Media literacy and the empowerment of users

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Media literacy and the empowerment of users

Amélie Lacourt

Foreword

If you unlocked your phone and randomly opened a social media app, or turned on your TV to a 24-hour news channel, what would you see and how would you describe your media consumption in the first 30 seconds, after 1 minute, 5 minutes, 15 minutes?

Have you never mindlessly scrolled through posts on Instagram, Facebook or TikTok, or blindly absorbed information broadcast on TV? Even for media experts, it is becoming increasingly easy to drown in the sea of content and information, to be overwhelmed by what we see and hear, without much critical analysis or discernment between factual content and sensational clickbait.

This is an increasingly common challenge at a time when automated content generation and the spread of disinformation are pressing concerns. While ensuring accurate media content has traditionally been the responsibility of media providers, journalists, or fact-checkers, the focus has recently shifted towards empowering users themselves. However robust the mechanisms employed to counter disinformation, the ultimate responsibility for fostering a fully informed, resilient and actively engaged citizenry finally lies with users. Recently, features like X's "Community Notes" have enabled users to collaboratively add context or information to posts they deem incomplete or misleading. However, this empowering approach also raises questions about the accuracy of such user-contributed content.

It is therefore vital that all individuals are equipped with the right skills to face the new challenges that lie before us. And this extends beyond minors who have been at the centre of attention for years. It is indeed equally crucial for adults and senior users to be empowered with the essential media literacy competencies, critical thinking in particular.

After the opening overview, Chapter 2 explores how media literacy is approached at the supranational level, whereas Chapter 3 shifts the focus to a national outlook, detailing the obligations imposed in selected European countries to undertake, support, or promote media literacy and user empowerment initiatives. This Chapter highlights various national strategies dedicated to equipping users with media literacy skills and funding mechanisms tailored to address media literacy needs. Additionally, Chapter 4 examines potential obligations related to evaluation procedures, which have become increasingly significant in recent years in order to assess the needs, the actions envisaged to meet them, and whether the projects carried out have effectively addressed the issue at stake. While media literacy skills are diverse and can cover various aspects from media production, to creativity, and communication, Chapter 5 explores the practical implementation of media literacy initiatives aimed at cultivating critical thinking abilities. Particular focus is placed on actions tailored for minors and the elderly. Additionally, this chapter delves into the emerging challenge of educating educators and also examines the concept of "media literacy by design". Chapter 6 shifts its attention to the new challenges

and opportunities arising from the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI). This chapter rounds off the report and investigates the need for developing a new set of literacies.

Enjoy the read!

Strasbourg, June 2024

Maja Cappello

IRIS Coordinator

Head of the Department for Legal Information

European Audiovisual Observatory

Table of contents

Figures

Executive summary

Media literacy has been a hot topic for many years, keeping pace with developments in the media and technology sector, and has led to the implementation of a number of initiatives in this area. The development and growth of the media offer, as well as changes in media consumption habits, have made media literacy a key issue for legislators, media stakeholders and users, with the recent aim of empowering the latter.

Much has been done and continues to be done at the international level. Media literacy was already addressed by the European Union in the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) of 2010, albeit rather timidly. A little less than a decade later, with the 2018 revision of the Directive, obligations on the development of media literacy came into play under Articles 33a and 28b(3)(j). Various initiatives have been taken by the European Commission, including in cooperation with ERGA. The Council of Europe, OSCE, UNESCO, EPRA and EDMO have also taken up the issue and have been working on topical issues such as the most vulnerable groups, disinformation, AI literacy and cooperation.

Media literacy has also become an issue for most countries at the national level, especially since the revision of the AVMSD. In recent years, in particular, the empowerment of users with media literacy skills has taken up more space. It appears in certain countries under review (Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg and North Macedonia) that critical thinking occupies an important place in the countries' journey towards user empowerment, as do digital and programming skills.

However, the development of such initiatives requires resources, including financial ones. Funding schemes may be specifically earmarked for media or digital literacy initiatives, and in such cases may be required under primary or secondary legislation. While some countries, such as Croatia, have opted for an allocation of funds to programmes and content of public interest aimed at developing and fostering general media literacy initiatives, others, such as Finland, have developed funding instruments mainly devoted to children and young people. In Sweden, on the other hand, there is currently no state support specifically for media literacy activities and it seems that in recent years most activities have been funded by media literacy stakeholders themselves.

Given this investment in developing media literacy initiatives and equipping users with essential media literacy skills, it is vital - and required under Article 33a AVMSD - to support their promotion. The promotion of media literacy can be achieved individually, in particular by national regulatory authorities, media literacy bodies, industry or educational organisations, or through collaborative efforts. This is particularly the case in France, where various agreements have been signed between the French government, the national regulatory authority Arcom, the Centre for Media and Information Education (CLEMI), CELSA Sorbonne University and ARTE Education.

More recently, evaluation has begun to play an important role in the development of media literacy initiatives, in identifying areas of focus, determining how to equip users with media literacy skills and whether the actions taken have effectively tackled the issue. Indeed, national media landscapes and cultural or political contexts mean that the approach to media literacy and the skills needed may vary. Evaluation requirements have been considered in some countries, albeit at different stages. Some countries, such as Latvia, Slovakia and Poland, require an upstream evaluation to assess the state of the media environment or the level of media literacy. Others, such as Lithuania, require an evaluation of the implementation of media literacy activities and their impact. Finally, others, such as the UK, require the development of recommendations on how to evaluate activities or initiatives. In practice, the UK and Flanders have already implemented insightful initiatives in relation to the evaluation process, with a toolkit for evaluating media literacy interventions and a media literacy competency model, respectively.

All these steps, from funding to promotion and evaluation, therefore play a crucial role in the development of media literacy initiatives aimed at empowering users. While media literacy skills are diverse and can cover different areas, this report also examines the practical implementation of media literacy initiatives aimed at cultivating critical thinking skills, which are a key component for understanding and navigating media content safely and securely. Two particularly vulnerable groups emerge: minors and senior citizens. For decades, much effort has been put into minors through formal and non-formal education systems. Seniors, on the other hand, have long been set aside, partly because they do not seem to be as easily targeted by these systems. However, there has been a shift in recent years, although initiatives targeting adults and seniors remain in the minority. The analysis of initiatives to empower users with critical thinking skills further revealed a fundamental issue: the education of educators. In other words, the need to raise awareness among adults themselves so that they have the knowledge and skills to raise and educate media literate individuals. However, this seems to be a challenge as such initiatives require a lot of resources in terms of time as well as human, material and financial resources. Projects with such an aim include, in particular, developing critical attitudes among teachers (Flanders), raising their awareness of the harmful effects of disinformation, promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills and enhancing their ability to combat disinformation and propaganda (Georgia), and providing guidance on the effective use of teaching resources (Ireland). Getting to the root of the problem may also require tackling it at its core, by integrating media literacy principles and practices into various facets of audiovisual media services. Indeed, media literacy by design has the potential to directly improve the outreach of media content. In the UK, for example, Ofcom has decided to explore how companies of all sizes can design their services to promote and support the digital literacy of their users.

The importance of cultivating critical thinking skills has grown significantly with the emergence of new technologies and the increasing integration of AI into our daily lives. This report concludes with an analysis of a new area of focus: empowering users to think critically about algorithms and AI. The risks of AI-generated content are manifold and include deepfakes, automated fact-checking, personalised content recommendations, predictions, algorithmic bias and filter bubbles. However, public understanding of AI can vary widely and AI systems need to be understood in order to be challenged, evaluated and held accountable. It follows that education will be crucial in enabling the population

as a whole to critically engage with AI-driven technologies. Media literacy, which has gone through several phases, is therefore shifting towards new horizons to cover data, algorithms and AI literacy. Several initiatives are emerging to empower users to think critically about digital media, algorithms and AI, with specific examples in Belgium, South Korea, Canada and the UK.

1. Overview

Media literacy is a particularly broad theme, which reflects the diverse and complex nature of today's media landscape. The media offering has shifted from the traditional dissemination of information through linear TV services to increased production of digital and online audiovisual services, which make the sources of information particularly diverse (public service media, information channels, social media, user-generated content, vloggers, influencers, freelancers…). This shift is also reflected in the evolution of users' consumption habits.

Media literacy therefore plays a prominent role in ensuring a safe and informed engagement of users with content provided on audiovisual services. Today, users play not only the role of information receiver but also that of transmitter, which creates new risks and challenges in "a regime of shared truths",[1] where one must learn how to "distinguish between true and false, between scientific authority and bias, and between established facts and mere opinion".[2] Because the media can be a vector of disinformation or of potentially harmful content (harmful to democracy, to freedom of expression, to security or to health…), the empowerment of users is of particular importance. Despite the measures taken upstream, the risk of false or misleading information remains, and in such a case working on improving users' media literacy skills is part of the solution, as empowered users are better equipped when facing unfiltered sources. "Media literacy therefore empowers people to participate in a more open and informed democratic debate",[3] and creates a resilient and actively engaged citizenry, contributing to the strength of democratic societies.

But who are these users? Audiences include a wide range of people of different ages and backgrounds, from toddlers and teenagers to adults and seniors. Each of these target groups is embedded in a particular context and time, with different realities, habits and automations. While this generational and contextual divide tends to highlight the strength of each group, it also reveals the deficiencies and gaps that need to be addressed. The result is a multifaceted set of challenges that require the enhancement and development of a wide range of user skills, from critical thinking and the ability to analyse information, the safe and efficient use of media tools, the responsible creation of content, the exercise of democratic freedoms, and the identification of bias, to the understanding of AI and underlying algorithms. The European Digital Competence

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[1] Declaration by French Minister for Education Pap Ndiaye

[2] Ibid

[3] Guidelines pursuant to Article 33a(3) of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive on the scope of Member States' reports concerning measures for the promotion and development of media literacy skills, European Commission, p. 1,

Framework for Citizens[4] provides a common understanding of what digital competence is with more than 250 new examples of knowledge, skills and attitudes that help citizens engage confidently, critically and safely with digital technologies, and new and emerging ones such as systems driven by artificial intelligence (AI).

This diversity indicates that a wide range of actors can be involved in developing media literacy efforts at different levels. At the supranational level, organisations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) or the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) are extensively involved in research, the exchange of best practices and the development of guidelines, recommendations and frameworks to facilitate cooperation on media literacy. NGOs often bridge gaps by organising international conferences, workshops and campaigns that bring together experts and stakeholders to share insights and strategy.

At EU level, the legislator intervened on this issue over a decade ago by including media literacy obligations in the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD[5]) and more recently, in 2023, by developing media literacy guidelines.[6] The obligations imposed on member states (and EEA countries) led them to address media literacy in their national legal frameworks. These national measures generally involve a wide range of actors, from government to industry and academia. The active involvement of the industry also spurred a diverse array of initiatives, including by public service media, community media, TV channels and online platforms. As stated in the Commission's guidelines, "[i]t is necessary that Member States, in addition to both media service providers and video-sharing platforms providers, and in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, promote the development of media literacy in all sections of society, for people of all ages, and for all media". Actors have the autonomy to operate independently but initiatives can also foster cooperation, for example between national governments and audiovisual media services or educational institutions. The relationship between all actors is fundamental as such synergy is key to ensuring a structured approach to the teaching of media literacy skills. Ultimately, a multi-stakeholder approach, involving educators, policymakers, and international organisations, is essential for cultivating a globally informed and media-literate society.

While the European Audiovisual Observatory already presented media literacy practices in 2016[7] and, more recently, the issue of disinformation in 2022[8], this

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[4] Vuorikari, R., Kluzer, S. and Punie, Y., DigComp 2.2: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens - With new examples of knowledge, skills and attitudes, EUR 31006 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2022, ISBN 978-92-76-48882-8, doi:10.2760/115376, JRC128415.

[5] Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) (codified version)

[6] Guidelines pursuant to Article 33a(3) of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive on the scope of Member States' reports concerning measures for the promotion and development of media literacy skills, European Commission, p. 1,

[7] Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in the EU-28, European Audiovisual Observatory, Strasbourg, 2016,

publication aims to follow this path, focusing on empowering users with media literacy skills that allow them to fully exercise and protect their rights as citizens in the context of disinformation. Critical thinking is one of the key skills for both prevention and recovery and this is all the more true in times of crisis, when mis- and disinformation can easily be spread on a large scale, for instance during the COVID-19 crisis in 2020 or more recently in the context of armed conflicts. Therefore, while critical thinking skills are valuable in everyday life, they become particularly important in times of crisis or of major change. The year 2024, the so-called "election year", will certainly be no exception. The ongoing emergence of AI has also brought many new challenges to the surface, in terms of copyright protection and transparency, but also in relation to disinformation. Deep fakes and the use of algorithms, combined with a lack of knowledge in this area and a lack of critical thinking about what appears to be true, calls for further training. The ability to understand how AI systems work, the ethical considerations surrounding their use and the potential impact on various aspects of society is therefore fundamental to enable users to make informed decisions.

