house.

The day began with a presentation by Erik Moora, head of Delfi Media’s investigative and fact-checking editorial team, who spoke about the organizational structure of the media house and the role of journalism in our society. Using current topics as examples, he emphasized the importance of journalistic media in maintaining democracy. Then Moora and fact-checking reporter Marta Vunš led the participants on an engaging tour of Delfi Media’s editorial offices, introducing the work of various publications within the media group.



Figure 5. Media training in Delfi Estonia.

After a snack break, the day continued with Marta Vunš, who provided insights into her daily work – fighting misinformation – and explained the principles of fact-checking. Participants learned practical tips for identifying misinformation in everyday life and why fact-checking skills are essential for everyone today.



Figure 6. Media training in Delfi Estonia.

In the following session, investigative journalist Martin Laine shared his advice on using investigative journalism tools. He opened up about his extraordinary experiences to illustrate how journalists conduct in-depth research into complex topics. The insights gained gave the young participants a glimpse into the fascinating behind-the-scenes work of journalism and fact-checking.

The day concluded with Delfi's managing editor Greete Lehepuu who introduced new forms of journalism and discussed the various visualization tools used in Delfi Media. Participants learned how different technological solutions help present stories more clearly and engagingly to readers.

1.2. Training in Latvia

Similar trainings were conducted simultaneously at the Delfi editorial office in Latvia. Latvian participants also had the opportunity to learn about the daily work of the Delfi news editorial team.



Figure 7. Media training in Delfi Latvia.

Following, the editor-in-chief of "Delfi Bizness," Aija Krūtaine, helped answer questions such as: What is a media outlet, what is the structure and role of media? What does a journalist do? What sources do journalists use?



Figure 8. Media training in Delfi Latvia.

The head of Delfi's Social Media Department, Jānis Sildniks, explained how social media differs from traditional media. Why isn't TikTok considered a media outlet? What do we know about social media algorithms? Meanwhile, the editor-in-chief of Delfi, Filips Lastovskis, answered questions about the fact-checking genre in journalism: What are fact-checking articles, how are they created, and why is this genre important?



Figure 9. Media training in Delfi Latvia.

The training was attended by 11 young people, with an average age of 19.6 years. The majority of participants were female (7 women, 4 men). Participants came from various cities in Latvia, with the largest number from Rīga (3 participants) and Liepāja (2 participants), as well as from Babīte, Ropaži, Sigulda, Jēkabpils, and Cēsis.



Participants particularly appreciated the opportunity to gain new knowledge about media operations, social media algorithms, and fact-checking. Several noted that the training helped them better understand how to distinguish credible information from manipulation.



Figure 10. Media training in Delfi Latvia.

One participant highlighted: "After this training, I have a much better understanding of how the media works and how to recognize when someone is trying to mislead me." The trainers' openness and willingness to answer questions were also praised, as they created an informal and engaging atmosphere that encouraged active participation. "It was great that we could freely ask questions and discuss things – it didn't feel like a dry lecture," one participant noted. Many also appreciated that the trainers shared real-life experiences from their professional work, making the topics more relatable. "I especially liked that there were many real-world examples – not just theory, but also hands-on experience," said another participant.

While the overall feedback was highly positive, participants suggested several improvements to enhance the training even further. Many expressed a desire for more concrete examples, particularly concerning fact-checking and evaluating information sources. "I would have liked to see more real examples of how to verify information, not just explanations about it," one participant suggested. Others recommended extending the

training sessions or adding additional workshops to cover specific topics in more depth, such as visual content creation. Some suggested dedicating an entire session to graphic design and visual elements in media. Another recurring suggestion was to increase interactive components—more group work, practical exercises, and activities promoting collaboration among participants. "It would be great if we could work in groups more, not just listen," one participant commented.

In their concluding remarks, several attendees expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate and emphasized that such training is essential. One participant wrote: "This event was incredibly valuable because it helped me understand how the media operates and how not to get lost in the chaos of information." Overall, the training was seen as highly successful, and many participants indicated their interest in attending similar events in the future.

In summary, the training was a great success and a valuable experience. Similar initiatives should be continued and further developed.

1.3. Training in Lithuania

In Lithuania, media workshops were led by Delfi journalists Aistė Meidutė (critical thinking, fact-checking, and media logic), Eglė Lungytė-Ramonienė (social media marketing), and Vytautė Merkytė (the basics of mobile journalism and data visualization). These sessions aimed to equip young people with essential media literacy skills to better navigate the complexities of the modern media landscape.



Figure 11. Media training in Delfi, Lithuania.

