



Published in Berlin by **PERITIA – Policy, Expertise and Trust**

November 2022

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- 1 | About the Youth on Trust Awards
- 2 | What is "Trust"?
- 3 | Winners in the 13-14-Year-Old Category
- 4 | Winners in the 15–16-Year-Old Category
- 5 | Winners in the 17-18-Year-Old Category

1 About the Youth on Trust Awards

We asked students from around Europe to put their thinking caps on and share their thoughts on the topic of public trust.

A European student competition

PERITIA is an EU-funded research project on public trust in expertise. In 2022, we joined forces with the Irish and International Young Philosophers Awards, as well as the Centre for Ethics in Public Life at University College Dublin. Together, we launched a special European edition on trust, asking students from across the continent to share their ideas and creativity with us and make us think of new ways to understand trust from multiple perspectives.

For the Youth on Trust Awards, students were asked to create a project in response to a question or issue they think is most important in relation to the topic of trust in public life. Submissions could take the form of an essay, podcast, film, blog post, short story, or dialogue.

The Youth on Trust Awards were open to students between the ages of 13–18. The three prize categories corresponded to the following age groups: 13–14 / 15–16 / 17–18. We accepted entries from any of the member states of the Council of Europe. The winning entries have now been published in this essay collection and the awardees invited



What is "Trust"?

The Youth on Trust Awards is a student competition that amplifies hundreds of voices of talented youth from across Europe.

Great thinkers wanted!

What is trust? Why is it that we can - or cannot - trust social media? What does it mean to trust scientific experts? We asked Dr Adam Levy, climate scientist and youtuber, to offer answers to some of our questions.

Climate scientist and youtuber Adam Levy explains what the Youth on Trust Awards are all about:



Watch the full video on our YouTube channel

(Also available in Armenian, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Norwegian and Polish.)

3 Winners

13-14-Year-Old Category

Zorayr Beknazaryan

Title: "Trust"

Format: Video (7')

School: Primary School #5 "Mkrtich Martirosyan", Ijevan

Country: Armenia



Watch online

"In many cases, social media forces readers to make decisions that are emotional rather than informed."

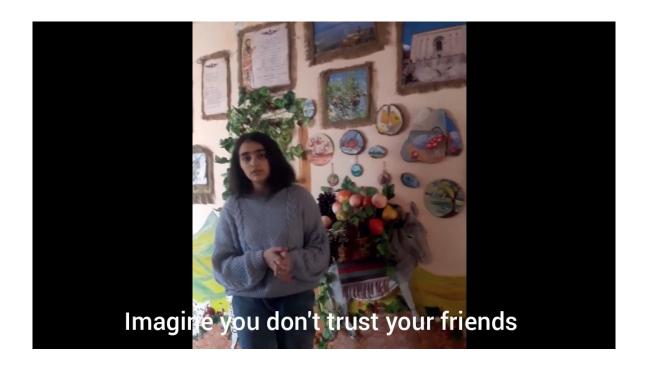
Mari Hovhannisyan

Title: "Trust"

Format: Video (4'27'')

School: Aragatsavan Secondary School #1, Aragatsavan

Country: Armenia



Watch online

"Imagine you don't trust your teacher. You would not accept any formula taught by them, you wouldn't agree with a historical fact, you wouldn't know any law of physics. As a result, you will lose such important things that it will be difficult to study then."



James Molloy

Title: "Is Trust Racist?" Format: Video (6'10")

School: Belvedere College, Dublin

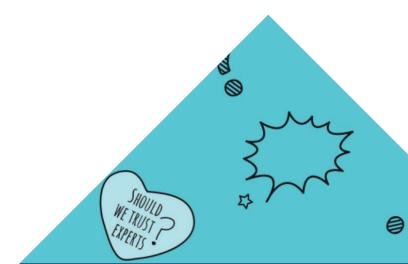
Country: Ireland





Watch online

"If trust is based on knowledge and knowledge is based on storytelling and not on scientific fact, our judgements are impaired and incorrectly biased."



Marcelina Wawrzyńczyk

Title: "Who can be trusted in 2022?"