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[8] Cabrera Blázquez F.J., Cappello M., Talavera Milla J., Valais S., "User empowerment against disinformation online", IRIS Plus, European Audiovisual Observatory, Strasbourg, September 2022

2. Media literacy at supranational level

Media literacy is a longstanding concern. It is only in recent years, however, that media literacy has really come to the fore of the supranational debate. While already addressed in Article 33 and recitals 12 and 47 of the 2010 AVMSD, the European Union reinforced its interest in addressing the issue with the 2018 revision of the Directive by imposing a set of obligations on member states and video-sharing platforms (VSPs). Other supranational organisations such as the Council of Europe, the OSCE, UNESCO and EPRA have also been working on the issue over the years, in particular through soft law instruments aimed at providing guidance to all actors involved.

2.1. Looking back at the European Union's legal framework

In 2010, the European Union addressed the issue of media literacy in the AVMSD, considering it a public interest to be safeguarded by European audiovisual regulatory policy.[9] At the time, the concept of "media literacy" itself was rather broad, but its scope has since evolved to keep pace with the rapid technological changes. Media literacy now also focuses on empowering users to deal with and counter disinformation, the frontier now extending to the challenges posed by AI.

Despite a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council from 2006[10] and its suggestions for promoting media literacy, Article 33 of the 2010 AVMSD did not impose any obligation in relation to media literacy other than to address media literacy levels in the reports submitted by member states to the European Commission. Additional obligations concerning media literacy came into play a little less than a decade later, with the 2018 revision of the Directive. This revision imposes obligations on member states to promote, take measures and report on media literacy and to ensure the implementation of measures by VSPs.

Under Article 33a, member states must promote and take measures for the development of media literacy skills. As part of this obligation, they must periodically

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[9] Recital 12 of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2010/13/EU
[10] Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on the protection of minors and human dignity and on the right of reply in relation to the competitiveness of the European audiovisual and on-line information services industry

report these measures to the Commission.[11] In addition to this set of obligations, Article 28b(3)(j) AVMSD requires member states to ensure the implementation of a number of appropriate measures by VSPs, including the provision of effective media literacy measures and tools, and raising user awareness in this regard.

The European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA)[12] also plays a role in the application of the regulatory framework for audiovisual media services, including for media literacy. ERGA focuses in particular on exchanging experiences and best practices (Article 30b(3)b) AVMSD), and in 2021, in collaboration with the European Commission, developed a Media Literacy Toolbox in line with the 2020 Media and Audiovisual Action Plan.[13] The Plan recognises that the new obligations regarding media literacy arising from the revised AVMSD are crucial to empowering citizens, and that media literacy "should be supported across various programmes and initiatives, as outlined in the European Democracy Action Plan".[14] In particular, it emphasises the importance of enabling and empowering citizens of all backgrounds and generations, including young people and the elderly.

The Commission's Guidance on Strengthening the Code of Practice on Disinformation also highlights the value of media literacy in combating the spread of disinformation, in particular by enabling users to critically assess sources of information and identify false or misleading content.[15] The European Media Literacy Week,[16] another initiative of the European Commission, reinforces the societal importance of media literacy and promotes media literacy initiatives and projects across the EU.

2.2. Approaches taken by other actors

2.2.1. The Council of Europe

Media literacy notably falls within the remit of the Media and Education Departments of the Council of Europe. So far, its strategy has been to place media literacy within an institutional framework to ensure systemic approaches and coordination between its member states. It develops practical guidance and provides tools to empower media users "of all ages and walks of life". Several recommendations by the Committee of Ministers deal with media literacy. These recommendations are set in the broader context of the

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[11] The first national reports covering the period 2020-2022 were published in May 2023. The reports are available at: https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/national-reports-media-literacy-measures-under-audiovisual-media-services-directive-2020-2022

[12] https://erga-online.eu/

[13] Europe's Media in the Digital Decade: An Action Plan to Support Recovery and Transformation

[14] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/protecting-democracy_en

[15] European Commission Guidance on Strengthening the Code of Practice on Disinformation

[16] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/media-literacy

creation of a favourable environment for quality journalism,[17] enabling users to navigate the online media environment,[18] enhancing the development of appropriate legislation and policies for the promotion of MIL[19] and enhancing children's competences to effectively engage with the digital environment and cope with its risks.[20] The Council of Europe has therefore been at the forefront of media literacy work, issuing publications, and organising conferences, seminars and other events to stimulate discussion on a number of specific issues:

2.2.1.1. Vulnerable groups

The Council of Europe has recognised the importance of reaching out to specific groups through media literacy initiatives on several occasions. The 2020 study "Supporting quality journalism through MIL"[21] confirmed that more still needs to be done to reach out to some groups. In another report from May 2020,[22] the Council noted that public service media, as well as local and community media, could play an important role in this context. More recently, the Information Society Department published a report reflecting on the right of seniors to participate in the digital era through MIL.[23] The Note by the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) on countering the spread of online mis- and disinformation also highlights that "MIL measures should consider that different population groups have varying degrees of vulnerability to different types of mis- and disinformation, and tailor empowerment initiatives to address the specific needs of different vulnerable groups".

2.2.1.2. Disinformation

In 2019, the Council of Europe held a set of conferences, where discussion centered in particular on how MIL is often considered the "silver bullet" in the fight against online disinformation.[24] It also explored what stakeholders can do to help empower accurate, credible news, strengthen MIL and help individuals engage with quality sources.[25] In December 2023, the CDMSI published a Guidance Note drawn up by its subordinate body, the Committee of Experts on the integrity of online information (MSI-INF), on countering the spread of online mis- and disinformation.[26] In this Note, ""user

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[17] Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)4 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age

[18] Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)6 on a Guide to human rights for Internet users

[19] Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)1 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership

[20] Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7 on rights of the child in the digital environment

[21] Supporting Quality Journalism through Media and Information Literacy

[22] Media literacy for all: supporting marginalised groups through community media

[23] The Digital Era? Also My Era! Media and information literacy: a key to ensure seniors' rights to participate in the digital era

[24] https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/mediapluralism2019

[25] https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/qualityjournalism2019

[26] Guidance Note on countering the spread of online mis- and disinformation

empowerment" refers to measures aimed at expanding users' understanding, informed choice and control of the impact of digital technologies on their rights, including by promoting MIL opportunities for exercising user rights, and avenues to collective action".

2.2.1.3.   AI literacy

The CDMSI's Guidelines on the responsible implementation of artificial intelligence systems in journalism[27] of November 2023 recommend that states "develop initiatives in collaboration with media organisations, journalists, platforms, communication scholars, and relevant NGOs designed to foster data, media and AI literacy among citizens, so that they are better able to understand the use of journalistic AI systems by news organisations, and better able to make use of the control over personalisation that news organisations and platforms offer". It also states that MIL programmes and activities should be "oriented towards helping users to better understand the online infrastructure and economy and how technology can influence choices in relation to media, and to highlight the value of quality news sources".

2.2.1.4.   Co-operation

The Council of Europe also develops multiple co-operation projects in the field of freedom of expression, providing expertise and assistance to media actors, governments and regulatory authorities in its member states and in the aouthern Mediterranean region. For example, such an initiative was implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2020 to 2022 as part of the "Media and Information Literacy: for Human Rights and More Democracy" project. In October 2022, the Council published New Guidelines for the Development of Media Information Literacy Policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[28] In 2018, the Council of Europe also published a comparative analysis[29] of the best European practices in promoting media literacy, with a special focus on the role of media regulatory authorities. The study was published as part of the JUFREX cooperation project.[30]

2.2.2. OSCE

As part of its mandate to address security-related concerns, the OSCE, and in particular the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), touch on a wide range of issues, including media freedom. The RFoM observes media developments as part of an early warning function and helps participating states abide by their commitments to freedom of expression and free media. In January 2024, the OSCE Chairperson-in-office,

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[27] Guidelines on the responsible implementation of artificial intelligence systems in journalism
[28] Guidelines for the Development of Media Information Literacy Policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina
[29] Regulatory authorities for electronic media and media literacy – Comparative analysis of the best European practices, Robert Tomljenović
[30] https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/promoting-freedom-of-expression-in-south-east-europe

the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta, emphasised at the inaugural Permanent Council meeting in Vienna, that it would push forward initiatives on media literacy, media freedom being more under threat than ever before.[31] Field operations support their host countries in the implementation of their OSCE commitments through missions. In particular, media literacy initiatives have been undertaken in Ukraine,[32] Montenegro[33] and Kosovo[34].

2.2.2.1. Focus: OSCE mission in Kosovo

Since 2016, the OSCE has taken specific initiatives through its mission in Kosovo. The spread of fake news and misinformation related to the COVID-19 pandemic increased the OSCE's involvement in this regard. In response, it launched a one-month media literacy campaign in June 2021, specifically targeting youth, with the aim of "equipping the public with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the online environment safely and critically". The initiatives highlighted in this document[35] show how creative MIL initiatives contribute to comprehensive security through building a new generation of critical thinkers.

Figure 1.   **OSCE initiatives in Kosovo**

Initiatives	
Formal education	2017: inclusion of media literacy as an optional subject at pre-university level. Study plans of several universities envision the subject to be taught as a mandatory skill to all students
Workshops	How to consciously use technology and social media and deconstruct complex media messages? Examples of true vs fake news, disinformation, clickbait, social media addiction, advertising, and hate speech...

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[31] https://www.osce.org/chairpersonship/561902

[32] The project is aimed at supporting initiatives to educate audiences about principles of media literacy to enable people to avoid negative influence of propaganda or bad journalism and runs from November 2022 to the end of May 2025

[33] This research examines media literacy among parents and children in Montenegro, how they choose media content and, in general, habits related to the adoption of information obtained from different sources
Another report from October 2022 provides Recommendations to help parents, guardians, educators and media professionals gain a better understanding of digital challenges, communicate more successfully with children, and to encourage them to positively use the huge range of opportunities provided by digital platforms on the Internet

[34] All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

[35] OSCE Mission in Kosovo - Media and Information Literacy Initiatives, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 11 May 2023,

Education of educators	Annual training workshop on media literacy concepts and innovative methods, targeting high school teachers (in partnership with DokuFest, International Documentary and Short Film Festival).[36]
TV programmes and awareness-raising campaigns	
Translation of media literacy textbooks into local languages	

2.2.3. UNESCO

UNESCO plays an important role in promoting media literacy and user empowerment. It has developed frameworks, guidelines and training tools to improve media literacy education worldwide, fostering critical thinking and responsible use of media.

As mentioned in the overview of this publication, the development of media literacy requires the intervention of a wide range of actors and UNESCO's mission addresses most of them. These include policymakers, educators and learners, information and media professionals, youth organisations, city actors, and vulnerable communities. It also assists its member states in formulating national policies and strategies in this area and facilitates the exchange of good practices and the promotion of collaboration. The UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Alliance, formerly known as the Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy (GAPMIL), is a network of networks dedicated to fostering international collaboration to advance media and information literacy for all.[37]

2.2.3.1. AI

UNESCO recently delved into the issue of user empowerment in relation to generative AI. It released a policy brief in 2024,[38] which analyses the risks and opportunities of such developments. The policy brief complements UNESCO's Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms,[39] launched in 2023.

"Policies and regulations on artificial intelligence must prioritize user empowerment, and in this perspective, media and information literacy offers the key set of competencies for users to navigate through a disrupted digital ecosystem"

Tawfik Jelassi, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, UNESCO

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[36] https://dokufest.com/en/
[37] https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy/alliance
[38] User empowerment through media and information literacy responses to the evolution of generative artificial intelligence (GAI), Divina Frau-Meigs, 2024
[39] Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms: safeguarding freedom of expression and access to information through a multistakeholder approach

2.2.3.2. Co-operation

In October 2023, UNESCO launched, with the support of Meta and as part of the Social Media 4 Peace[40] project, a global campaign[41] to empower young users with the critical thinking skills they need to be resilient to online harmful content. The campaign was structured around a quiz designed to test their knowledge and skills on topics such as recognising manipulated content and understanding the role of journalists in a new digital ecosystem. The quiz is available in English and Bosnian and promoted particularly among users in Bosnia and Herzegovina - a target country of the Social Media 4 Peace project.

In February 2024, UNESCO also collaborated with TikTok[42] to emphasise the importance of MIL in creating a safer digital space. It launched an educational hub, available directly on TikTok,[43] where people can learn more about safety tools and watch helpful videos from UNESCO and its network of online safety partner organisations. This took place on "Safer Internet Day".[44]

2.2.4. EPRA

Established in 1995, EPRA[45] is the oldest and largest network of broadcasting regulators. It was created with the aim of exchanging information, case studies and best practices between broadcasting regulators in Europe. The creation of EPRA was a direct response to the need to increase cooperation between European regulatory authorities and cross-border and cross-sectoral cooperation is now at the heart of EPRA's mission. The network now counts 55 regulatory authority members from 47 countries[46] within and beyond the EU. The European Commission, the Council of Europe, the European Audiovisual Observatory and the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media are permanent Observers of the Platform.[47]

While EPRA is prohibited from adopting common positions or declarations, it encourages open discussions on issues pertaining to the application of media regulation, supported by comparative working documents, presentations and series of virtual meetings.

