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Media and Information Literacy: for human rights and more democracy

TECHNICAL PAPER

Guidance on

Implementing, promoting and advancing European and international standards on Media and Information Literacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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1. Introduction

The Council of Europe is currently implementing in Bosnia and Herzegovina the project on “Media and Information Literacy: for human rights and more democracy”, which aims to contribute to increasing media and information literacy (MIL) in the country in line with international and Council of Europe standards, and in particular in regards to the media-literacy related provisions of the Recommendation CM/Rec (2018)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership.

The Communication Regulatory Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (CRA) is the main partner of the project, as an institution in the position to advance the debate around MIL in the country and convene and coordinate efforts with the existing Informal Network of MIL practitioners. Other institutions in the MIL landscape are direct and indirect beneficiaries, including the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), the Ministry of Communications and Transport, and the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This technical paper contributes to supporting state institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina when translating and adapting the Council of Europe and other relevant international MIL standards into their respective institutional strategies, policies, workplans and interventions.

Based on the recommendations deriving from the [study](#) on “Implementing European and International Standards on Media and Information Literacy in various domestic institutions” a first and a follow-up workshop were organised to share the insights gained from the study and assist the key actors with the necessary knowledge and guiding tools to implement, promote and advance the MIL field in line with standards as set out in:

- [Recommendation CM/Rec \(2018\)1](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership.
- [Recommendation CM/Rec \(2018\)7](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment.
- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2014\)6](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on a Guide to human rights for internet users.

The following supplemental documents recognised as crucial contributions to the development of MIL also informed the workshop sessions:

- The [Communication](#) from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A European approach to media literacy in the digital environment.
- Council of the European Union [conclusions](#) on media literacy in an ever-changing world
- [Audiovisual Media Services Directive](#) (Revised AVMSD 2018).
- The Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in the Digital Era 2014.¹
- The Riga Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy in a Shifting Media and Information Landscape.²

In a nutshell, the workshops contributed to:

- Initiating an inter-sectorial and inter-disciplinary discussion concerning the future policy approaches and steps towards the development of the MIL public policy framework based on the best practices and standards of various Council of Europe member States;

¹ UNESCO. (2014) Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in the Digital Era.

² UNESCO/GAPMIL. (2016). Riga Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy in a Shifting Media and Information Landscape.

- Strengthening communication and coordination among stakeholders, through the provision of a hub for networking and sharing practices, experiences and questions.

Last, the workshops elucidated the key action points for follow up as specified in this technical paper.

2. Summary of the Activity

2.1. First workshop: “Implementing European and International standards on media and information literacy in various domestic institutions”

	Date	Time	Format
Workshop No.1	8 September 2022	09:00 – 13:00	Online



Entitled “Implementing European and International standards on media and information literacy in various domestic institutions”, the first Workshop gathered a total number of 10 (ten) participants mainly representatives from the academia, professionals from the media regulatory body, namely Communication Regulatory Agency

(CRA) and educational institutions. The representatives from the state authorities and decision-makers were not present at the workshop.

The goal of the first workshop was twofold:

1. To present the Study on Implementing European and International Standards on Media and Information Literacy in various domestic institutions (hereby: the Study) jointly produced by the Council of Europe experts Krisztina Rozgonyi and Bojana Kostić;
2. To set the ground for initiating an inter-sectorial and inter-disciplinary discussion concerning the future policy approaches towards the development of the MIL public policy framework based on the best practices and standards of the Council of Europe member States.

Through the lens of contextually comparable country experiences, the Technical Paper and the workshops addressed the following:

1. MIL as a conceptual framework (legal definition, underlining MIL values and goals, key interventions and programs); and
2. MIL as a governance model (coordinating and regulatory responsibility of different intuitions and regulatory authorities, facilitations of the MIL country networks and funding models).

After a detailed comparison and analysis of the specific approaches to MIL policies taken in different Council of Europe Member States (Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, United Kingdom and Croatia), the discussion shed light on the MIL dynamics in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Particularly, the experiences from Ireland, the United Kingdom and Finland are important to the Bosnia and Herzegovina context, as the regulatory authorities are entrusted with coordinating and instructive roles in the facilitation of MIL policies and interventions.