In conclusion, the workshops were a resounding success, reflecting the strong engagement, curiosity, and active participation of the young attendees. Aistė Meidutė underscored the significance of recognizing cognitive biases and taught participants how to train their minds to resist the manipulation of information. She also suggested that integrating psychological expertise in future sessions could enhance participants' ability to communicate effectively with friends and family who may have fallen for misleading narratives or conspiracy theories.



Figure 12. Media training in Delfi, Lithuania.

Eglė Lungytė-Ramonienė found the discussions on social networks particularly enlightening. She noted that the participants were not only keen to learn about media and social media trends but were also interested in broader topics such as career development, study choices, and the evolving role of media in society. The workshop fostered an open dialogue on the fast-changing media landscape and the importance of staying informed in a digital age.



Figure 13. Media training in Delfi, Lithuania.

Vytautė Merkytė was deeply impressed by the participants' enthusiasm for journalism. She

observed their active, insightful contributions and emphasized that their thoughtful engagement demonstrated a genuine interest in the journalistic path and media literacy. The young people displayed a keen desire to understand the tools of mobile journalism and data visualization, reflecting their readiness to adapt to new forms of media production and consumption.



Figure 14. Media training in Delfi, Lithuania.

These dynamic interactions highlighted the participants' promising interest in media literacy and their eagerness to explore and critically assess the complexities of information in today's world. The success of these workshops shows that the younger generation is not only aware of the challenges posed by misinformation but is also proactive in learning how to navigate and engage with the media more responsibly.

The overall reception of the training was highly positive, with the majority of participants rating the event 9 or 10 out of 10 in terms of relevance and quality. Attendees particularly appreciated the interactive format and the balance between theoretical learning and practical exercises. However, some respondents noted that certain parts of the training contained information they were already familiar with, suggesting that content differentiation based on prior knowledge could improve future sessions.

Many participants found the topics highly relevant, particularly those related to fact-checking, media literacy, and social media strategies. The practical application of knowledge was well received, with an emphasis on mobile journalism, social media

marketing, and fact-checking techniques. Additionally, the use of real-world examples and case studies was praised for making learning more engaging and applicable.

The trainers received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with ratings mostly in the 9-10 range for their delivery style, clarity, and ability to engage the audience. Many participants highlighted that speakers were well-prepared, provided valuable industry insights, and demonstrated strong oratory skills. Furthermore, the interactive Q&A sessions were particularly appreciated, allowing attendees to discuss real-world challenges and gain deeper insights.

Participants reported significant gains in fact-checking skills, especially in recognizing disinformation. Insights into social media strategies and algorithm mechanics were also deemed highly valuable. Additionally, learning about visual storytelling and content structuring for different digital platforms was considered practical and beneficial for their professional growth.

Some participants expressed that certain sessions lacked depth, particularly for those already familiar with media literacy basics. A suggestion for future training is to include more advanced topics to cater to experienced attendees.

A recurring suggestion was to increase the number of hands-on exercises, especially in areas such as fact-checking, video production, and digital storytelling. Practical exercises were considered highly effective, and participants requested more opportunities to apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios.

Some attendees felt that sessions were too packed with information, making it challenging to absorb all the material. Additionally, a few mentioned that venue setup and lighting made it slightly uncomfortable to sit for extended periods. Improvements in time allocation and venue arrangements could enhance the overall experience in future events.

Several participants expressed interest in continuous learning opportunities beyond the event. Suggestions included follow-up workshops, online resources, and mentorship programs to reinforce and expand upon the knowledge gained during the training.

Participants highlighted key areas they would like to explore in future training sessions:

- Social media algorithms and content creation techniques;
- Fact-checking and disinformation analysis, with a focus on hands-on verification

exercises;

- AI's role in journalism and how automated tools can support fact-checking.

The opportunity to visit a newsroom and learn from industry professionals was highly appreciated. Many participants noted that the event exceeded their expectations and expressed strong interest in attending similar training in the future. Moreover, the networking opportunities were valued, with suggestions for incorporating more interactive sessions to foster collaboration among participants.

For more information about the T4.5 Media training you can find [HERE](#).

2. **BALTIC YOUTH MIL MEDIATHON (HACKATHON) IN RIGA, LATVIA**

February 1, 2025, in Riga, 30 young participants from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania came together to collaborate in mixed teams, developing well-researched and impactful media content strategies on critical topics, including the environment, health, economics, culture and entertainment, social issues, and politics. This event was the culmination of an intensive learning journey that began with media training sessions at DELFI newsrooms in Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius on January 18, 2025.



