

“I teach media literacy” – empowering SMART citizens

Cristina Lupu

Center for Independent Journalism Romania

Context

Social context:

- A 2016 study showed that 42% of Romanian students aged 15 are functional illiterates;
- A 2018 study shows that:
- 45% of the Romanian teachers agree with a dictatorship regime
- The most trusted institutions by the teachers are the army (79%), the church (62%) and the police (59%)
- 40% agree with death penalty in certain situations
- But comparing with the rest of the population, they are more tolerant and democrat.

Context

Access to information and Good Governance

- Most of the people don't know Romania has access to information legislation since 2001 and the ones who know never submitted a FOIA request.
- In 2016, 70% of Romanians used the internet and more than 73% used internet daily or almost daily; 9 out of 10 high school students use the internet daily and 1 out of 2 retirees.
- e-Service development was not a priority for Romanian city halls and that, with one exception, e-government did not appear prominently in their strategic development plans (*E-government Services in Romanian Cities: A Look from the Inside*. (April 2017).

Changing the perspective

- 92 teachers: A combined approach - training and mentoring



What We Teach

- Human rights
- Good governance & access to information
- Mass media – who does it; who pays for it
- Public interest vs. The interest of the public
- Authorship; use of techniques; points of view; purpose;
- How to create media
- News. Information. Fake news. Disinformation

What happens

- More than 12,000 kids learn MIL and good governance starting with January 2017
- 92 workshops for more than 2,800 high school students will be held until June 2018
- 1,000 teachers will learn about MIL as a tool for civic engagement.



What changes

- The legislation is not enough. Institutions don't work if they aren't forced.
- We train and empower teachers and students to act like responsible citizens in their endeavour to transform the society.
- We include MIL elements during the "regular" classes, transforming the learning process.
- We celebrate Freedom of Information Day and students across Romania learn for the first time about the law and submit FOIA requests.
- We celebrate MIL Week with special classes and events

Teachers & students work together

- “Teacher, today we’ve learned that we control the public institutions. That’s cool!”
- The students from Ploiești submitted a request to learn from the City Hall when the street of their high school will be fixed. They received the answer and after many years of delays and empty promises, the street was repaired. The students consider it their personal victory.
- The students from Cluj Napoca submitted a request to the school principal to learn what is the budget for new books at the library and how is the acquisition of the new books decided.

Conclusions

- You won't get something that you don't know how to ask for: you can't have a SMART city without SMART citizens.
- We believe that focusing on teachers greatly expands your reach in MIL, through several generations of students.
- It's bitter sweet, but Romania is not alone anymore in the educational impasse: curricula must adapt to constant technological change.
- "The future is already here, just not evenly distributed." We have a chance of importing proven SMART city projects.