Format: Essay and Illustrations (2,248 words)

School: Szkoła Podstawowa nr 38 im. Ludwika Zamenhofa, Częstochowa

Country: Poland

Translated from Polish:

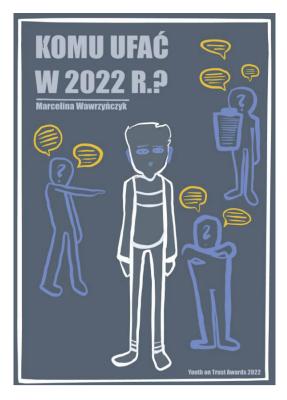
Who Can Be Trusted in 2022?

Analysis of discourse on the Wikipedia portal as an example of manipulation experienced by young people today.

Introduction:

Can we trust definitions?

Trust is an important part of social life and above all, it provides us with a daily sense of security. Probably, most pupils do not wonder whether they can trust the information provided by teachers at school. We also trust our friends and family with our secrets. We trust our senses and feelings, as well as our neighbours, books, newspapers and entries on the Internet. But is it right? But let us start by defining the term trust. If we were to look it up in a dictionary, we would probably come across the definition that trust is the conviction that a person or institution is trustworthy; that someone's words, information are true; that someone has certain competences. That is the answer a teacher might expect after posing the question us at the blackboard. But in practice, does it make me understand what trust is? Why should I trust this description at all? Definitions usually have this quality that we seem to know their content. However, when it comes to a practical and contextual understanding of the phenomenon in question, we only encounter a problem. Of course, there is nothing wrong with not understanding



things, but why, then, do we trust definitions and sources, and only the authorities who provide us with information? We will look at whom we are willing to trust. There is a belief in society that if someone is wise and has said a few "wise words" before, then they can be taken as a reliable source of information. People first of all trust people who are from higher social classes, politically better placed, or celebrities. Representatives of lower classes and religious and national minorities are marginalised and their words are considered less credible.

This order seems to stem from the association of power and prestige with wisdom and competence. I would argue that we are taught this early in life. Starting at the very beginning of our education, we encounter a hierarchically established order of

"Children are afraid to protest or contradict the knowledge given by the educator because they have been taught to have absolute trust in the knowledge of teachers."

passing on knowledge, and we learn conformist behaviour, about which I. Illich writes, among others. According to this Austrian philosopher, school offers jobs to teachers without considering what and how much the pupils get out of their lessons. Because of its teaching methods and the division of space, school can foster in pupils a feeling of inferiority, of being less important in a predetermined hierarchy.1 Pupils are reminded of this every time they enter a classroom. The teacher, who occupies a prominent position in the classroom, can decide who has the right to speak, to judge, and their knowledge is always unquestionable. But is it right? It is undeniable that teachers, by virtue of their higher education, are competent to teach children. However, we should remember that they are only human: they are not infallible. In addition, a conformist attitude has serious consequences. Children are afraid to protest or contradict the knowledge given by the educator because they have been taught to have absolute trust in the knowledge of teachers. This translates into their social life in the future. Not only when someone makes a factual mistake, but they may fail to react when a person in a higher position, such as an employer, commits a crime or harms others. Children and young people do not acquire the competence to check the accuracy of information and to use scientific sources. As a result, they rely on knowledge from the Internet: Wikipedia, Brainly (a peer-to-peer homework site), the first suggested page that appears in a search engine, and social

[1] I. Illich, Odszkolnic spoleczenstwo, Byc Zmiana, Warsaw 2010, p. 71.

media such as Tik Tok, Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter. However, I will focus my essay on the most recognisable of these sites-Wikipedia: the multilingual online encyclopaedia. This portal has been extremely successful in recent years and has been translated into some 300 languages, which are not copies of the articles on the English version. The articles on the platform are contributed by a community of volunteers, which anyone can join at any time, regardless of their education or age. This is illustrated by Wikipedia's slogan: "a free encyclopedia that anyone can edit". ² The Wikipedia community of writers is meant to build trust and reputation among other Wikipedians. Greater fame comes with new permissions and pure "blind" trust. Wikipedians have free permission to edit other users' articles or discuss improvements.