Figure 15. Mediathon participants in Riga.

Designed for young people aged 18 to 23, the program aimed to enhance media literacy, critical thinking, and responsible content creation. Through expert-led workshops and hands-on experience, participants were equipped with the skills to navigate today's complex media landscape and contribute meaningfully to public discourse.



Figure 16. Mediathon participants in Riga.

The selection process was highly competitive, with participants chosen based on the strength of their applications. The initial national training sessions provided a deep dive into essential media concepts, guided by local media professionals. Key topics included:

- Understanding Media: The structure and role of media in society;
- Journalistic Practices: The responsibilities of journalists and the sources they rely on;
- Social Media. Traditional Media: The impact of algorithms on content distribution;
- Fact-checking and Disinformation: How to verify information and counter misinformation;
- Data Visualization and Mobile Journalism: Tools for effective storytelling;
- Behind the Scenes at DELFI: An insider's look at a major news organization;



Figure 17. Mediathon participants in Riga.

After completing the national sessions, the top 10 participants from each Baltic country advanced to the Mediathon in Riga, where they worked in mixed-nationality teams to develop and present their media strategies.



Figure 18. Mediathon participants in Riga.



Figure 19. Mediathon participants in Riga.



Figure 20. Mediathon participants in Riga.

Throughout the Mediathon, participants benefited from mentorship provided by a jury of media experts, who also assessed the final projects. The jury included:

- Filips Lastovskis – Editor-in-Chief, DELFI Latvia
- Rasa Lukaitytė-Vnarauskienė – Editor-in-Chief, DELFI Lithuania
- Erik Moora – Head of Investigative and Fact-Checking, DELFI Estonia
- Inese Braže – Journalist, Re:Baltica.



Figure 21. Mediathon participants in Riga.

Projects were evaluated based on:

- Relevance of the chosen topic
- Credibility of sources & fact-checking rigor
- Audience engagement strategies
- Visual communication & storytelling
- Innovative content distribution approaches.



Figure 22. Mediathon participants in Riga.

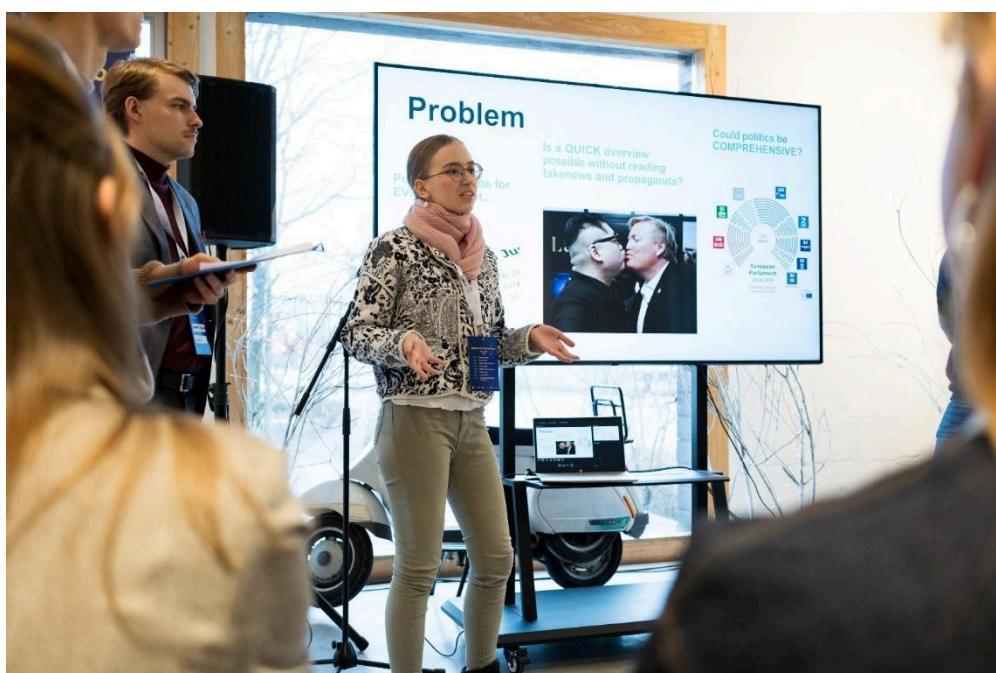


Figure 23. Mediathon participants in Riga.



Figure 24. Mediathon participants in Riga.



Figure 25. Mediathon participants in Riga.

