



“Exploring Eco-Literacy, Climate Change, and Media Literacy”

The Eco-Literacy webinar, held on September 19th, 2023, was a comprehensive exploration of the critical intersection of eco-literacy, climate change, media literacy, and information literacy. The webinar featured a panel of distinguished speakers, including Julia Moreira, Alexandra Panos, James Damico, Olof Sundin, and Spyros Psychas. People from all over the world participated and expressed their views, in total 35. This report seeks to provide an in-depth summary of the key insights and discussions that transpired during this enlightening two-hour session.

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. At the top, there are four video thumbnails for participants: Abdallah Sobeih - Swl..., Julia Moreira - Swideas, Olof Sundin, and A. Defingou-ACP. The main content area displays a presentation slide from Swide's. The slide has the ECOLitAct logo and the text 'Co-funded by the European Union'. The title of the slide is 'Meet our panelists'. Below the title is a photo of Alexandra Panos, an Assistant Professor of Literacy Studies at the University of South. The Zoom meeting controls at the bottom show 35 participants, chat, share screen, reactions, apps, and a 'Leave' button.



EcoLitAct and Its Objectives:

Julia Moreira, the lead analyst and project manager of EcoLitAct, initiated the webinar by outlining the project's core objectives. EcoLitAct endeavors to empower Vocational Education and Training (VET) practitioners and educators to confront and counteract misinformation pertaining to the environment and climate change. The project's broader aims include inspiring eco-friendly attitudes, fostering critical thinking, nurturing digital and media literacy skills, and promoting shifts in attitudes. To achieve these objectives, EcoLitAct plans to develop valuable resources, including a media literacy toolkit, a handbook addressing eco-literacy topics, and an educational structure based on a self-assessment tool for learners.

Summary of the Webinar:

The webinar delved into the multifaceted realm of eco-literacy by emphasizing the interconnectedness of humanity with the natural world. The speakers provided valuable insights into the challenges posed by climate change misinformation and the pivotal role that media and information literacy play in addressing these challenges.



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Key Points and Discussions:

Spyros Psychas:

- Spyros highlighted the long-standing issue of misinformation, dating back to the 1980s, and its detrimental effects on climate discourse. He emphasized that misinformation can be a significant roadblock to informed decision-making.
- Drawing on the 2023 floods and wildfires in Greece, Spyros illustrated how misinformation can divert public attention from the real challenges of climate change. The media's role in either amplifying or mitigating these distractions was a recurring theme.
- Spyros shared the unique perspective of Greece, where citizens are increasingly recognizing the tangible effects of climate change. He underscored the vital role of grassroots efforts, exemplified by volunteers and civilians stepping in during crises when the government falls short.
- His emphasis on the historical context of ecological challenges and the need for citizens to advocate for change served as a reminder that many environmental problems have deep-rooted origins. He urged active engagement in discussions about the climate crisis as a means to pressure governments and international bodies to take meaningful action.



Olof Sundin:

- Olof's questions about the role of media in combating misinformation was an eye-opener. His assertion that building trust can sometimes backfire was thought-provoking, especially in an era where trust in information sources has become increasingly fragile.
- He stressed that one important part of media and information literacy lies in the evaluation of sources. Olof highlighted that without clear boundaries on and agreement regarding what sources should be avoided and what sources should be trusted, the evaluation of sources becomes extremely difficult.
- Olof's recognition of the role of new technologies, AI, and algorithms in shaping information landscapes underlined the multifaceted challenges in fostering media literacy. It shed light on the ever-evolving nature of the battle against misinformation.
- The concept of infrastructural meaning-making as the cornerstone of contemporary media and information literacy resonated with the audience, as it underscored the importance of not just evaluating the information's source, but also the whole digital ecology that construct access to sources regarding ecology and climate change.



James Damico:

- James' exploration of the impact of personal beliefs, values, and political affiliations on shaping opinions about environmental topics highlighted the complex interplay between individual perspectives and media consumption.
- His emphasis on individuals' tendencies to seek information that aligns with their preexisting beliefs and values underscored the challenge in breaking echo chambers and fostering open-mindedness.
- The importance of critical analysis of media was a recurring theme in James' discussion. His call to examine authorship, expertise, evidence, and multiple perspectives when evaluating media content provided practical guidance for media consumers.
- James' acknowledgment of the persistent challenges posed by AI-generated content and his recommendation to consider historical, cultural, economic, and political factors affecting media production deepened the audience's understanding of the complexities of media literacy.
- His probing questions about the role of climate denial in personal lives and media ethics challenged participants to reflect on their own roles in shaping the discourse on climate change.