The role of the CRA in Bosnia and Herzegovina was discussed, as it already has a de-facto coordinating role on MIL-related issues in the country. It was also noted that two central MIL pillars, namely educational and public policy components, have already emerged, involving a range of different stakeholders’ activities and programs.

Based on the specific recommendations from the Study regarding an enabling legal and policy framework (See: 5.2., p.35) it was concluded, jointly with participants, that the current MIL pillars should be intersected, to enable a holistic and integrated approach to MIL across both pillars.

- ➔ In line with the recommendations, the CRA confirmed their willingness to continue their de-facto coordination role of the existing MIL network to ensure that the impetus and multi-sectorial interest is sustained.

The workshop was also relevant from regulatory, network governance and funding perspectives as, through an open exchange, expert knowledge and recommendations were shared on the roles and responsibilities of different actors in a wider MIL public policy perspective (ministries, educational institutions, academic, civic and private sector) as MIL policy design relies on horizontal multi-stakeholder arrangements that are not in a legal tradition of BiH.

- ➔ It was concluded that a clear legal remit for the CRA (or similar authority) is relevant, but not a pre-condition for the facilitation and development of a countrywide MIL strategy that requires the engagement of all actors in the country.

2.2. Second workshop: follow-up

	Date	Time	Format
Workshop No.2	25 October 2022	10:45 – 12:30	In-person, Sarajevo



The second (follow-up) workshop was organised as a part of a series of events celebrating Media Literacy Week in Bosnia and Herzegovina, organised under the auspices of the Council of Europe and the Communication Regulatory Agency. The workshop session gathered a total of forty-three participants with different affiliations and backgrounds, involved in MIL education and policy development, civil society representatives and MIL informal Network. Representatives from different levels of state intuitions and independent authorities such

as the Ministry of Communication and Transport of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Ombudsman for Children of Republika Srpska were present.

The workshop particularly contributed to the MIL strategic policy development process by prompting discussion on:

The roles and responsibilities of public, private and civil actors in the various Council of Europe member States, and the different forms of MIL networks, in light of the country obligations vis à vis CM/Rec(2018)1, and particularly section 5, paragraph 5.1 – 5.2 concerning:

1. Introduction of MIL in the regulatory framework, including strengthening of the existing provisions;
2. Inclusion of various state institutions in the development and implementation of MIL public policy as a key component of an enabling environment for freedom of expression; and
3. Facilitation of multi-sectorial and inter-disciplinary media literacy network.

The workshop addressed the contextual resemblance of the Council of Europe Member States practices and their relevance for the emerging in-country MIL Informal Network, especially concerning

the network structure, communication and coordination mechanisms, and collaboration procedures based on existing good practices. While illustrations from Ireland, the Netherlands and Germany informed the discussion, a set of different approaches in structuring the network – centralised, semi-decentralised or decentralised – were analysed focusing on finding a delicate balance in ensuring horizontal cooperation with clear responsibilities and accountability mechanisms.

Against the background of this discussion in line with Recommendations on the governance models in BiH and the role of the Communication Regulatory Agency (5.1., p.33) and Recommendations on an enabling legal and policy framework (5.2., p.35) set in the Study:

- The Communication Regulatory Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina reiterated their genuine interest and goodwill to persist in strengthening and formalization of the MIL network. It was also emphasized that other state and non-state actors should also contribute to the work of the network, especially responsible state institutions, as it is seen in similar networks across the Council of Europe member States.

In addition, participants were provided with practical advice and possible ways to transpose the presented network governance experiences to the MIL network in BiH. For example, one possible approach would be to ensure that educational and academic institutions, including civil society organizations inform and involve CRA in their discussions on MIL interventions and plans. In this way, CRA would gain a genuine facilitation role of the MIL network, ensuring a consistent and systematic approach to MIL interventions in the country.

3. Analysis of progress: Observations and action points for follow-up with responsible structures

As an introductory remark, it should be noted that the lack of genuine involvement of the decision makers at all state levels turned out to be a semi-obstacle to conceiving a clear plan with clear timelines for follow-up by responsible structures – which was initially foreseen as an important step in supporting the authorities through sharing the expert advice on addressing their MIL related obligations. However, significant efforts are made by the CRA, other independent institutions, including Ombudspersons, educational institutions, the academic sector, and civil society organisations to create a positive environment for and make concrete steps toward developing a MIL policy framework, including MIL strategy.