This event highlighted the remarkable creativity, critical thinking, and teamwork of young people from across the Baltics. Collaborating in diverse teams, they combined different perspectives to develop innovative solutions to key challenges, including fighting

disinformation, improving financial literacy, and supporting mental well-being.

Some of the most outstanding ideas included board games promoting media literacy, social media campaigns raising awareness about financial fraud, and a cutting-edge app that helps young voters compare political platforms, encouraging greater civic engagement.

The passion, dedication, and problem-solving abilities demonstrated throughout the event underscore this generation's tremendous potential in shaping a more informed and responsible media landscape, says Filips Lastovskis, Head of the Jury.



Figure 26. Mediathon participants in Riga.

The winning team, composed of Janete Olev (Estonia), Pauls Zalitis (Latvia), Karl-Erik Õun (Estonia), Filips Rasmussens (Latvia), and Viltė Apolianskaitė (Lithuania), demonstrated exceptional analytical and creative skills in their investigative project.

Their work focused on the rise of cryptocurrency scams, uncovering common fraudulent tactics used in deceptive investment schemes and the psychological factors that make young people particularly vulnerable to them.

To raise awareness and protect young audiences, the team developed a visually engaging educational campaign that included:

- Informative social media videos explaining crypto scams;
- Interactive presentations debunking investment myths;
- Fact-checking reports exposing misleading claims;
- Practical guidelines on safe investment practices.

Through their project, the winning team successfully debunked prevalent myths and provided young people with critical thinking tools to navigate the digital financial landscape with greater awareness and confidence.

The Baltic Mediathon 2025 not only strengthened media literacy among young people but also fostered cross-border collaboration and inspired a new wave of responsible digital creators. The enthusiasm and dedication shown by participants underscore the growing awareness of media influence and the need for fact-based, ethical journalism in today's fast-changing digital world.

With such bright minds leading the way, the future of media in the Baltics looks informed, critical, and innovative.

Information about T4.5 Baltic Youth Mediathon can be found [here](#).

3. CONCLUSIONS

Media literacy and critical thinking are increasingly essential for youth in the Baltic countries—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—amidst the rapidly evolving digital landscape and rising misinformation. These skills enable young people to critically evaluate information, engage responsibly with media, and form informed perspectives. Recognizing their importance, the Baltic countries have integrated digital competence into their education systems, incorporating problem-solving, analytical thinking, and responsible media consumption into curricula. Despite these advancements, challenges persist, including gaps in research, insufficient teacher training, lack of standardized educational resources, disparities in digital access, and the need for cross-sector collaboration.

To address these issues, the BECID initiative has focused on developing teacher training, creating high-quality educational materials, and fostering collaboration among key stakeholders. A key milestone in this effort was the Youth MIL Hackathon (Mediathon), which engaged young people directly in media literacy initiatives. Organized with media partners across the three Baltic nations, the event combined expert-led training with hands-on content creation, allowing participants to develop innovative and impactful media strategies.

As part of Task 4.5, contributions from five BECID partners—UTARTU, UAB Delfi, AS Delfi, Ekspress Meedia, and BCME—resulted in the successful implementation of media literacy programs. The initiative included a collaborative media course, national training sessions, and the final Mediathon in Riga, where young participants applied their knowledge to create media content addressing topics such as misinformation, social issues, and civic engagement. The training, held at DELFI newsrooms, covered critical skills including fact-checking, media ethics, social media marketing, and mobile journalism.

The culminating event in Riga gathered 30 participants from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, who worked in mixed-nationality teams to develop and present their media strategies. A jury of media professionals evaluated their work based on criteria such as relevance, credibility, audience engagement, and storytelling effectiveness. The winning team developed an investigative project on cryptocurrency scams, creating an engaging educational campaign to raise awareness about fraudulent investment schemes.

The success of the Youth MIL Hackathon and related media literacy initiatives underscores the growing awareness of media influence and the importance of critical thinking in today's digital world. By equipping young people with essential media literacy skills, the project has strengthened their ability to navigate the complexities of the information landscape and engage in responsible content creation.

While the initiative has made significant strides in enhancing media literacy, the challenges identified—such as disparities in digital access, teacher training gaps, and the need for comprehensive educational resources—highlight areas for continued development. Moving forward, expanding cross-sector collaboration among educational institutions, media organizations, and policymakers will be key to sustaining and enhancing these efforts.

The enthusiasm, creativity, and problem-solving abilities demonstrated by participants reflect the potential of the next generation to foster a more informed and responsible media environment. With ongoing investment in education, training, and innovative learning experiences, the Baltic region can continue to empower its youth with the skills necessary to critically assess information and contribute to a healthier digital ecosystem.