Alexandra Panos:

- Alexandra introduced the intriguing concept of "stories we live by" and its profound influence on shaping our perceptions of the world. Her explanation of how these narratives inform our understanding of climate change resonated with the audience.
- She emphasized the power of deconstructing these narratives as a means to counteract climate misinformation. This approach empowers individuals to critically assess the stories they encounter in the media and question their accuracy.
- Alexandra's commitment to building trust in educational settings aligns with the broader mission of eco-literacy. Educators play a crucial role in nurturing critical thinking and media literacy skills among students, equipping them to navigate the complex media landscape effectively.
- Her insights into the importance of media literacy as an essential component of eco-literacy underscored the interconnectedness of these domains. An informed and media-literate populace is better equipped to address environmental challenges.

Key Takeaways:

- 1. Eco-Literacy as Empowerment:** Eco-literacy is not a passive concept but a powerful tool for empowerment. The webinar demonstrated that it equips individuals, particularly educators, with the knowledge and skills to challenge misinformation, advocate for sustainable practices, and inspire positive environmental attitudes.
- 2. Interconnectedness of Issues:** The interconnected nature of ecological and social issues emerged as a central theme. Attendees gained an understanding of how challenges related to climate change, media literacy, and information literacy are deeply intertwined. Collaborative efforts are essential to addressing these multifaceted challenges effectively.
- 3. Media and Information Literacy:** The significance of media and information literacy was evident throughout the discussions. Critical evaluation of sources, narratives are a critical aspect of addressing misinformation, especially in the context of climate change.
- 4. Narrative Deconstruction and Building Trust:** Recognizing and deconstructing personal and societal narratives, as well as fostering trust, emerged as crucial strategies for countering climate misinformation. These strategies empower individuals to engage critically with information and make informed decisions.

Alexandra:

- Alexandra also emphasized the importance of building trust, particularly in educational settings. Trust is a foundational element in conveying accurate information about climate change and other environmental issues.
- She elaborated on the concept of "stories we live by," which stems from Eco linguistics. These narratives are often invisible but shape our values and perceptions. Addressing climate crisis education and making it visible to teachers is crucial.
- Alexandra pointed out that teachers are often not adequately trained to address climate-related issues in the classroom, and this presents a significant challenge. She emphasized that "stories we live by" can be a valuable tool for educators to navigate these challenges.
- She also raised the issue of disaster capitalism, which can perpetuate misinformation. Supporting and empowering youth is a primary goal, as they will play a leading role in addressing climate issues in the long term.

Final Discussion: The final discussion centered around tools for preventing climate denialism and misinformation, the role of media literacy in the fight for climate action, and the main challenges when engaging with misinformation on climate change.

Alexandra:

- Alexandra emphasized the importance of continuing to use older, proven tools and addressing the connection between the current climate crisis and political challenges. She highlighted the need to address the influence of climate denialism within right-wing political parties.

Olof:

- Olof stressed the importance of engaging in politics to protect institutions from politicians who deny climate change. Learning to trust institutions and second-hand knowledge can also play a crucial role in addressing misinformation.

James:

- James advocated for starting with schools as laboratories for democracy, creating democratic processes and dialogue to help counteract misinformation. He mentioned that achieving respect for institutions might be more achievable than trust in some cases. Holding fossil fuel companies accountable and addressing their influence is essential.

Open Discussion with Participants:

- Participants raised questions about the most promising avenues for success, whether through teachers teaching media literacy or government action. Olof highlighted the importance of both. Educators can play a significant role in shaping future generations, while government action is essential for systemic change.
- Participants also discussed how to raise global awareness of the climate crisis in countries where awareness is lacking. Alexandra noted that even in countries with climate denialism, there are young people taking action. Listening to the needs of the current world and addressing them is vital.
- Participants emphasized the importance of experts in the field of climate crisis being vocal, from teachers to scientists to engineers. They also discussed the difficulty of scientists effectively communicating complex information and the need for interdisciplinary discussions and collaboration to address climate change comprehensively.

Reflections: The Eco-Literacy webinar provided profound insights into the complexities of eco-literacy, media literacy, and climate change awareness. Participants left the session with a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of these fields and a sense of urgency regarding the need for critical thinking and media literacy skills to navigate the ever-evolving media landscape.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the Eco-Literacy webinar was a thought-provoking and enlightening event that shed light on the challenges and opportunities in promoting eco-friendly attitudes and combating climate misinformation. The expanded insights from the speakers underscored the critical roles of education, critical thinking, and narrative analysis in shaping a more sustainable and informed future.

This report has provided an in-depth exploration of the key insights and discussions from the webinar. It is hoped that the knowledge shared during this session will continue to inspire efforts to enhance eco-literacy and environmental awareness, fostering a more informed and sustainable society.