The following key points emerged as the salient aspects of the noted MIL progress in the country:

1. Stakeholders have shown interest and respective levels of knowledge of the MIL field. In-country MIL educational interventions and policies (see: above) are continually developing in line with a MIL cross-sectorial dynamic nature.

- Future steps were discussed that should ensure a higher level of engagement and contribution of state authorities at all levels, especially given their mandate in creating an enabling environment for freedom of expression, of which MIL is an inseparable component.
- Joint engagement of the various stakeholders in the development of the future MIL strategy is an important step that should be encouraged and supported.
- The CRA, including representatives of the educational sector, expressed their commitment to this end.

2. It became clear that there is a need for more coordinated and centralised planning and implementation of MIL interventions and projects in the country. The CRA seems to be well placed and committed to overseeing these processes.

The second workshop, seen in conjunction with two additional strategic documents produced under the MIL project, namely [guidelines](#) for the strategic development of the MIL network and its operational scope and instructive guidelines and [recommendations](#) for MIL policy development in Bosnia and Herzegovina, prompted stakeholders to realize their sole and joint positions and responsibilities in the broader MIL framework.

- Academic and educational institutions at all levels expressed their willingness to continue a professional dialogue on the best approach for the development of a consistent MIL educational pillar.
- The CRA recently took over the responsibility of managing the repository of MIL initiatives (see more on: medijaskapismenost.ba) and they plan to integrate MIL outputs from various projects in the country.
- The MIL network, under the coordinating role of the CRA, should become a driving force of MIL development in the country. Besides international and state authorities support, the inclusion of civil society organisations, educational, academic and public sectors, including the private sector, is of crucial importance to generate a policy impetus for the development and adoption of the in-country MIL framework, ideally in the form of the MIL Strategy and Action plan.

3. There is a need to coordinate and integrate cross-country and international organizations' initiatives and results, especially those covering the development of the educational pillar of MIL.

The knowledge and expertise made available through various initiatives and projects should be elevated and further integrated to produce an in-country unified MIL policy framework.

4. Stakeholders expressed increased interest in learning about governance structures and mechanisms of cooperation of multi-stakolders' networks.

The MIL networks in the Council of Europe member States and in Bosnia and Herzegovina have emerged as a backbone of successful MIL regulatory models.

- It was agreed that future research and stakeholders' contribution should foster cooperation with similar networks, insisting on the inclusion of decision-makers at all levels in these processes.

4. Concluding observations and recommendations

Against this background and in line with a set of topical recommendations enlisted in the [Study](#), particularly Recommendation No. 5.1 on the governance modalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the role of the CRA and Recommendation No. 5.2 on an enabling legal and policy framework, the following key actions were concluded for follow-up:

4.1. MIL conceptual framework

In line with the [Study](#) Recommendation No 5.1.3 on Multi-stakeholder network, the existing informal MIL network should seek to establish organisational and operational structure with a set of priority tasks:

- to connect and integrate various MIL programmes and actors that have already established enormous body of knowledge (already partly addressed through the established MIL repository - medijaskapismenost.ba);
- to ensure active contribution and involvement of the competent ministries at all levels;
- to reach an agreement within the network on the goals, values and strategic steps for developing future MIL policy framework and MIL strategy.

4.2. MIL governance model

In line with the [Study](#) Recommendation No. 5.2.1 on the need for a specific statutory remit for the Multi-stakeholder network and Recommendation 5.2.4 on identifying appropriate funding schemes, the responsible state institutions, among others, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Communications and Transport, the Ministry of Security, and the State Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO, having the legal mandate and competences to foster an enabling environment of MIL development, should take actions through the following:

- Lifting up the current MIL progress and streamlining through the existing MIL institutional infrastructure, in cooperation with these responsible state institutions to ensure their fulfilment of the constitutional and international duties on protection and enhancement of freedom of expression and democratic value of MIL.
- In practical terms, they should act as a normative connecting point, providing human and financial resources and legislative scaffolding to the multiple actors involved in the work of the MIL network under the coordinating role of CRA.