I am sure that everyone has clicked on one of the Wikipedia pages at least a few times. It is definitely one of the most common internet platforms. However, does its popularity equate to its reliability? Secondly, does free access for all to edit articles have a positive effect? This can lead to serious factual errors. Moreover, the free editing of Wikipedia is clearly abused to express the author's view on a particular phenomenon, issue or situation. Just click on the revision history tab below the article. There you will find smaller or larger mentions of the author's personal views. The message can be humorous, visible, but also manipulative and not literal.

[2] Illich, Odszkolnic spoleczenstwo, Byc Zmiana, Warsaw 2010, p. 71. http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Wikipedia:Strona_g%C5%82%C3%B3wna [accessed on: 13.02.2022]

Wikipedia is also a simple advertising tool. A company can pay a writer to publish an article for the benefit of the principal. The article, at first glance, does not have to resemble a typical advertisement as we know it from the web. The sentences will be formulated in such a way that they do not sound advertorial, but the "bottom line" of the article will give a subliminal message to benefit the company.

This observation inspired me to write this text and to think about the concept of trust. In the following, I will describe two examples of discourse on Wikipedia. I will try to guide the readers through the analysis and answer the question: Who should be trusted in 2022?

The Seigenthaler biography incident - can Wikipedia's system ruin an image for life?

In 2005, an unknown Wikipedian published a biography of John Seigenthaler on Wikipedia. This man was an American journalist, writer, politician,

[3] Online: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_ Seigenthaler_biography_incident [accessed on 22.02.2022]

founder and director of USA Today, and assistant to Robert Kennedy. However, the published text had some surprising elements in it. The article contained many false accusations, the most serious of which was the murder of R. Kennedy. Extremely quickly, the information found its way into the traditional media. Three major news outlets were able to pick up the story, which resulted in the immediate spread of fake news. Although the journalist was suspected for a short time of involvement in the murder, in the end he was not proven guilty. Nevertheless, the information became viral.

In November 2005, in reaction to the defamatory Wikipedia entry, Seigenthaler publicised the matter in USA Today, posting an article entitled "Internet Character Assassination". In it, the journalist condemns Wikipedia for spreading lies and describes the site as a place where vandals are free to spread untrue and damaging rumours. Seigenthaler's friend Eric Newton copied the official biography from the Freedom Forum website into Wikipedia. A day later it was removed for copyright reasons and replaced with a previous version. In October, the version incriminating Seigenthaler with the murder charge was removed from





Wikipedia and extracted from the revision history. It turned out that the author was a co-worker and friend of the Siegenthaler family and that the article was meant to be a joke. The author added that he had no idea that a free internet encyclopaedia could be used as a serious source of information. On Wikipedia, we can find the article "Wikipedia Seigenthaler biography incident". It describes the previously mentioned situation. Interestingly, after reviewing the history of changes, we can see that the article has been edited from 2009 until today (2022).

It is evident that Wikipedia is a powerful imagebuilding tool. Free access to edit articles can be used notonlyforPRpurposes,butalsotodestroysomeone's image. And can articles freely edited for more than 12 years be considered a reliable source of information?

"The other side of the coin", or: homeopathy and medical treatment on Wikipedia

It can be assumed that people are much less likely to consult Wikipedia for science and medicine than for biographies or descriptions of places or events. After all, wrong information can put our lives at risk, right? This is not to say that there are no such pages on Wikipedia - quite the contrary. Occasionally we come across an article such as the one on homeopathy in which the author refers to sources and yet draws contradictory conclusions.

The article entitled "Homeopathy" refers to a pseudoscientific method of treatment using herbs and substances of natural origin. Until 4 February 2022, it was possible to read on Wikipedia that "(...) systematic reviews of all published clinical trials have failed to prove the efficacy of homeopathy (...)". The author of the article cited five studies which concluded that the results of previous studies were positive, but that in order to 100% confirm the efficacy of homeopathy, studies on a larger number of people must be continued. Further research is justified provided that it is rigorous, systematic and attentive to methodology. The aforementioned studies theoretically confirmed the efficacy of homeopathy, but in order to confirm it 100%, they encouraged further research on a larger sample. In reality. However, this was a biased opinion: for years, homeopathy has been considered a placebo-based treatment with no scientific basis. Interestingly, this error can be seen in a version of the article from nine years earlier, despite the fact that the article has been edited many times each year.