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[40] https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/social-media-4-peace
[41] https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-and-meta-empower-young-social-media-users
[42] https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-and-tiktok-collaborate-safer-internet-day-support-media-literacy
[43] https://www.tiktok.com/@unesco?_t=8krgVuaDLTl&_r=1
[44] https://www.saferinternetday.org/
[45] https://www.epra.org/
[46] List of members (epra.org)
[47] Permanent Observers (epra.org)

Media and information literacy is one of EPRA's focus areas, which has notably been addressed through the establishment of the EPRA Media and Information Literacy Taskforce in 2018, later formalised as EMIL in 2021. The taskforce consists of 35 members, including both media regulators and national MIL bodies such as the Belgian CSEM[48] or Mediawijs,[49] and multinational organisations like the European Audiovisual Observatory,[50] EDMO,[51] and the Community Media Forum Europe (CMFE).[52] EMIL's goals revolve around three main points:

1. Coordination and Learning

2. Networks & Partnerships

3. Giving MIL Networks a Voice

In addition to this, EPRA has created two other working groups to address issues and developments in relation to AI and VSPs. In 2023, EPRA organised a joint EMIL/AI & Regulators Roundtable, bringing together actors of both AI and MIL sectors to explore the topic of "algorithm literacy" and in particular the explainability of algorithms, from the perspective of media literacy practitioners, artificial intelligence experts and the media. The roundtable provided a forum for sharing key information and insights on this important issue at the intersection of media, technology, and regulation.[53]

2.2.5. EDMO

The European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)[54] is a European Union-funded initiative managed by a consortium led by the European University Institute. It was set up as part as part of the European Commission's 2018 action plan against disinformation,[55] aiming to improve detection, coordinate responses, work with online platforms, and raise public awareness. EDMO has an independent governance structure with advisory and executive boards that are independent from public authorities.

EDMO aims to enable and strengthen cooperation between stakeholders to combat disinformation and promote media literacy across Europe. The EDMO community is large and acts as a hub, bringing together fact-checkers, media literacy experts and academic researchers, media organisations, online platforms and media literacy practitioners. EDMO works through a network of 14 national and multinational "hubs"

[48] https://www.csem.be/profile-select?destination=/
[49] https://www.mediawijs.be/en
[50] https://www.obs.coe.int/en/web/observatoire/
[51] https://edmo.eu/
[52] https://www.cmfe.eu/
[53] https://www.epra.org/attachments/emil-ai-regulators-roundtable-event-summary
[54] EDMO – United against disinformation
[55] https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/document.cfm?doc_id=56166

covering all 27 EU member states as well as Norway, in the EEA. The hubs focus on analysing developments and specificities in their regions.

EDMO's activities include in particular

Media literacy

- Mapping of the media literacy landscape
- Promoting knowledge exchange
- Raising standards by providing guidance and identifying best practices

Fact-checking

- Network of fact-checking organisations based in the EU to foster collaboration
- Online platform supporting the detection and analysis of disinformation campaigns

Research

- Framework for secure data access and fostering of discussions for researchers studying disinformation

Policy analysis

- Monitoring and assessment of national and EU-level policies to tackle disinformation, reporting on relevant trends and research and expert support to the Code of Practice on Disinformation

Media literacy is therefore a cornerstone of EDMO's work. National and multinational hubs provide EDMO with direct links to national contexts and allow it to identify specific issues that need to be addressed.

EDMO has also established a Media Literacy Working Group, which organises regular meetings and opportunities to share experiences. The working group is also a way to promote and make visible the results of the work carried out and to continuously inform the policy debate on how to raise media literacy levels across society.

EDMO also provides training open to all, including on the evaluation of media literacy initiatives.

3. A national perspective

As mentioned in section 2.1. of this report, since the revision of the AVMS Directive in 2018, the development of media literacy measures and tools is a requirement for both EU member states and VSPs. Member states have therefore adopted primary and in some cases secondary legislation to transpose the Directive into national law to a greater or lesser extent. Other countries outside the European Union have also very often decided to follow suit and align themselves. International cooperation projects have also led to the implementation of legal frameworks or national action plans. All these efforts are crucial to equip users of all backgrounds and ages with the skills to navigate the challenges presented by the media and to allow them to exercise their rights as citizens. Media literacy skills play a vital role in empowering people to fully and responsibly exercise their right to freedom of expression, to receive and impart information, to decode messages in view of informed voting decisions, access online (government) services or ensure access to a plurality of information sources. The benefits are manifold.

This Chapter will therefore examine how national legislators have addressed the issue of media literacy and user empowerment within their legal frameworks. Due to the obligations set under the AVMSD, rules concerning media literacy are typically integrated into national primary law. However, these provisions are often rather general and are more commonly detailed in secondary legislation. This Chapter will explore how various countries have approached the empowerment of users with specific media literacy skills and through which legal frameworks. It will also analyse existing funding schemes that support media literacy initiatives, particularly in enhancing critical thinking abilities, and delve into the potential for promoting such initiatives through compelling examples. The following pages reflect the diversity of legislative actions implemented to empower users with the necessary media literacy skills to build an informed, resilient and actively engaged citizenry.

3.1. Exploring national legal frameworks for media literacy and empowerment of users

In transposing or aligning with the AVMS Directive, the primary legislation of most countries has followed the wording of the Directive very closely and thus remained rather

general.[56] The developments needed in terms of media literacy tend to be more extensively addressed as part of national strategies or policies. In some cases, these are aimed at equipping users with specific skills and competences in relation to their media consumption habits.

As the media offering and consumption vary across the world according to national cultural and political contexts, media literacy needs may also differ from one country or region to another, and national strategies may therefore aim to develop different skills or competences. National strategies may also evolve over time in a response to changes in technology, media consumption patterns and societal needs.

This section presents a selection of national policies that focus on empowering users with specific media literacy skills.

3.1.1. Finland

Under Article 2(2) of the Act on the National Audiovisual Institute (Laki Kansallisesta audiovisuaalisesta instituutista),[57] KAVI, the National Audiovisual Institute (Kansallinen audiovisuaalinen instituutti) is in particular tasked with the promotion of media education, children's media literacy skills, a child-safe media environment and the provision of information on matters relating to children and the media.

In autumn 2020, KAVI's department for media education published the "New Literacies" programme[58] for the period 2020 - 2023. The programme aimed to strengthen equity in teaching and learning skills needed in a media environment across the country, notably by strengthening media literacy, digital competence and programming skills of children and young people.

As an output, the Finnish National Agency for Education and KAVI, together with teachers and other experts, developed detailed competence descriptions[59] aimed at developing good pedagogical practice in early childhood, pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education. The competences are adapted according to the educational level of the target group (early childhood education and care, pre-primary education and primary education). The areas of work include "creative expression", "involvement", "communication of information" and "own media production". Good pedagogical activities, good competences and advanced competences are identified for each area. Throughout the activities proposed, children learn to foster their own rights and wellbeing and those of others when consuming and producing media.

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[56] AVMS Database, European Audiovisual Observatory
[57] Laki Kansallisesta audiovisuaalisesta instituutista
[58] https://kavi.fi/en/media-education/new-literacies-development-programme/
[59]https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1NJuVjMcPq5StRlxb0Y2_bFh6CD8RjhRX0WSoNB3oszo/edit#gid=18 07680698

3.1.2. Ireland

In 2016, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), now Coimisiún na Meán (CNAM), developed a media literacy policy[60] as part of the regulator's statutory obligation to undertake, encourage and foster research, measures and activities directed towards the promotion of media literacy (Article 7(3)g), Broadcasting Act 2009).[61]

> *"The overarching policy objective for the BAI's Media Literacy Policy and associated work plan is: To empower Irish people with the skills and knowledge to make informed choices about the media content and services that they consume, create and disseminate."*

The policy sets out five strategic objectives, accompanied by three core media literacy competencies, namely, the range of media literacy skills which have been identified by the Irish regulator as essential for navigating the current and emerging technological, media and social environment. The core competencies, accompanied by skills and success indicators, are as follows:

Understand and critically evaluate broadcast, digital and other media content and services, in order to make informed choices and best manage media use.

Access and use broadcast and digital media content and services in a safe and secure manner, to maximise opportunities and minimise risks.

Create and participate, via media, in a responsible, ethical and effective manner, in the creative, cultural and democratic aspects of society.

These competencies should enable individuals to identify potentially misleading or inaccurate information and apply this critical mindset to make well-informed decisions, whether in the context of political elections or when exercising their right to share information or freedom of expression. Such competencies should also enable people to check information against a plurality of sources, fostering informed and democratic debates.

Through this policy, the regulator also undertook to facilitate the development of an Irish Media Literacy network (Media Literacy Ireland),[62] and to publish an Annual Work Plan designed to address specific elements of all three competencies. Promoting media literacy and enhancing the understanding, engagement and participation of the public was once again listed as an objective in the BAI's 2021-23 strategy statement[63] and is now part of CNAM's Work Programme objectives from June 2023.[64]

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[60] https://www.bai.ie/en/bai-launches-media-literacy-policy/

[61] Broadcasting Act

[62] https://www.medialiteracyireland.ie/

[63] https://www.bai.ie/en/download/135507/

[64] https://www.cnam.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Coimisiun-na-Mean-Work-Programme-_Web.pdf

3.1.3. Luxembourg

"Digital, quite simply - the competencies of the future for strong children" (*Einfach digital – Zukunftskompetenzen fir staark Kanner)* is an initiative by the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth launched in February 2020. It aims to strengthen a set of technological as well as human and cognitive competencies known as the 5 Cs:

- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Coding

The initiative consists of four main projects, including the launch of a general framework for education about and through media (*Medienkompass*).[65] This framework is based on the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens,[66] and while the original 2020 version already included a large number of competencies to be developed throughout children's education, it was revised in 2022 to include, in particular, data and AI literacy. A total of 15 key media competencies are grouped into five areas of competence and supplemented with descriptions in terms of knowledge, skills and mindset.

Figure 2. *Medienkompass*, **a framework for education about and through media in Luxembourg**

	Areas of competence				
	Information and data	**Communication and collaboration**	**Creating content**	**Data protection and security**	**Digital world**
Key media competencies	Filtering and researching data, information and digital content	Working with others	Creating digital content	Protecting devices	Resolving simple technical problems
	Analysing and assessing data, information and digital content	Sharing and publishing data, information and digital content	Knowing and applying copyright	Personal data and protecting your privacy	Interacting with digital media in a critical, reflective way
	Storing and managing data, information and digital content	Using appropriate forms of expression (Netiquette)	Modelling, structuring and coding		Interacting with the digital world in a socially

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[65] https://www.edumedia.lu/medienkompass/medienkompass/
[66] https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC128415/JRC128415_01.pdf

					responsible way
	Processing data, information and digital content				

Once more, by emphasising these competencies, the Luxembourg government aims to empower users, particularly the younger generation, to understand and engage with a range of rights, responsibilities and obligations as citizens of democratic societies, encompassing aspects such as copyright and data protection.

3.1.4. North Macedonia

Following the expiry of the Program for Promoting Media Literacy in the Republic of Macedonia[67] for the period 2016 - 2018, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (*Агенција за аудио и аудиовизуелни медиумски услуги*), the national regulatory authority, published a media literacy policy[68] in March 2019. It aims to illustrate the way forward and was prepared within the framework of the joint EU-CoE project "Reinforcing Judicial Expertise on Freedom of Expression and the Media in South-East Europe" (JUFREX). With this policy, the objective pursued by the Agency is namely to "empower people of different classes, age and segments (old people, adults, children, young women etc.) and acting in different capacities and contexts (consumers, voters, citizens and so on) to benefit from the media environment they live in".

The new policy outlines in particular the competencies that are to guide the Agency's initiatives in promoting the skills and attitudes that will contribute to, and shape, the promotion of media literacy. According to the policy, media literacy is not "just a set of skills to acquire, but also a number of deeper personal attitudes and approaches". This further reinforces the importance of media literacy and empowering users in cultivating a robust and responsible citizenry. Equipped with the right skills, individuals have the opportunity to foster an engaged society that is mindful of both their own rights and those of others. Moreover, the ability to access and use digital tools is a strong skill that also allows users to exercise their rights digitally, as interactions with government widely transition online.

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[67] https://mediumskapismenost.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Programme_for_Promoting_Media_Literacy.pdf
[68] https://avmu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Media-Literacy-policy_online-version.pdf

Figure 3. Competencies in the North Macedonian media literacy policy

1. Critical consciousness:	Apply quality thinking as a personal attitude and solid values as reading keys
2. Awareness of emotions:	Emotional intelligence, creativity, intuition and mindfulness about one's own online behavior
3. Digital wellness:	Be able to use the technologies safely and confidently
4. Full citizenship:	Learn how to contribute to a better communication welfare

3.2. Funding schemes

The development of media literacy and education can be supported in various ways, in particular through funding schemes. Often funded by governments, non-profit organisations or private entities, media literacy requires in particular the identification of needs (i.e. challenges and gaps in the media landscape) and the setting of objectives to address them. Organisations with an interest in media literacy can apply for such funding to develop programmes, workshops or resources, for example to enhance people's ability to critically analyse and understand media content.

