



## Youth Work Ireland

Press Release

Youth Work Ireland/Limerick Youth Service

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### **International conference prepares Youth Information workers to tackle the opportunities and challenges arising from AI and the metaverse**

- Infonomics, a two-day international conference in Tipperary, brings together Ireland's Youth Information network to discuss the importance of investing in quality information that young people can reliably access
- Experts from across Ireland and Europe explore and respond to digital innovations in AI and the metaverse, as well as hate speech and extremist online content

*Limerick Junction, Tipperary, October 5th:* A major international conference in Tipperary has explored how youth information workers can deliver high quality information in the midst of unprecedented technological innovations in artificial intelligence.

Organised by Youth Work Ireland, working together with Youth Work Ireland Tipperary, Infonomics, a two-day conference is designed for youth information providers in Ireland and will feature participation from experts drawn from across Europe.

As well as digging into areas around hate speech, extremist content online, fake news, misinformation and how AI is changing the digital landscape, experts at Informatics will also detail the changing landscape of youth information in Europe as well as providing analysis around digital innovations such as Ireland's National Youth Information Chat Service.

Speaking about Informatics, **Patrick Burke, CEO of Youth Work Ireland**, said that, "Infonomics – Facts matter Conference is timely. While misinformation, disinformation, fake news and propaganda have been a constant in the history of humankind, social media, artificial intelligence and other technological advancements made these kinds of information much more pervasive.

"Now more than ever, the State needs to strengthen and grow the youth information sector in Ireland so that our young people can be supported to access reliable information on which to make good decisions for their lives," Burke added.

Speaking about the importance of Infonomics, **Roderic O'Gorman, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth of Ireland**, said, "Access to reliable information is essential in the modern age. In particular, young people require access to high quality information to make informed decisions in their own lives. The Infonomics Conference promises to deliver valuable insights into how we can improve youth information provision."

One way Youth Work Ireland is improving the digital landscape for young people is through dedicated apps such as Connecting You!, an app designed for young people in Ireland, to navigate the complex digital landscape while ensuring they get high quality information.

Speaking about Connecting You!, **Caolan Faux, CEO of Youth Work Ireland Cavan Monaghan**, said, “Connecting You! is a quantum leap forward in Youth Information in Ireland with a comprehensive directory of services and reliable information that matters to young people made accessible for young people.”

“With Connecting You!. young people can ask questions anonymously and get the help they need with easy access,” said Ella, 16, from 16, Youth Work Ireland Cavan Monaghan.

Aisling Moloney, a young person speaking at Infonomics, explained that youth information “has supported me for many years to get the information I needed at every stage of my life, no matter what my interests or challenges”

**Donal Kelly, Regional Director Youth Work Ireland, Tipperary**, said “Never before has the role of youth information been so important. With the rise of the far right, our engagement with online platforms and the undermining of facts young people need reliable, fact checked and quality services they can trust.

“Youth work, perhaps more than any other profession or service, has an enormous role to play in this. Our conference Infonomics is a chance to shine a light on these key issues,” he added.

**Mark Malone, a researcher from Hope and Courage Collective**, said that, “Youth service providers across Ireland are being forced to respond to the downstream harms arising from systemic failures of social media companies to effectively tackle hate and extremism. Young people in many targeted communities are directly impacted by online extremism and hate, or the subject of conspiracy theories and fake news because of their identity. Other young people are targeted as consumers and distributors of far right and hate influencers and encouraged to take part in hate activity.”

“Systems failures at a platform level have been further compounded by the decisions of all the main platforms, with the exception of TikTok, to reduce their trust and safety teams over the last 18 months. In the early part of 2023, HCC research found that just seven YouTube channels accounted for over one million views of anti migrant hate over a four week period. Two of these channels which accounted for 700,000 views were monetised, meaning YouTube was making money off this hate.”

Speaking at Infonomics, **Veronica Stefan, a youth information expert from the Council of Europe**, said that, “In an increasing world where we all speak about the internet and we are all connected to internet devices, AI is the big thing we should all be looking at.

“It’s not so new, its been here for decades, but the past few years have shown it can be pervasive, creative but also a challenge that we still have to understand - from the hype behind ChatGPT to the adoption of automated decision-making technologies with public institutions, AI has the power of shaping our realities, boosting our creativity but also impacting our most fundamental rights.

“Ensuring young people and civic organisation have a voice in upcoming policies and processes behind this technology making events like Infonomics: Facts Matter are essential.”

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