"The ability to distinguish lies from truth is indispensable in order to develop in many directions."

The author, despite the fact that he used scientific sources, wrote an article which contained factual errors and contradicted the literature. We cannot always trust people based on the terminology they use or the number of books they've read.

Summary: Can we trust in 2022?

Trust is a broad and non-zero-sum topic. It concerns our social, political, school and family life. The ability to distinguish lies from truth is indispensable in order to develop in many directions. The development of the media has made this even more difficult. Competent people with the right knowledge are not always speaking out on the web. This leads to the spread of fake news and confusion caused by the plethora of contradictory information, as we see in particular in February 2022 when observing the disinformation related to the war in Ukraine. On the other hand, the Internet has become a place where we have quick access to knowledge. Unlike its paper counterparts, the Internet provides us with the opportunity to read the latest publications and scientific achievements. The acquisition of knowledge is also not helped by our culture, which since childhood has created in us an erroneous, negative image of criticism.

So, can we trust in 2022?

The answer to this question is not unequivocal, but I believe that we cannot always trust. It is worth directing your attention to scientific expertise which is particularly neglected in the case of social sciences: psychology, sociology, political science and related sciences. This is because people observe the society

around them, but they have neither the knowledge nor the research competence to evaluate it reliably.

Information found on the web should be checked against several references. The bibliographies at the bottom of each article are helpful. Wikipedia, for example, is not the most trusted place to check knowledge, but it can serve as a collection of literature that can be useful. The example of Wikipedia has shown that citing scientific references or writing in scientific language is no quarantee of a factually correct article. Platforms with free editing can be used for PR purposes as well as for damaging someone's image or spreading propaganda.

Reliable scientific articles can be found not only in libraries, but also on the Internet: Academia.edu, ResearchGate, Google Scholar, or on the websites of open access scientific journals. This does not mean that libraries are not useful. At school, we are rarely taught about the culture of reading or the use of reading rooms. The idea of university libraries is an important source of access to scientific publications as well as a place where we have a place to learn. The modern world provides us with a range of opportunities that we can take advantage of. Children and young people can "go high": whether it's to the "abyss" of the internet, the latest international scientific journals or the library's CD-ROM. The most important thing, however, is to critically check the sources and trust the science.



Note: the illustrations in the text were created by the author of the essay – Marcelina Wawrzynczyk – also as part of her work for the Youth on Trust Awards 2022 competition.

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4 Winners

15-16-Year-Old Category

Izabella Andreasyan

Title: "Trust"

Format: Video (4'59")

School: Abovyan Educational Complex, Abovyan

Country: Armenia



Watch online

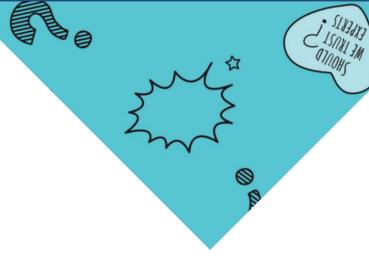
"Trust as a human characteristic is also changeable."

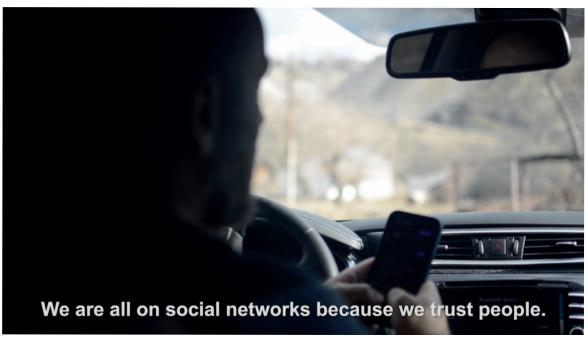


Essay title: "Trust" Format: Video (3'15")

School: French College in Armenia, Yerevan

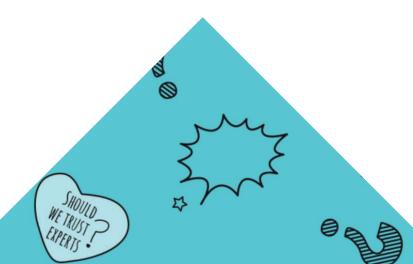
Country: Armenia





Watch online

"This world would simply disappear if we didn't take into account all the daily activities we do that require trust."