In some cases, funding schemes specifically earmarked for media/digital literacy initiatives can be mandated or required by national legislation. This is particularly the case in the effort to ensure that funding is allocated to important societal needs and to provide a more stable and sustainable financial environment. Such schemes may be apparent in primary legislation (as is the case in Croatia, Germany and Ireland for instance) but may also be addressed to a greater or lesser extent in national strategies and policies (such as in Finland).

3.2.1. Croatia

Article 71(2) of the Electronic Media Act (*Zakon o elektroničkim medijima*)[69] provides that the resources of the Fund for the Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity of Electronic Media shall be allocated to projects, programmes and content of public interest aimed at developing and fostering media literacy programmes.

According to the country's report to the European Commission,[70] the only source of regular annual funding for media literacy projects comes from the national regulatory

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[69] Electronic Media Act, https://www.zakon.hr/z/196/Zakon-o-elektroni%C4%8Dkim-medijima
[70] https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/96037

authority, the Agency for Electronic Media (*Agencija za elektronicke medije*, AEM). Since 2015, the AEM has launched an annual public call for tender to co-finance media literacy projects for universities, institutes, educational institutions, NGO associations and other legal entities that develop and implement projects related to media literacy (e.g. educational materials, seminars, workshops, conferences, lectures or surveys). In addition, under Article 81 of the Electronic Media Act, unused funds from the AEM may be used for media literacy projects.

In addition to this regular annual project, funding can also come from individual government agencies on a more occasional basis, including the Ministry of Labour, the pension system agency, and the agency for family and social policy, which supports the implementation of two projects: *Prevention, not Intervention!* and *Growing Up Without (E)Violence - Every Child's Right*. The Ministry of Science and Education co-financed the implementation of two other projects: *I'm Part of the World of Media* and *Beauty Ideals on Social Network Sites*.

3.2.2. Finland

"Media Literacy in Finland", the National Media Education Policy published by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2019,[71] reports that the lack of resources (financial, human, time, material etc.) often inhibits the implementation of media education. This can however be countered by allocating more funds. In Finland, media education has received public and private funding for a long time.

General grants can be provided to organisations involved in youth work at a national level, including key media education organisations, such as the Finnish Society on Media Education. Grants are allocated to national projects that strengthen media education and critical media literacy for citizens of all ages and special groups (e.g. immigrants, people with special needs or at risk of exclusion). Special grants can be awarded to media education projects conducted by municipalities and communities.

Libraries also play a key role in promoting citizens' media competences, and library development funds have also been allocated to media education projects and training.

The "New Literacies" programme developed by KAVI and run between 2020 and 2023 was awarded EUR 13 million by the Ministry of Education and Culture. It aimed at strengthening media literacy, digital competence and programming skills of children and young people in early childhood education and care and in pre-primary and basic education. The funding was divided in two different categories: project funds for administrative agencies and special grants for municipalities or other educational service providers.

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[71] https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162065/OKM_2019_39.pdf

In 2021, a report by KAVI however stressed that funding instruments similar to those for media education for children and young people have not been available for adult media education.[72]

3.2.3. Germany

In Germany, Article 112(1) of the Interstate Treaty on Broadcasting and Telemedia (*Medienstaatsvertrag*)[73] provides that funds from the share specified in Article 10 of the Interstate Treaty on Broadcasting Funding may be used, on the basis of special authorisations granted by the state legislator, for projects promoting media literacy.

Federal programmes, projects and initiatives on media literacy and online safety therefore receive funding from, *inter alia*, the budget of the Child and Youth Plan of the federation or the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection (*Verbraucherschutzministerium*). By contrast, the projects of the state media authorities (*Landesmedienanstalten*) are funded by federal state budgets or TV/radio licence fees (*GEZ-Gebühren*).[74] The organisation and financing however vary so much from *Land* to *Land* that it is not possible to determine a standardised figure in terms of media literacy funding.

3.2.4. Sweden

According to Sweden's national report on measures for supporting media and information literacy to the European Commission as required by Article 33a(2) AVMSD,[75] there is currently no state support specifically dedicated to media information literacy measures. Funding is arranged primarily through the concerned authorities' activities and measures – some of which are financed through special funds connected to government assignments. In 2021, the Swedish Media Council (*Statens medieråd*) conducted a largescale mapping exercise of national measures pursued for the development and promotion of MIL in Sweden. The study found that 70% of these measures were financed by the media literacy stakeholders themselves, through their own funds or grants, and approximately 20% through specific project funds. While a small number of measures were financed by participant fees or external contributions, the majority of activities conducted by MIL actors are financed through public funds, although MIL is not their main purpose.

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[72] https://medialukutaitosuomessa.fi/medialiteracysummary.pdf
[73] https://www.die-medienanstalten.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Rechtsgrundlagen/Gesetze_Staatsvertraege/Medienstaatsvertrag_MStV.pdf
[74] 6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media (europa.eu)
[75] https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/96052

3.3. Promoting media literacy

Under the terms of Article 33a AVMSD, media literacy needs to be promoted in order to make users aware of the risks posed by the media and to give them the opportunity and competences to face these challenges. While the term promotion can refer to the support and encouragement of media literacy, it can also refer more specifically to the actions taken to advertise and raise public awareness of media literacy initiatives.[76] Ensuring visibility, generating interest and reaching audiences effectively is indeed crucial. Media literacy can therefore be promoted at different levels and by different means.

Figure 4.   How to promote media literacy

Who?	How?
Government	Campaigns (community engagements, events, workshops)
NRAs	Educational outreach
Industry	Partnerships with online platforms and media outlets / involvement of influencers
Dedicated bodies	
	Multilingual resources

This section provides examples of how the promotion of media literacy has been addressed in the primary and/or secondary legislation of a set of countries, what measures, requirements or initiatives are envisaged and to whom they apply. Promoting media literacy can be achieved either individually or through co-operation between different actors of the media landscape.

3.3.1. Obligations on national regulatory authorities

In many countries, the responsibility of promoting media literacy initiatives falls upon the existing national media regulatory bodies. Their supervision of the audiovisual media landscape plays a crucial role in effectively addressing this issue and enables a robust, extensive, and official outreach. Latvia, Austria and Croatia provide examples of how regulators can achieve this goal.

In **Austria**, Article 20a of the KommAustria Act (*Bundesrecht konsolidiert: Gesamte Rechtsvorschrift für KommAustria-Gesetz*)[77] also provides that RTR-GmbH is responsible for providing a wide range of information on media literacy in the digital age and must act as a service centre for initiatives in that field. The NRA must also operate an information

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[76] According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the noun promotion is defined as "the act of encouraging something to happen or develop" or "activities to advertise something"

[77] Federal Act on the establishment of an Austrian Communication Authority (KommAustria Act, KOG), https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20001213

portal on projects and initiatives, in particular initiatives for the promotion of media literacy that receive public funding.

In **Croatia** as well, the Council for Electronic Media must promote programmes aimed at the development of knowledge and media literacy skills, as foreseen in Article 19 (1) of the Electronic Media Act (*Zakon o elektroničkim medijima*).[78] In 2018, the Croatian regulator (AEM) set up the "Media Literacy Days" to create a platform to promote and organise media literacy projects, now one of the most important ML events in Croatia. In 2021, there were more than 266 events (lectures, workshops, debates and other activities) in 115 cities across Croatia, with more than 16 000 participants.[79]

While the **Latvian** Law on Electronic Mass Media (*Elektronisko plašsaziņas līdzekļu likums*)[80] only requires the National Electronic Mass Media Council to "promote media literacy", the National Strategy for the Development of the Electronic Media Sector for the period 2023-2027[81] provides detailed information on how this objective is to be achieved and the challenges it faces. Media literacy is to be promoted, in particular, through the database "datubaze.neplp.lv", developed by the National Electronic Mass Media Council (*Nacionālā elektronisko plašsaziņas līdzekļu padome* - NEPLP). The 2023-2027 strategy foresees in particular the expansion of its functionalities, and the inclusion of materials from other Baltic countries - in Lithuanian and Estonian - and the translation of the most important materials into Latvian. According to the strategy, the maintenance, regular updating and widespread use of the database will significantly facilitate the exchange of experience in the field of media literacy and allow anyone interested to easily access materials from other countries.

3.3.2. Obligations on media literacy bodies

In some countries, the focus on media literacy has led to the creation of new bodies specifically dedicated to this field. These institutions are not necessarily that recent and, in some cases, have already existed for several decades.

Belgium is a good example in this regard, as all three Communities have indeed set up such bodies.

The High Council for Media Education[82] was set up in the **French-speaking Community** as early as 2008.

In **Flanders**, the Flemish Knowledge Centre for Digital and Media Literacy (*Mediawijs*),[83] was established a few years later, in 2013. It was initiated and funded by the Flemish Minister for Media and aims to provide the Flemish Community with the

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[78] Electronic Media Act

[79] https://edmo.eu/resources/repositories/mapping-the-media-literacy-sector/croatia/

[80] Electronic Mass Media Law

[81] National strategy for the development of the electronic media sector 2023-2027

[82] https://www.csem.be/

[83] https://www.mediawijs.be/en

necessary information and material "to use and understand digital technology and media actively, creatively, critically and consciously to participate in the digital society".

For the **German-speaking community**, a dedicated media centre (*Medienzentrum Ostbelgien*)[84] aims to promote what it describes as "media competence" and offers media education activities targeted at all age groups.

3.3.3. Obligations on VSPs

The obligation to raise users' awareness of media literacy measures and tools developed by VSPs has very seldom been addressed in primary law. A few exceptions however go beyond the wording of the AVMSD, including Austria, Belgium and Poland.

In **Austria**, VSP providers must, in order to raise users' awareness and improve media literacy, provide simple and directly available services - or their own services - permanently on their website, or at least refer to the information portal provided by RTR-GmbH and additionally to other relevant services by third parties, with a clearly visible identification and layout on the homepage of the website.

The decree on audiovisual media services and video-sharing services (*Décret relatif aux services de medias audiovisuels et aux services de partage de vidéos*)[85] of the **French-speaking Community of Belgium** specifies, in Art. 2.5-2 paragraph 2 (6), that, in addition to taking media literacy measures and raising users' awareness of those measures, VSP providers must ensure that such measures are transparent, user-friendly, and efficient.

The **Polish** Broadcasting Act (*Ustawa o radiofonii i telewizji*)[86] also provides, in Article 47w, that VSP providers must promote media literacy among their users by raising awareness of the rights and obligations of VSP users and providers.

3.3.4. Co-operation between actors of the media landscape

While promotion activities can be carried out independently by different actors, such as national regulatory authorities, other national institutions, the industry or educational organisations, they can also be addressed as part of collaborative projects. The national legal frameworks of certain countries require cooperation between these actors in order to achieve the desired objectives.

In **Cyprus**, Article 18D of the Broadcasting Corporation Act (*Ο περί Ραδιοφωνικού Ιδρύματος Κύπρου Νόμος*)[87] provides that the promotion and development of measures for media literacy skills must be undertaken by the Corporation, in cooperation with the Radio

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[84] https://ostbelgienmedien.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-4434/7886_read-44477/

[85] Decree on audiovisual media services and video-sharing services - 4 February 2021,

[86] Broadcasting Act

[87] The Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation Act

Television Authority (*Αρχή Ραδιοτηλεόρασης Κύπρου*). The Corporation must participate in the media literacy actions coordinated by the national regulatory authority, in particular with regard to disseminating clear and user-friendly information among citizens and supporting awareness-raising campaigns on, *inter alia*, how information and creative content is produced, promoted and distributed in the digital environment, the responsible use of the internet in general, as well as how search engines work and their optimal use.

In **France**, the Ministry for National Education and Youth, the National Regulatory Authority (Arcom) and the "réseau CANOPÉ", in particular the Centre for Media and Information Education (CLEMI), signed a partnership agreement[88] in January 2023. The agreement was designed to strengthen cooperation between the ministry, the CLEMI and the regulator in the field of education in the media, information and digital citizenship. Through this engagement, the ministry recalled in particular its implication in media literacy by giving space for it in compulsory and high school curricula and through educational initiatives aimed at developing students' information habits and critical thinking skills, while at the same time teaching them how to use information and the digital world in a responsible and civic-minded way. As per the agreement, the parties decided to cooperate in various fields, notably to support the actions taken by one another, engage together in developing media literacy educational initiatives and sharing experience.

This was followed by another partnership agreement[89] signed in March 2023, between CELSA Sorbonne University and Arcom. As part of its engagements, Arcom commits in particular to present the educational teams with resources available on its areas of expertise, to organise trainings for students and to participate in occasional educational events.

A further agreement[90] was signed in January 2024 between Arcom and ARTE. ARTE Education, a subsidiary of the European cultural channel ARTE, will work with Arcom to promote media and information literacy as well as digital citizenship, by offering new educational resources on the platform Educ'ARTE, specially designed for French-speaking secondary schools.

With NGOs, universities and higher education institutions playing an important role in the **Latvian** landscape, the national strategy for 2023-2027 further emphasises the importance of promoting the acquisition of media literacy skills in all age groups in the formal education system. The role of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Culture in the field of media literacy is also highlighted, and active cooperation with these ministries should be promoted in order to strengthen the implementation of media literacy policies at all levels.

