



CONCEPT NOTE

Rebuilding trust in media

Conference for media practitioners, academics, and policymakers

Tunis, 30-31 October 2023

The media landscape is overwhelmed with a multitude of content producers, ranging from institutional information sources and new media to influencers and advertisers. Traditional values underpinning journalistic practices of impartiality and verification are coming under greater pressure from social and political polarization.

At the same time, the increase in disinformation masquerading as news, the multitude of information channels not bound by the self-regulatory rules of accountability journalism and the political rhetoric undermining the role of media in a democratic society create a fertile ground for eroding trust in media and, by extension, in democratic institutions.

This sentiment is echoed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations who said “trust is the bedrock of every society. When it's chipped away, societies crumble. We must build trust in the face of a growing infodemic of disinformation and lies. I call on countries to develop media and information literacy policies that put science, knowledge, and facts first”.

It is against this background that UNESCO is highlighting the theme of “Media and Information Literacy in Digital Spaces for the 2023 edition of the Global Media and Information Literacy Week. UNESCO strives to equip everyone with Media and Information Literacy and digital competencies, to enhance their capacities to access and verify information and media content and to better harness the power of technology.

There are steps that governments can take to enhance an enabling environment so that it can produce high quality, trustworthy news and information, but there is a growing understanding that journalists, too, must play a more proactive role in rebuilding trust, and in communicating the role of the media to their audiences – increasingly, this is becoming an integral part of the media and information literacy ecosystem. Moreover, digital technologies, frequently seen as a threat to the long-standing media business models and an added factor in diminishing trust in quality journalism, can be used as a force for good, assisting in countering disinformation and increasing the media literacy level in society.

Latvia, as a regional leader in the Central and North-Eastern Europe in journalist-driven media literacy and fact-checking initiatives, and Tunisia, as a country still undergoing democratic transition where media play a crucial role, are well-placed to join forces in holding an international conference to address these contemporary challenges faced by the media in particular through looking at the intersection of media and information literacy and rebuilding trust in the media.

The conference which takes place at the same time as the Global Media and Information Literacy Week will seek response to the following questions:



- How do contemporary threats (disinformation, polarization of opinions, assaults against journalists online and off, hostile political rhetoric) affect trust in media? And what threats to democracy that eroding trust presents?
- How can the professionalism of journalists be sustained in the face of these threats?
- What can media companies and individual journalists do to reverse the trend of eroding trust, particularly in the area of media literacy?
- What technological solutions are there to help overcome contemporary challenges?
- What can different governmental and intergovernmental actors including UNESCO and Member States, do to strengthen the enabling environment for professional journalism?

The organizers of the conference hope that the outcome of the panel discussion will feed the internal debate in the Member States represented at the conference.

Conference organizers:

Manouba University and the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence, UNESCO Office for the Maghreb, EU Media Support Programme in Tunisia, Permanent Delegation of Latvia to UNESCO, and Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Venue: Tunis, Tunisia

Dates: 30-31 October 2023

Languages: Arabic, English, and French with simultaneous interpretation.

Time	Agenda
DAY I	Monday, 30 October 2023
09:00-09:30	Registration
09:30-10:15	Opening Remarks
10:15-11:30	The Story of Trust
11:30-12:00	Coffee break
12:00-13:30	Panel I: Safeguarding Trust Through Inclusive Content <i>A panel on engaging audiences through interactive and inclusive content that fairly represents society it serves and is responsive to the needs of different groups (ethnic minorities, women, people with special needs)</i>
13:30-14:30	Lunch
14:30-16:00	Panel II: Safeguarding Trust Through Media Literacy <i>A panel on the role of journalist-led media literacy initiatives in exposing disinformation and increasing public awareness of the value of independent journalism</i>
16:00-17:00	Rapporteurs' Report and Road Map Closing Remarks
DAY II	Tuesday, 31 October 2023
09:30-13:00	Show and Tell <i>Interactive showcase for journalists and editors about innovative media formats aimed at reaching digital audiences with a special focus on fact-checking</i>
13:00-14:00	Lunch