Aslı Öktem

Essay title: "Orpheus' Doom and Trust"

Format: Essay (1,456 words) School: ODTÜ Geliştirme Vakfı

Ankara Okulları Country: Turkey

Orpheus's Doom and Trust

Myths are from the past. They are what is before all the revolutions of humanity and resolutions of individuals. And yet, we are still talking, telling and studying these primitive stories, proving their prominence and importance in human culture. Myths are the commonplace of the ancestor and the successor and this commonplace is achieved by the only resemblance of ancestors and successors; that they are both human. This, I think, is a crucial point as it demonstrates the deep bond of myths to humanity itself. Furthermore, I believe, since proven by their companionship from the beginning, not only are they tied to humanity, they also must carry, convey and preserve the very core of humankind. Humanity filters these stories over the centuries, retelling and reshaping like a sculptor getting rid of the rough edges until individual desires and hatreds, individuality itself really, washes away and what is left is pure humanity. Besides, if Plato's Ideas are the truth and if they are only reached through the mind, what possesses more of the idea of human than the myths which are solely created by the human mind to be told to humans? Hence, I believe that humanity and all its characteristics are better understood when looked through the lens of mythology. when looked at through the lens of mythology. So, as "trust" or lack thereof is something all humans have had in common since the dawn of humanity, making it a part of the human core, I believe in this writing, while I explore what trust is, using mythology as my quide would be an appropriate approach.

And what better myth to indulge in the matter of trust than the tragedy of Orpheus?

Eurydice and Orpheus, the greatest of poets, were deeply in love. Their love was to be sealed with marriage when suddenly, on her walk to Orpheus, Eurydice died from a snake bite. "Orpheus, consoling love's anguish, with his hollow lyre, /sang of you [Eurydice], sweet wife, you [Eurydice], alone on the empty shore, /of you [Eurydice] as day neared, of you [Eurydice] as day departed."1 Orpheus, overcome with grief, decided to travel to the realm of the dead to take his wife back. He reached Hades and Persephone. "I beg you, by these fearful places, by this immense abyss, and the silence of your vast realms, reverse Eurydice's swift death,"2 he pleaded, "hearts that do not know how to soften at human prayer"3 soften with his melodies. He was granted his wish on one condition; while he was walking back to the world of living with his love behind him, he was not to look back until he was out in the light. However, when he saw the light, Orpheus broke the holy pact, looked back and lost Eurydice. "What madness has destroyed my wretched self, and you?"4 she called, as she fell back into the underworld and Orpheus spent the rest of his days, woeful, longing for his love. The "madness" that destroyed Eurydice and Orpheus was, in my opinion, not actually lunacy but solely distrust.

I think his scepticism might have had three different causes. One of them, a combination of them, or all of them might have pushed him to look back. I would like to ponder these causes below.

- [1] "Georgics" by Vergil
- [2] "Metamorphoses: Book X" by Ovid
- [3] "Georgics" by Vergil
- [4] "Georgics" by Vergil

He does not trust Eurydice

He might have turned around because he wants to make sure that Eurydice is following him.

"Confident reliance on someone when you are in a position of vulnerability" is the definition of trust by Robert F. Hurley. This definition showcases the relationship between trust and vulnerability. Humans act on personal interest as essentially, they are individuals. Individuals are limited to their own minds. The thoughts and interests of others cannot, under any circumstances, even with communication be fully known because of this limitation. This inevitable and uncurable unknown makes others unpredictable and what is unpredictable is always capable of harm. This possibility of harm creates an environment of distrust in any social relationship. If and when a "confident reliance", trust, is formed with familiarity, this inevitable existence of vulnerability is exactly what makes it so delicate. With familiarity, the unknown doesn't disappear but it is rather lessened. Extreme events and/or time spend separated adds more variables to the unknown, potentially breaking this fragile trust. Since Eurydice has been through major events without Orpheus, Eurydice's unpredictability has increased, because the ways she may or may not have changed are added to the equation. This might have broken Orpheus' trust, making him doubt whether the Eurydice that has been through all of this would follow him to the world of the living or not.