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[88] Convention de partenariat du 17 janvier 2023 entre le ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la Jeunesse et l'Arcom dans le domaine de l'éducation aux médias, à l'information et à la citoyenneté numérique

[89] Convention entre le CELSA Sorbonne Université et l'Arcom dans le domaine de l'éducation aux médias, à l'information et à la citoyenneté numérique

[90] ARTE Education et l'Arcom signent un partenariat et s'engagent conjointement pour l'Education aux médias, à l'information et à la citoyenneté numérique

4. The importance of evaluation

Media literacy may vary according to the national media landscape and cultural or political context. For example, in countries with high levels of political polarisation, of control or censorship, critical thinking, fact-checking and the ability to navigate through bias or sensational content may be more important than elsewhere. It is therefore essential to tailor media literacy initiatives to the specific needs of a nation. This ensures that the skills acquired are relevant and effective in that particular environment. In this scenario, the implementation of a comprehensive evaluation framework becomes essential to ensure proper impact on the existing media landscape and to assess the levels of success of the initiatives implemented. Evaluation can occur at various stages: prior to, during, and following the creation and execution of media literacy programs.

Assessment can help to:

- Evaluate the current media offering and media consumption environment
- Identify challenges and areas for improvement
- Define clear objectives
- Determine the technical and financial means to address them
- Assess their impact once implemented

While no supranational legal framework concretely requires such an evaluation process, some countries have nevertheless addressed the issue in primary or secondary legislation, with some countries, such as Latvia, Slovakia and Poland, requiring an upstream evaluation to assess the state of the media environment or the level of media literacy, or requiring recommendations on how to evaluate activities or initiatives (such as the UK). In other cases, including Lithuania, there is a requirement to evaluate the implementation of media literacy activities and their impact.

4.1. Requirements under national legislation

In **Lithuania**, the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public (*Lietuvos Respublikos visuomenės informavimo įstatymas*)[91] requires the authority authorised by the Government

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[91] Article 45 - 2. (4) of the Law No I-1418 on the Provision of Information to the Public of the Republic of Lithuania

in the field of public information, in cooperation with other organisations, to periodically evaluate the implementation of media literacy activities and their impact on the public.

In **Poland**, Article 6-2(14) of the Broadcasting Act (*Ustawa o radiofonii i telewizji*)[92] stipulates that the tasks of the National Broadcasting Council, the national regulatory authority, include the examination and evaluation of the state of media education, including the evaluation of the actions of media service providers and VSP providers in this area.

The **Slovakian** Law on media services and on amending and supplementing certain laws (*Zakon o mediálnych službách a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov*)[93] requires an evaluation process upstream, to assess the state of the media environment, rather than an evaluation of the measures taken and of their impact. Article 110(3)g) provides in particular that the competences of the national regulatory authority include initiating and performing media research and analytical activities in order to monitor and evaluate the state of the media environment, including of media literacy.

In the **UK**, the regulator OFCOM is tasked in particular with the elaboration of a media literacy statement as part of its annual report to the Secretary of State, the Scottish Ministers and the Welsh Ministers and the Minister for the Economy in Northern Ireland (paragraph 12 of the Schedule to the Office of Communications Act 2002).[94] OFCOM must draw up, and from time-to-time review and revise, a statement recommending ways in which others, including providers of regulated services, might develop, pursue and evaluate activities or initiatives relevant to media literacy in relation to regulated services. The statement focuses more specifically on summarising what has been done in the financial year to which the report relates (a year ending with 31 March) in the exercise of OFCOM's duties to promote media literacy, and on assessing what progress has been made towards achieving the objectives and priorities set out in the year's media literacy strategy (Article 11 (AD) and 11A (6) to (8) Communications Act).[95]

Such an evaluation obligation may also result from secondary legislation, as is the case in **Latvia**. The National Strategy for the Development of the Electronic Media Sector 2023-2027 (*Elektronisko plašsaziņas līdzekļu nozares attīstības nacionālā stratēģija* 2023.-2027.)[96] stipulates in section [A-3-4] that in order to ensure the implementation of data-based media literacy activities, including if funding is provided, a survey of the level of media literacy in society, including both qualitative and quantitative parts, should be carried out at least every two years. This survey should use the methodology developed by the Expert Working Group in 2022. Once the study has been conducted and the results have been compiled, they must be presented to the stakeholders and used to determine the next steps to be taken to promote media literacy.

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[92] Broadcasting Act
[93] Law of 22 June 2022 on media services and on amending and supplementing certain laws
[94] Office of Communications Act 2002
[95] Communications Act 2003
[96] National strategy for the development of the electronic media sector 2023-2027

4.2. Practical implementation

As one of the measures taken under the Communications Act, the **UK** regulator, Ofcom, published a toolkit for evaluating media literacy interventions[97] in February 2023, revised in November 2023. The aim of this toolkit is to provide guidance to those delivering digital literacy interventions to evaluate their own projects and share their findings with others to help make future projects more effective. The toolkit highlights three key stages: preparing, doing, and learning and sharing. Ofcom highlights the importance of sharing the information gathered through the evaluation process to contribute to the enhancement of future media literacy initiatives by providing valuable insights.

Definitions and fictional examples illustrate the situations and concepts described, and links to other reports, articles and tools are provided. The toolkit is also accompanied by two online, searchable libraries of media literacy initiatives and media literacy research.[98]

In **Flanders**, the Flemish Knowledge Centre for Digital and Media Literacy *Mediawijs* has been working with several partners since 2015 to measure media literacy in Flanders. Together, they investigate the status of media use and media habits among citizens through (bi)annual research monitors. The Center has also worked on elaborating a "Media Literacy Competency Model".[99] This project serves as a useful tool for evaluation matters. It provides in particular guidance for the development of new projects and tools.

Mediawijs compares the circular visual below to a pizza: like a pizza, media literacy initiatives will differ from person to person, depending on their preferences and situation. This model can therefore be used as a starting point to formulate a framework for achieving one's objectives effectively and efficiently depending on the medium, target group and context. Depending on the objectives pursued, projects will focus on different (sub)competences. A "learning curve"[100] was derived from the Media Literacy Competency Model, which shows what skills and knowledge children should ideally have mastered by what age.

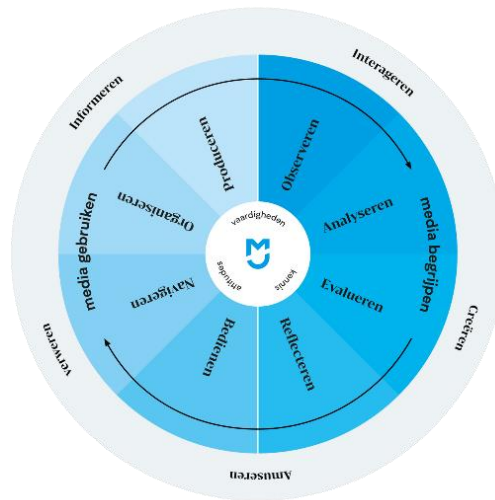[97] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/approach/evaluate/toolkit
[98] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/toolkit/initiatives-library and
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/toolkit/research-library
[99] https://www.mediawijs.be/en/competentiemodel
[100] https://www.mediawijs.be/en/node/300

Figure 5.   The Media Literacy Competency Model

Source: Mediawijs, The Media Literacy Competency Model

Figure 6.   Zoom on the media literacy competency model

The Media Literacy Competency Model				
MEDIA GOALS				
Informing	Interacting	Creating	Entertaining	Defending
COMPETENCY CLUSTERS				
Using media		Understanding media		
SUB-COMPETENCES				
Operating		Observing		
Navigating		Analysing		
Organising		Evaluating		
Producing		Reflecting		

Source: Mediawijs*, The Media Literacy Competency Model*

The Competency Model can also be used to measure the impact of media literacy projects and tools. It is the basis of the Betternet Impact Wizard,[101] a tool to help measure the effectiveness of an initiative.

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[101] At the time of writing the Better Impact Wizard tool was not accessible.

5. Empowering the most vulnerable users with critical thinking skills

Critical thinking has always been the cornerstone of media literacy. When faced with a constant and overwhelming flow of information, the key is to be able to critically engage with and understand it.

While every group of the population is a target for the development of critical thinking skills, tackling the problem at its roots is fundamental. Helping young people develop the skills they need to critically evaluate the mass of information they will encounter throughout their lives is crucial. To ensure this, critical and responsible media providers and users must be trained. Since users can now also take on the role of creator and information/content provider, it is all the more important to empower them with the adequate skills. Critical thinking therefore also comes with a sense of responsibility. But although media literacy and disinformation have indeed traditionally been discussed from the angle of minors, a target group easily reachable through formal education, attention is slowly shifting towards another vulnerable group. With the expansion of digital sources, older individuals are increasingly required to engage with online media, considering in particular that they consume a lot of information and are concerned about news and current affairs.[102] A primary focus is often put on digital literacy, so as to equip the elderly with the necessary skills to navigate digital tools, access government websites, and engage with various online media sources. However, beyond basic digital skills, the elderly may also face heightened risks in terms of mis- and disinformation, due to a lack of critical evaluation and discernment on their part when encountering information on the internet. The risks faced by older people also stem from their consumption habits, which are rooted in a profound reliance on traditional media formats such as newspapers, radio and television. Unlearning and re-learning is therefore primordial at older ages.

5.1. Critical thinking skills

Critical thinking is therefore a key component for understanding and navigating media content safely and securely. It also allows the fostering of a more discerning and informed and resilient citizenry. More specifically, developing such a skill gives users the ability to:

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[102] Media Literacy for Senior Citizens in Spain, https://media-and-learning.eu/subject/media-literacy/media-literacy-for-senior-citizens-in-spain/

- Recognise different types of media content and evaluate content for truthfulness, reliability and value for money;
- Form independent opinions;
- Question the motivations of content producers in order to make informed choices about content selection and use.

In particular, critical evaluation of media content and information should enable users to identify bias, manipulative tactics, (hidden) audiovisual commercial communication (ACC), misinformation, and disinformation, and to distinguish between fact and opinion. As minors and young users in general consume more and more media content at an ever younger age, they are increasingly confronted with such challenges. It is therefore essential to ensure that they are empowered to recognise and understand the risks posed by (online) media. Numerous initiatives have been taken at national level to address these issues and give young users the ability to deal with them. According to the fourth edition of the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) Policy Map[103] published in May 2023, Poland, Spain, Estonia and Slovenia have reported new activities to encourage critical thinking around media industries and evaluate content for truthfulness and reliability in the previous 12 months.

Critical thinking initiatives can be embedded in the early education system, focusing on specific age-appropriate tools and interventions to introduce basic concepts. They can also take the form of interactive learning sessions, with activities that require minors to analyse, question, and create media content. An open environment that encourages discussion and dialogue also plays an important role in equipping users with the necessary skills. The involvement of parents and teachers is an important factor, as they play a key role in educating the younger and the older generations. However, ensuring they are qualified to do so is challenging. Therefore, resources and guidance are being developed to train educators and provide them with the right tools to support children's education.

While media literacy initiatives can be developed in formal education systems, they can also take the form of non-formal education, i.e., all educational activities organised outside the formal school system. In the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles,[104] published in 2023, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission commit to "supporting efforts that allow all learners and teachers to acquire and share the necessary digital skills and competences, including media literacy, and critical thinking, to take an active part in the economy, society, and in democratic processes". The Media and Audiovisual Action Plan[105] published by the European Commission in 2020 further provides that "[m]edia literacy should be integrated in school curricula to enable children to use media services responsibly and to be better equipped

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[103] The Better Internet for Kids (BIK), Policy Map, fourth edition, 2023,
[104] European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles,
https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/94370
[105] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Europe's Media in the Digital Decade: An Action Plan to Support Recovery and Transformation

to face the threats of online violence and disinformation". The Digital Citizenship Education[106] (DCE) project led by the Council of Europe provides a holistic approach to developing the essential skills and knowledge needed in today's connected world, and fostering the values and attitudes that will ensure they are used wisely and meaningfully. It includes media literacy, and more particularly the ability to develop a critical mind, as part of its 10 areas of action. The Council of Europe has also initiated the DCE Promoters Network, an informal network of education professionals, allowing for facilitated implementation of DCE in schools and non-formal and/or informal learning contexts.[107]

5.2. Empowering minors

For years, minors have been a focal point, with the majority of media literacy initiatives directed towards young people. Providing minors with the tools and knowledge to navigate the risks they may face through media is crucial, especially while they are still in the process of learning and being educated about their surroundings.

In March 2024, Better Internet for Kids (BIK), a strategy adopted by the European Commission in 2022,[108] launched the #MediaSmartOnline campaign in Czechia, Ireland and Poland in cooperation with the network of Safer Internet Centres.[109] This five-week phase was a pilot test before the launch of the project across Europe in 2025. The campaign aims at raising awareness about all the media literacy actions and initiatives currently available for children and young people, and those who are working to upskill them (parents and caregivers, teachers and educators).