He does not trust himself

He might have turned around to see what is happening is real or not.

As stated above, familiarity is a big part of trust. This includes familiarity with reality, too. Individuals get used to the way of life as they grow older, and

thus "norms" are created. Reality is expected to fit these norms—it is expected to be what it was before. With a general sense of normality in reality, humans become familiar with reality and they trust what they perceive is real. However, there may be instances where what is real is not what is the norm and this creates distrust in the real and what is perceived. In Orpheus' case—he is in the underworld, talking to Gods and bringing people back from the dead. These are conventionally abnormal circumstances. This abnormality might have created distrust in reality, in his mind and essentially in himself, making him turn around for reassurance.

He does not trust Hades and Persephone

He might have been sceptical about strangers' promises.

Humans have a higher chance of surviving as a group, considering they can't beat a tiger, for example, as a sole individual. Thus, in order to survive, they evolved in a way in which they automatically have the need to form groups. However, the groups that can be formed are naturally small because of people's individualistic nature (contrary to bees, for example). Thus, groups must be formed, but they cannot consist of all humans as a whole. This naturally creates a concept of "us" and "them." While "us" is held together by "trust", "them" is an unpredictable thread; thus the distrusted. Hades and Persephone had never met Orpheus, making them foreigners, "them" to Orpheus. Hence his primitive distrust of "them" might have caused his deed of distrust.

In conclusion, I think what all these reasons of distrust have in common is the deterioration of what is familiar. In the case of distrust in Eurydice, there is a disintegration of Orpheus' knowledge of Eurydice's thoughts, actions, reactions and Eurydice in general as she becomes more unpredictable. When it comes

to Orpheus' self-doubt, we can see it is caused by the estrangement of Orpheus from the normal, familiar reality he is used to. Lastly, Hades and Persephone, whom Orpheus has never met, are outsiders to him. So, his wariness of them and their word is caused, essentially, by the lack of familiarity he has with them.

Human beings are alone creatures who are vulnerable in social interactions, and distrust is a survival mechanism so that their vulnerability doesn't get taken advantage of. As a new social relationship occurs, in the beginning, one is cautious of the other. They test and observe each other and, with time, they become more predictable and familiar with each other. At that point, trust forms. The vulnerability and the everlasting unknown that is another person's mind are still there but based on previous experiences, are avoided to focus on testing, observing other relationships that are still distrusted. In a way, it is similar to another survival system of humans - sensory adaptation - in which sensitivity is reduced

after constant exposure to a stimulus to free up attention to focus on other, potentially more vital stimuli in the environment. This is the reason we don't feel our shoes after a while and why we rather focus on a paper cut on our hand more.

So, trust can be considered as a branch sensory adaptation. Distrust is painful yet it is necessary for As we have many relationships in which we must use distrust, for some of them, after constant stimuli, in other words, familiarity, our distrust lessens to focus on others. This is not to say that trust is something like an addictive, numbing drug that is bad for individuals. In most cases, it is rather a natural way of survival and comfort. After all, the myth whispered to us the utter loneliness and pain Orpheus was condemned to after his deed of distrust. As George Elliot said, "What loneliness is more lonely than distrust?"