5.2.1. Addressing critical thinking in formal education systems

The integration of media literacy into formal education ensures a structured and comprehensive approach to developing essential skills at all ages. By integrating media literacy into their curricula, schools and universities ensure that media literacy is systematically taught and assessed.

In **Denmark**, media and digital literacy are prominent in the formal education system, as they have been included in general and vocational upper secondary education for a number of years. The Strategy for Digital Growth in Denmark for the period 2018 - 2025 envisages the inclusion of media literacy in the curriculum of general upper secondary education. Among the initiatives implemented to support this is the Social

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[106] https://www.coe.int/en/web/digital-citizenship-education/the-concept
[107] https://www.coe.int/en/web/digital-citizenship-education/promoters
[108] https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/
[109] https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/mediasmartonline

Star[110] platform, which provides educational material for children and young people between the ages of 13 and 17. According to EDMO's report on media literacy in Denmark,[111] Social Star teaches them to navigate online and to take a critical stance towards social media, hidden advertising and product placement among influencers on YouTube through a variety of activities.

In **France**, the CLEMI[112] is responsible for media and information literacy in the French education system. Its tasks include the production and distribution of resources to support initiatives with pupils, from nursery school to secondary school, with the aim of teaching them how to use the media responsibly in order to develop a critical mind, whatever the information or communication medium used (written press, audiovisual, Internet, social networks).

According to EDMO's country page on media literacy in the French landscape,[113] the CLEMI's approach is more skills-based than tool-based, and aims to give children the skills to question and verify the information they have been exposed to. The "Press and Media in Schools Week" is organised annually by the CLEMI. The aim of the initiative is to help pupils from nursery school to secondary school to understand and decipher the world of the media, to learn how to verify sources and information, to develop a taste for current affairs and to forge their identity as citizens. The 35th edition took place from 18 to 23 March 2024 under the theme "News on all fronts". Understanding how information is produced is crucial for students to be able to think critically about the flow of information to which they are exposed.

The CLEMI's projects also include, in particular, critical thinking workshops (*Ateliers Déclic'Critique*) that illustrate concrete cases of media and information literacy to help teachers, and games (such as *Qu'est-ce que tu fabriques ?*) that teach students to distinguish between advertising and information.

In **North Macedonia**, media literacy is as such not incorporated in any of the official education programmes. Yet, the Education Strategy and Action Plan for 2018 - 2025[114] targets in particular the "development of generic and core competencies of pupils (and all learners), in order for them to develop into critical thinkers, active and relevant participants in social life". One of its priorities notably consists in improving the content of primary education, and more particularly "developing key and generic competencies such as the pupils' abilities for critical thinking and problem solving, respect for diversity and multiculturalism, and acquiring democratic values and skills".

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[110] https://portals.clio.me/dk/dansk/7-10/forloeb/show-unitplan/?unit_plan=f32bc5f5-19d1-4721-a501-f27030504680&is_preview=1

[111] https://edmo.eu/resources/repositories/mapping-the-media-literacy-sector/denmark/

[112] https://www.clemi.fr/

[113] https://edmo.eu/resources/repositories/mapping-the-media-literacy-sector/france/

[114] Education Strategy and Action Plan for 2018 - 2025

5.2.2. Addressing critical thinking in non-formal education

Implementing media literacy in non-formal education allows the reaching of a wider population, across different socio-demographic groups.[115] Non-formal education also allows for more flexible approaches in quickly responding to emerging media trends and addressing the specific needs and interests of learners, and encourages individuals to continue developing their media literacy skills beyond formal education. However, the implementation of media literacy and the attempt to equip users with the appropriate skills to use the media can also pose a number of challenges. According to the EDMO country report on media literacy in Czechia, there are particular concerns among educational or media organisations, NGOs and the public sector. The following provides examples of non-formal education projects in Ireland and Luxembourg.

In **Ireland**, the 2022 Pluralism Monitor country report[116] specifically pointed to the fact that the risks associated with media literacy had declined compared to 2020, notably due to the progress achieved in non-formal media literacy education. Such initiatives are mainly driven by the BAI (now *Coimisiún na Meán*)-funded project: Media Literacy Ireland[117] (MLI), an informal alliance of organisations and individuals working together on a voluntary basis to promote media literacy in Ireland. The 2023 country report notes, though, that "[m]uch more needs to be done, however, specifically with regard to mainstreaming critical media literacy as a life-long-learning skill and with regard to the emergence of identity-targeting hate speech".[118]

MLI notably supported the Be Media Smart campaign,[119] which aims to raise awareness of the importance of knowing how to verify information, provides tips and guidance on how to check the accuracy and reliability of information, and directs people to additional sources of support and training. It is supported by a wide range of members including media, civil society organisations, libraries, and educational, training and research institutions. In October 2023, it launched the "Stop/Think/Check" campaign,[120] with the aim to encourage people to reflect on the information they encounter, check its source, accuracy and reliability and thereby reduce the impact of misinformation and disinformation.

Stop/Think/Check offers in particular the following features:

- Tips to help judge whether information is accurate and reliable;
- Information about free online and community-based training;
- Exchange opportunities with Be Media Smart experts.

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[115] https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/74708/MPM2022-TheCzechRepublic-EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

[116] https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/74693

[117] https://www.medialiteracyireland.ie/

[118] https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/75726

[119] https://www.bemediasmart.ie/

[120] https://www.bemediasmart.ie/

The campaign was largely disseminated across all media (TV, radio and in news publications across communities, and commercial, public service and social media – in Irish and English) in October and November 2023.

In **Norway**, the regulatory body Medietilsynet introduced a comparable initiative, "Stop. Think. Check." (Stopp. Tenk. Sjekk.) emphasising the significance of critically evaluating information before sharing it, amidst the prevalence of fake news and misinformation.[121] This campaign enables individuals to assess their own abilities in identifying fake news with a test and provides guidance through six essential questions:

- ■ Does the story evoke strong feelings? (Stop)
- ■ Does the story seem unlikely? (Stop)
- ■ Do you believe the photo? (Think)
- ■ Is the story trying to influence you? (Think)
- ■ Has the story been published elsewhere? (Check)
- ■ Who is behind the story? (Check)

In **Luxembourg**, the National Youth Service, (SNJ) acts in the field of non-formal education, providing young people with activities designed to be complementary to school programmes and helping them become responsible, active and critical citizens. Among its five fields of actions, it notably addresses challenges related to the media and the reality behind audio-visual images and the risks of manipulation. In 2021, the SNJ published the National Reference Framework on Non-Formal Education for Children and Young People,[122] which describes how and in what areas educational programmes can be promoted. Media literacy is foreseen under the field of action "language, communication and media" and is addressed in the context of early childhood, school-age children and youth. The framework sets a range of objectives and pedagogical principles for childcare and education services, mini-care centres, parent assistants and youth services.

Among the initiatives developed in the Luxembourg landscape is also BEE SECURE. The project was initiated by the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Family, Integration and the Greater Region and operated by the SNJ and the consulting service *Kanner-JugendTelefon* (KJT), in partnership with the Luxembourg House of Cybersecurity, the Luxembourg Police and the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. BEE SECURE aims to raise awareness among the general public about the safe and responsible use of digital technology and to empower children, young people and those around them (parents, teachers, educators and others). BEE SECURE's 2023 activity report[123] notes in particular that the BEE SECURE trainings "aim above all to promote and support critical thinking regarding Internet-related content and practices. This is essential for good risk management in information and communication technology (ICT) usage." In addition to a relatively high number of training sessions provided in

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[121] https://www.medietilsynet.no/digitale-medier/kritisk-medieforstaelse/stop-think-check-en/
[122] Cadre de référence sur l'éducation non formelle des enfants et des jeunes, Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse et Service national de la jeunesse
[123] 2023 annual activity report

formal education, BEE SECURE ensures training in non-formal education systems, such as after-school day care institutions or youth centers.

5.3. Empowering the elderly

While there has been a shift in the targets of media literacy initiatives in recent years, several studies have however shown that older people are not the primary target group, and in fact are only a minority.[124] The 2020 ERGA report stated that "one of the biggest challenges,(...) is the question of how to reach the widest possible range of target groups in society, especially elderly people".[125] More recently, in 2023, the Council of Europe emphasised once more that "until recently, little effort ha[d] been made to strengthen that knowledge and skills among the older generations". A shift of mindset was however noted following the COVID-19 pandemic and the realisation that digital media competencies are necessary for all generations.[126] In March 2024, *Deutsche Welle Akademie* reported that, after conducting a review of available studies on MIL for adults over 60, it found that not many studies looked at media literacy for older people, that the focus of many initiatives for older people was on digital media literacy rather than on media literacy in general, and that most of the studies so far were limited to countries in the Global North.[127]

Although still scarce, media literacy initiatives empowering the elderly with critical thinking skills to counter disinformation and therefore allow for a good use of their rights to freedom of expression and freedom to receive and impart information are nevertheless developing at national level, such as in Czechia and Spain, and in the framework of cooperation projects.

5.3.1. Czechia

In the past few years, Czechia has worked on developing and promoting media literacy initiatives targeting in particular the most vulnerable groups: the young and the elderly.

The Medgram project,[128] "Media Literacy: Interactive and Accessible to All", was developed in 2023. It targets in particular seniors aged 65 and over and consists of interactive open online courses (MOOCs) specifically tailored for them. The project was supported by Norway Grants[129] and involved the participation of two Czech universities

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[124] https://rm.coe.int/digital-literacy-for-seniors-print/1680a6ce9e
[125] ERGA (2021), *Improving Media Literacy campaigns on disinformation*
[126] https://rm.coe.int/digital-literacy-for-seniors-print/1680a6ce9e
[127] Digital Media and Information Literacy for adults over 60: Five insights for media development, Rose Kimani, 13 March 2024, https://akademie.dw.com/en/digital-media-and-information-literacy-for-adults-over-60-five-insights-for-media-development/a-68470820
[128] https://medgram.cz/
[129] https://eeagrants.org/about-us

and one Norwegian. The course covers six core themes: Introduction, Traditional and New Media, Misinformation, Critical Thinking Development, Manipulative Techniques, and Social Media Behaviour. Each module includes video and text. The videos feature high school students and senior citizens and present their generation's take on media literacy. The MOOC is in particular part of the Virtual University of the Third Age[130] (VU3V) course at the Faculty of Economics and Management at the Czech University of Life Sciences Prague. This programme provides people at a later age with general, leisure and non-professional education at university level. Media literacy for seniors has also been taken up by other actors of the Czech media and educational landscape. Since April 2023, Transitions,[131] an organisation dedicated to fostering independent and professional investigative journalism and Elpida,[132] a leader in senior education, have been collaborating to promote media literacy among seniors and to boost resilience against manipulative and misinformation tactics. The project aims to provide seniors with the skills to withstand those who exploit fear and misinformation, fostering self-assurance over fear, uncertainty, and stereotypes. The education modules are designed to be adaptable for local entities such as libraries and clubs. Seniors can test their resistance to misinformation through five online courses,[133] provided in Czech and Slovak, but offline meetings are also organised in Elpida's regional institutions in Czechia. The project is being carried out with the support of Google.[134]

5.3.2. Spain

The course "How to detect false information online",[135] specifically targeted at adults over 50 years of age, was launched in Spain in April 2022. Developed by Poynter-MediaWise, Newtral and Universidad de Navarra, with the support of Meta, the programme provided free five-minute courses per day over 10 days via Whatsapp for smartphone owners. The course aimed at answering two questions:

- Can a course designed for the over-50 age group increase their ability to detect fake news?
- Can this training contribute to the degree of security with which this audience consumes online information?

Research[136] conducted by the University of Navarra for Poynter/MediaWise, with Meta's support, which measured the effectiveness of the course, reported in particular that "[e]lderly people, generally more mature and with a built critical thinking, frequently lack knowledge or abilities to select and weigh all the information the Internet provides. This

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[130] https://katedry.czu.cz/en/sis/e-senior-vuvc

[131] https://tol.org/

[132] https://www.elpida.cz/english

[133] https://www.faktjokurz.cz/en

[134] Navigating the Media Maze: Empowering Seniors with Media Literacy

[135] Sádaba, Charo; Salaverría, Ramón; Bringué-Sala, Xavier (2023). "How to teach the elderly to detect disinformation: a training experiment with WhatsApp", *Profesional de la información,* v. 32, n. 5, e320504,

[136] Measuring the effectiveness of a WhatsApp course against disinformation for the elderly in Spain

is especially relevant when that information arrives through second-generation networks like WhatsApp".

To test the efficacy of the course on the improvement of digital skills, surveys were sent out to two groups of people: one that had followed the course (experimental group) and one that had not. The surveys were sent in two waves, before taking the course and afterwards and addressed in particular the respondents' ability to identify if news' headlines were true or false. In general, the assessment showed that following at least five out of the 10 course sessions had had a positive impact in this regard, although identifying true headlines seemed easier than identifying false ones. The results stemming from the surveys sent to the group of respondents that had not participated in the training courses showed an unequal knowledge of some components that can help strengthen digital skills, including of terms such as "wiki", "phishing", "spyware", "advanced search" or "preference settings" and more advanced ones. By contrast, the experimental group had significantly improved its knowledge and understanding of some of these terms after completion of the course. The report however stressed that despite positive results only a small sample of respondents fully completed the course and that different formats that are more user-friendly for this age group could be considered.

5.3.3. Co-operation between Ireland, Italy, North Macedonia and Slovakia

From September 2022 to August 2024, Ireland, Italy, North Macedonia and Slovakia are cooperating under the Erasmus+ Programme to develop a new media literacy project targeted at adults and seniors, and more particularly seniors in rural areas. Coordinated by New Horizons, a non-profit organization located in Italy and dedicated to promoting social development and cultural preservation for the local territory, DIsinformation of SEniors in Rural Areas (DISERA)[137] is aimed at improving the media literacy of rural adults and seniors (35 years or older) in those four countries. According to DISERA, rural areas "represent almost 30% of the EU population and 80% of its territory, show a declining population and a relatively old demographic structure, poor opportunities on the labor market and access to services, resulting in a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion. Due to their age, economic situation and level of education, people living in rural areas are prone to receive, incubate and spread disinformation".

The main objectives are to educate and help seniors to access, recognise and act on information through awareness-raising activities, capacity-building on basic digital skills and the creation of a European network to promote critical thinking.

Considering the segment of the population targeted, the activities were developed so as to be accessible and inclusive, for example with radio broadcasting courses, trainings in senior centers and cafes. The lessons were developed by EurAV, the Irish

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[137] https://disera.eu/

partner and media expert in this project. Divided into eight lessons, they address the very notion and importance of media literacy, how the media works, the issue of fake news, mis-, dis- and malinformation, the evaluation of news and information credibility, online media and the associated risks, protection against disinformation online, and media literacy and civic engagement.

The content of the course is adapted to each partner organisation's languages so as to be transmitted through local radio programmes in podcast format. The courses and transcripts are also available on the webpage of local municipalities, the EPALE platform and Spotify for the Italian version. The Irish EurAV also made the recordings available in an audiovisual version, although EurAV stressed that "the lessons and discussions that take place afterwards are aimed to be radio-friendly as many of the older target group are more likely to tune in to the radio than watch content online." The lessons are also followed by a panel discussion.[138]

5.4. A new challenge: The education of educators

Parents and educators in general have a responsibility to raise informed, resilient and responsible future generations, both as consumers and as creators. To do this, however, it is necessary to raise awareness among adults themselves so that they have the knowledge and skills to raise and educate medialiterate individuals. To ensure that trainers and educators are able to discuss media- and information-related issues with children and young people, training and educational materials are being developed specifically for parents and educators. This appears to be a new challenge for the media sector as such initiatives require a lot of resources in terms of time, as well as human, material and financial resources. According to the TeaMLit report on findings of initial investigations covering the period from January to June 2023,[139] both pre- and in-service teachers struggle with the dynamic and constantly changing media field, and education in MIL is scarce. Besides, teachers tend to prioritise the use of media to achieve an educational purpose rather than critically approaching MIL. The second edition of this report, covering the period from September 2023 to January 2024, reports that an over-emphasis on use of media and technological solutions in MIL education was observed, although some regions/countries are beginning to put more emphasis on critical thinking. Besides, some of the educational contexts studied showed underfunding and resource limitation, as well as overworked teachers, all of which are significant barriers which need to be addressed in order to integrate MIL education more effectively.

TeaMLit,[140] led by the Media & Learning association, provides guidance, resources and support for teacher trainers in media and information literacy in Europe to directly advance students' abilities to tackle disinformation. In addition to online training modules, a draft version of a repository of existing materials to support teacher education

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[138] https://eurav.eu/?p=134
[139] D2.1 Report on findings of Initial Investigations
[140] https://media-and-learning.eu/project/teamlit/#outputs

is now available. Teaching critical thinking is the first of the top six recommendations for teacher training.

5.4.1. Flanders

"Looking at archives differently" *(Archiefbeelden anders bekeken)*[141] was developed in 2016 by Mediawijs and Meemoo, the Flemish Institute for archives. This project provides online interactive videos to help teachers in particular (both teachers-to-be and those already teaching in classrooms) to take a closer look at videos and images that they might want to share with their students. The tools provided allow them to reflect on what they (do not) see and to question whether the audiovisual content is as objective as it seems. Developing a critical attitude is one of the main objectives of this project.

5.4.2. Georgia

The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, the national regulatory authority (ComCom), and UNICEF joined forces in a collaborative effort to integrate media literacy into formal education. Launched in 2022, the project began with an evaluation of media literacy requirements in Georgia, highlighting a strong interest among teachers in improving their media literacy skills through training sessions, workshops, and webinars. This initiative resulted in the creation of an educational standard for media literacy, a manual, and a training module tailored for teachers. According to UNICEF, approximately 600 high school teachers underwent training as part of this programme.[142]

In the past, ComCom had successfully trained over 900 teachers through the project "Disinformation as a Challenge: Developing Critical Thinking in Schools". The primary goals of this initiative were to increase awareness about the harmful impacts of disinformation, foster media literacy and critical thinking skills, and enhance teachers' abilities to combat disinformation and propaganda.[143]

Since 2018, ComCom's Media Literacy Development Department, along with the Ministry of Education and Science and its affiliated agency, the Teachers Professional Development Centre, have been actively promoting media literacy and raising awareness among students, teachers, and parents. Through a series of projects and activities, their collective efforts aim to safeguard and empower individuals in making well-informed decisions in their digital lives.

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[141] https://www.mediawijs.be/nl/tools/archiefbeelden-anders-bekeken
[142] https://www.unicef.org/georgia/press-releases/results-project-integration-media-literacy-formal-education-presented-ministry
[143] https://media-and-learning.eu/subject/media-literacy/integrating-media-literacy-into-formal-education-georgian-experience/

5.4.3. Ireland

The collaboration between MLI and EDMO Ireland in promoting media literacy led to the creation of a series of webinars and training sessions. Within this initiative, EDMO Ireland developed the "Be Media Smart Workshop in a Box". It consists of "teaching guidelines, slides, and learning resources to empower teachers, librarians and community leaders with the necessary knowledge, tools, techniques, and resources they need to deliver a media literacy workshop in their communities". The training sessions provide guidance on utilising the teaching resources effectively and encourage participants to discuss various media literacy subjects.

MLI and EDMO Ireland also held four webinars on different media literacy topics, such as digital media spaces, how to tackle disinformation, and the work of fact-checkers. One webinar was delivered specifically to secondary teachers who are currently teaching or have an interest in teaching the Digital Media Literacy short course.[144]

5.5. Going further: Media literacy by design

Fostering media literacy among users through formal or informal education, while empowering parents and educators to facilitate this process, is crucial. However, getting to the root of the problem also requires tackling it at its core, by integrating media literacy principles and practices into various facets of audiovisual media services. This approach has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of media content directly.

The UK regulator Ofcom recently directed its attention to this matter as part of its media literacy programme "Making Sense of Media", which addresses both people and platforms, in alignment with its responsibilities outlined in the Online Safety Act (OSA).[145]

After convening an expert working group to gain insights into existing efforts promoting media literacy across various online platforms and the underlying strategies, and conducting in-depth discussions with representatives from Google search, Meta, TikTok, Twitter (now X), and Roblox,[146] Ofcom made the decision to explore how companies of all sizes can design their services to promote and support their users' digital literacy. Current examples of on-platform interventions include labels, overlays, pop-ups, notifications and resources.

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[144] https://www.bemediasmart.ie/be-media-smart-training-gets-underway/

[145] Clause 166 of the OSA provides Ofcom with additional media literacy duties, including drawing up, and from time to time reviewing and revising, "a statement recommending ways in which others, including providers of regulated services, might develop, pursue and evaluate activities or initiatives relevant to media literacy in relation to regulated services".

[146] More information on the outcome of the working group, the discussions led with the platforms and other initiatives can be found in the call for input

Figure 7.   Examples of on-platform interventions
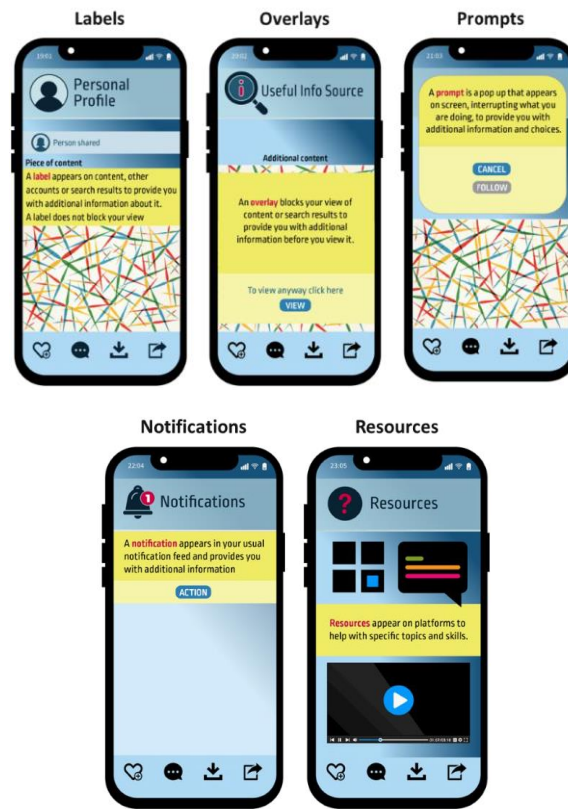
Source: Illustrative mock-ups of in-scope interventions, call for input, Ofcom

With the aim of releasing principles for media literacy by design in June 2024, the UK regulatory body initiated a call for input from October 2023 to January 2024 to enhance its comprehension of good media literacy 'by design' for social media, search engines, video-sharing platforms, and gaming services, and to shape best practice principles. As outlined in the call, this approach necessitates online services to actively engage on their platforms to encourage critical thinking, challenge unwelcome behaviors, and enhance user experiences. The principles should encourage platforms to anticipate user needs, support user choices, allow users to correct errors (thereby providing learning opportunities), and provide feedback to users.

The principles revolve around three main objectives:

- ■ Priority, transparency and accountability
- ■ User-centric design and timely interventions
- ■ Monitoring and evaluating

6. A new focus: AI/algorithm literacy

Critical thinking is widely recognised as the foundational skill essential for developing a media-literate society. The significance of cultivating critical thinking abilities, especially among children and youth, has grown significantly alongside the emergence of new technologies and the increasing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into our daily lives and future prospects. In August 2022, the UN report on "A Future with AI – Voices of Global Youth"[147] already confirmed that AI was being adopted rapidly and eagerly everywhere. Today, AI and its associated algorithms already undeniably influence users' decisions, perspectives, and inclinations, including socially and politically. However, a number of challenges arise from the deployment of AI in the media and therefore require solid critical thinking to ensure that the content and information provided is not taken for granted, and that bias and manipulation are recognised.

Keep in mind:
Computational thinking is the whole thinking process that allows formulation of clear, step-by-step instructions for solving a problem and tell a computer how to do it. **Algorithms** are the specific step-by-step instructions that dictate how a task is to be executed and are provided in the form of a **code**. **AI** uses these algorithms along with training data to make decisions, learn from experiences, and adapt based on new information.

6.1. The risks posed by digital media, algorithms, and AI

While AI brings numerous positive advancements (speed, availability, automation...), it also presents challenges and risks that are still in the process of being addressed and regulated. Although they don't necessarily apply to AI specifically, some already existing legal frameworks, such as the General Data Protection Regulation,[148] are nevertheless relevant to AI.[149] For its part, the Digital Services Act,[150] which is part of the EU's approach

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[147] "A Future with AI – Voices of Global Youth", Final Report, August 2022, United Nations, https://unite.un.org/sites/unite.un.org/files/a_future_with_ai-final_report.pdf

[148] Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC

[149] The impact of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on artificial intelligence, STUDY Panel for the Future of Science and Technology, European Parliamentary Research Service, June 2020,

to regulating digital technologies, specifically addresses algorithmic transparency and accountability requirements for intermediary services. The AI Act[151] will be the first comprehensive legislation on AI.