Maciej Urbańczyk

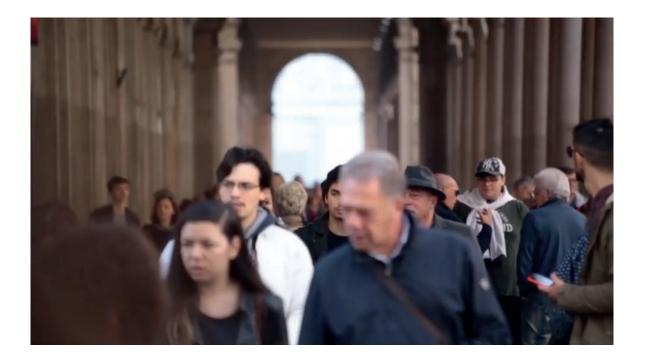
Title: "Trust"

Format: Video (5'27")

School: Salezjańskie Liceum Ogólnokształcące

im. Księdza Bosko, Łódź

Country: Poland



Watch online

"The right gestures and choice of words, it all affects us subconsciously."

5 Winners

17-18-Year-Old Category

Laura Bzdak

Title: "Us and Heuristics" Format: Video (8'53")

School: XXXIII Liceum Ogólnokształcące

Dwujęzyczne, Warszawa

Country: Poland



Watch online

"What manipulates the mechanisms in our brain are heuristics: little imposters that make it impossible for our brain to work free from any influence from the outside."

Eylül Öyküsu Değirmenci

Essay title: "Reclaiming the Trust"

Format: Podcast (5'53")

School: Middle East Technical University Development Schools High School, Ankara

Country: Turkey

Listen online

"When we first realize that we are not safe, we actually realize that we do not trust [...]. Trust we have for the society we live in is much more needed than the trust we have for governments, I believe. Because I strongly believe we are each others' only hope."































Natalia Niedźwiedź

Title: "Trust on a Bike" Format: Video (5'53'')

School: XIV Liceum Ogólnokształcące w ZSO

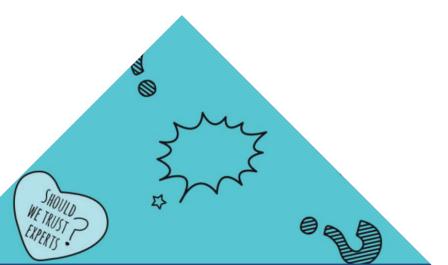
nr 1 im. Zbigniewa Herberta, Lublin

Country: Poland



Watch online

"When I know that my bike is prepared and the track and ramp are safe, what's left is to have trust in myself [...]. No matter what we do, trust is an inseparable element of our goal."



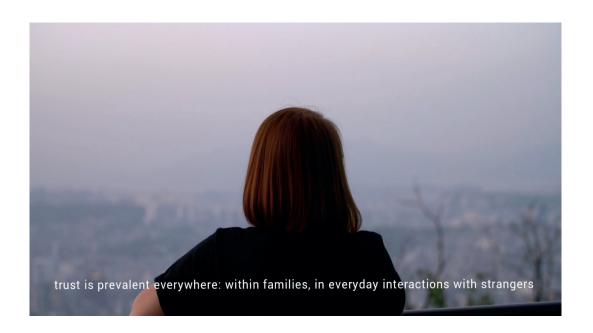
Aneta Pastuszka

Title: "Unthoughtful Thoughts"

Format: Video (5'53'')

School: V Liceum Ogólnokształcące z Oddziałami Dwujęzycznymi im. Romualda Traugutta, Warszawa

Country: Poland



Watch online

"Trust is the screws in this huge machine that is the world."



8 About PERITIA

Trust is the foundation of our social interactions. Likewise, trust in the basis and justification of policy measures is essential to their implementation. Transformations in sociotechnology and the rise of populist politics with its tenet of anti-elitism have been pulling at the threads of public trust in experts.

PERITIA brings together philosophers, social and natural scientists, policy experts, ethicists, psychologists, media specialists and civil society organisations to investigate the nature and conditions of public trust. The project reviews the role of science in policy decision-making and the conditions under which people trust and rely on expert opinion, thereby shaping public opinion.

The key hypothesis that has been explored conceptually and tested empirically is that affective and normative factors play a central

role in decisions to trust, even in cases where judgements of trustworthiness may seem to be grounded in epistemic considerations, such as professional reputation, reliability and objectivity.

The project uses climate change and climate science as a test case. Ultimately, it seeks to design and provide practical tools and indicators which can be applied to measure and establish the trustworthiness of the agents and institutions involved in social and political decision making.



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