Concerns surrounding AI include in particular issues related to the creation and dissemination of automated and unverified content and information, based on coding, algorithms and automated learning. Risks can derive from:

- deep fakes
- automated fact-checking
- personalised content recommendation
- predictions
- algorithmic bias (the perpetuation of social inequalities by influencing perceptions including stereotypes built on gender, culture, religion or sexual preferences)
- bubble filters

AI is integrated into various daily services, yet public understanding of and approaches to AI can vary significantly. While the 2022 UN report[152] indicated that 14% of youth lack awareness of AI, a more recent EBU report from October 2023[153] highlights that 57% of European citizens have concerns over the use of AI and just one in five Europeans feel confident in recognising AI-generated content. It is therefore essential to equip both youth and the general population with the skills and competences to critically evaluate information encountered in this context with "algorithms play[ing] a crucial role in the selection, prioritisation, categorisation, and presentation of information and communication".[154]

6.2. How to cope with the risks?

Thirty EBU members responded to a survey for the abovementioned report prepared by the Media Intelligence Service of the European Broadcasting Union and all of the responders reported that media literacy will increase in importance for them in the years ahead and AI was listed as one of the key areas. Education will be crucial to allow the population as a whole to critically engage with AI-driven technologies. The EBU also emphasised that "by fostering a media-literate society, we can ensure AI becomes a force

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[150] Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32022R2065

[151] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/regulatory-framework-ai

[152] "A Future with AI – Voices of Global Youth", Final Report, August 2022, United Nations,

[153] "Public service media – Strengthening media literacy media intelligence service", October 2023,

[154] Dogruel, L. (2021), "What is Algorithm Literacy? A Conceptualization and Challenges Regarding its Empirical

Measurement", In M. Taddicken, & C. Schumann (Eds.), *Algorithms and Communication* (pp. 67-93). Berlin

for informed decision-making and democratic discourse rather than a source of confusion and bad information".[155]

Understanding the fundamental technologies is crucial to empower the younger generation to make informed decisions as consumers of digital media and navigate the dynamic media landscape responsibly. The already mentioned 2022 UN report further noted that the majority of young people (76%) do not understand how AI works. However, AI systems need to be understood to be challenged, assessed and held accountable. This is in particular essential to:

- critically assess the reliability of a tool
- challenge the validity and critically evaluate outcomes produced by AI
- assess the lawfulness of the processing
- anticipate usage limitations of the tool
- build individual resilience[156]

Being algorithm- and data-literate means being empowered to better understand how computers work and how algorithms use AI, and this also requires users to work on their critical evaluation skills.[157] In this regard, individuals should develop the abilities to reflect on the opportunities and risks associated with algorithms and potential effects of algorithmic curation on the individual and societal level. AI must become a force for informed decision-making and democratic discourse.[158] "[A]lgorithm literacy comprises two cognitive dimensions, awareness and knowledge, and the (critical) evaluation of algorithms, and two behavior-related dimensions, addressing individuals' coping behaviors and addressing their abilities regarding creation and design in terms of the use of algorithms".[159]

Initiatives like computer science classes, programming, computational thinking, and other educational efforts are therefore essential in fostering digital/algorithm/AI literacy. However, challenges persist due to limited understanding and training among MIL practitioners, with algorithms often perceived as opaque 'black boxes'. Enhancing transparency is therefore also crucial to enhance explainability.

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[155] https://www.ebu.ch/news/2023/10/navigating-the-digital-frontier--the-impact-of-ai-on-media-literacy
[156] These competences were presented by Ansgar Koene, EY Global AI Ethics and Regulatory Leader, during the EPRA EMIL/AI & regulators roundtable of May 2023. A summary of the event is available.
[157] https://algorithmliteracy.org/
[158] Dogruel, L. (2021), "What is Algorithm Literacy? A Conceptualization and Challenges Regarding its Empirical
Measurement", in M. Taddicken, & C. Schumann (Eds.), *Algorithms and Communication* (pp. 67-93), Berlin
[159] *Ibid*

6.3. A new set of literacies?

Today's rapidly advancing media landscape, and in particular the arrival of digital media, has required the development of new skills and competences. Media literacy, which has traversed multiple phases since its implementation in both formal and non-formal education systems has finally reached the point where, in addition to covering questions about media content and information, it has also had to address the underlying technology used to generate and share such content and information. With this, media literacy covers the whole information-communication chain, from the production system to the users' consumption.[160]

Media literacy has therefore evolved towards other more specific forms of literacies:

- Data literacy
- Algorithm literacy
- AI literacy

In her report for UNESCO, Divina Frau-Meigs highlights, however, that while AI literacy is still in its infancy, all three literacies are nested. She defines the concepts in the following terms: "[c]ritical data literacy focuses on understanding data and tends to concentrate on privacy and consumer protection (Nguyen and Beijnon 2023). Algorithmic literacy focuses on awareness as well as selection, organizations and presentation of content (Droguel, Masur and Joeckel 2022), and posits that 'Algorithmic literacy — a subset of information literacy, is a critical awareness of what algorithms are, how they interact with human behavioral data in information systems, and an understanding of the social and ethical issues related to their use' (Head, Fister and MacMillan 2020). (...) The definition [of AI literacy] most directly akin to MIL posits that [it] is 'a set of competencies that enables people to critically evaluate, communicate and collaborate effectively with AI' (Hargittai et al 2020)."

Divina Frau Meigs further reports that all three literacies can be part of the MIL paradigm as they promote critical thinking about data and foster ethical and social uses of information and AI tools. This is characteristic of MIL as a transliteracy, i.e. an umbrella concept. In addition, although developing a critical approach to AI is essential, this new set of literacies also includes other skills and competences. Although not specifically reflected in this report, these new competences don't only apply to children and young people but to the population as a whole, including editors and journalists.

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[160] User empowerment through media and information literacy responses to the evolution of generative artificial intelligence (GAI), Divina Frau-Meigs, UNESCO, 2024,

Figure 8. **The dimensions and sub-categories of algorithm literacy**
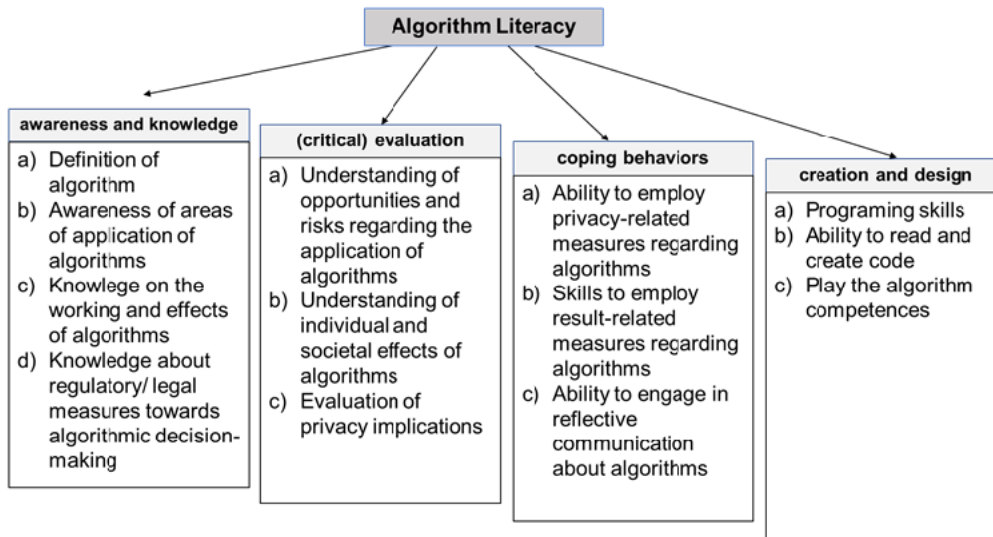
Source: Dogruel, L. (2021), "What is Algorithm Literacy? A Conceptualization and Challenges Regarding its Empirical Measurement"

6.4. Initiatives empowering users with critical thinking for digital media, algorithms, and AI

6.4.1. Belgium and South Korea

"In the Shoes of an Algorithm"[161] is a media education game initiated by researchers of the University of Namur and practitioners from *Action Médias Jeunes*, a media education association working with children and teenagers, to address issues related to recommendation algorithms in particular. The project, which led to the creation of a series of pen-and-paper games, was designed to help teenagers (14 years of age and over) share their daily experiences of recommendation algorithms to identify core issues that should be addressed by media educators and to foster a better understanding of key issues related to recommendation algorithms used by digital media platforms. The project was initiated in Belgium, ran from 2016 to 2019 and expanded as an international program in collaboration with South Korean researchers and practitioners.

The project's foundation lies in the increasing concerns surrounding recommendation algorithms present in numerous digital media platforms, which leads to

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[161] "In the Shoes of an Algorithm: A Media Education Game to Address Issues Related to Recommendation Algorithms", Jacques, Jerry; Grosman, Jeremy; Collard, Anne-Sophie et al., in: *The Journal of Education*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2020, p. 37-62.

the collection and use of data. According to the authors of the study, this phenomenon however "raises concern for media educators" who "would like to empower users and help them become active and autonomous citizens by being creative, reflexive, and critical in their interactions with digital media". The educational aim of the project was therefore to develop an activity that would empower participants with the skills to critically discuss and reflect on the consequences that recommendation algorithms have on their use of digital media.

The Belgian version of the game consists in developing a recommendation algorithm, ranking videos and rating different recommendation algorithms. For this purpose, students are divided into two groups: engineers designing the recommendation algorithm and computers executing it. The Korean version of the game, "Let's Make YouTube Algorithms!" was adapted to the Korean youth culture's use of YouTube. Differences were perceived in the engagement of participants: while the Korean students more rarely critically assessed the digital landscape they inhabit, the Belgian students frequently argued over the choices that were made or could be made by the digital platforms designing recommender systems.

According to the report on the implementation of the game, "[d]espite its limited scope, the project revealed valuable insights in terms of expanding media education to include a critical understanding of recommendation algorithms".

6.4.2. Canada

Digital Moment, a Canadian charity that is part of a global network of organisations dedicated to mobilising communities to build a better future through digital literacy education, launched Digital2030.[162] This programme encourages youth to use digital skills to take action to build a more sustainable future. Digital2030 comprises three projects focused on teaching coding, digital literacy, and artificial intelligence to equip youth with essential digital skills for the future:

- The Challenge: a series of challenges for youth to use coding, data and artificial intelligence to tackle the world's most pressing problems
- Digital Leaders: a space for young people to reflect and share ideas on the issues that matter most to them, through interactive roundtables and discussions
- The Algorithm and Data Literacy Project

The Algorithm and Data Literacy Project[163] was developed in partnership with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO) and UNESCO. It aims in particular to raise awareness and educate children about the presence of algorithms and how they influence their digital experiences. It offers concrete explanations of AI, algorithms, computational

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[162] https://digitalmoment.org/digital2030
[163] https://algorithmliteracy.org/

thinking, and related concepts through text, videos, and interactive games such as "the Most Likely Machine", which allows development of a simple algorithm in a given context and understanding of the concrete impact of the instruction given on the result. The project also offers additional resources for reference. It is structured around five themes:

- Watch
- Take action
- Read
- Reflect
- Get involved

The project's goal is therefore to empower children to think critically about how they engage online and to become proactive, creative users and creators rather than passive consumers.

6.4.3. The UK

Algorithmic decisions play a significant role in shaping our online interactions, prompting concerns about biases and the consequences of algorithmic curation.[164] Platforms using recommendation algorithms and personalised search features, like social media, streaming services, and news aggregators, can profoundly influence users' social and cultural experiences, also potentially affecting their mental well-being. By tailoring content suggestions to user preferences, algorithms have the capacity to create filter bubbles, restricting exposure to different viewpoints and reinforcing existing beliefs. Furthermore, algorithms can prioritise popular global content over local or specialised content, thus influencing perceptions of societal norms by standardising specific behaviors, values, ideas, or lifestyles. It is also worth noting that algorithms may overlook the sensitivity or quality of disseminated content, potentially resulting in comparisons and lower self-esteem.

Therefore, for a thorough and critical assessment of digital media and our engagement with it, it is important to educate not only about how AI and algorithms work, but also about the impact they can have and how to deal with them. "Disrupt your feed"[165] is a media literacy initiative aimed at empowering young girls to protect their mental health, providing them with a way of enjoying social media by turning it from potential toxicity into a force for good. A study led by The Female Lead[166] examined how teenage girls interact with social media, specifically focusing on whether these interactions made a measurable difference to their outlook and impacted their mental

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[164] Dogruel, L. (2021), "What is Algorithm Literacy? A Conceptualization and Challenges Regarding its Empirical
Measurement" in M. Taddicken, & C. Schumann (Eds.), *Algorithms and Communication* (pp. 67-93), Berlin
[165] https://www.thefemalelead.com/disrupt-your-feed
[166] https://www.thefemalelead.com/_files/ugd/05606b_9b61ebf0d39e41b391982bf6a9f5c527.pdf

health and their offline lives. The findings indicated a direct (causal) relationship between who you follow and your self-belief/self-confidence.

The social media pledge, which consisted in a campaign launched by The Female Lead, aimed at inspiring healthier social media habits and empowered people to follow those who make them feel good by:

- scrolling with purpose
- challenging the algorithm
- taking the lead on your own feed

The Female Lead suggests a list of positive role models to follow to "disrupt your feed" in a variety of fields including: body acceptance, business, media and news, mental health, activists, women in stem, arts and entertainment, feminist icons and pages, politics, charities and campaigns, sports and positive supporters.

7. Conclusion

Media literacy plays a vital role in today's landscape. Over the past decade, there has been a significant transformation in the media offering and user consumption habits. From the users' perspective, this shift has evolved from mere consumption towards a blend of consumption and production, in particular with the rise of user-generated content. Traditional linear services have given way to diverse online media services like social media, video-sharing platforms, news aggregators etc. and information-gathering now heavily relies on these platforms.

However, the interactive nature of these services, coupled with information overload, creates challenges in comprehending and managing content. This underscores the importance of media literacy, which has more recently evolved towards equipping individuals across diverse demographic backgrounds with the skills, competencies, and values needed to engage with media in an informed, responsible, and critical manner.

This issue has already been addressed at supranational level by multiple actors, including UNESCO, the Council of Europe, EPRA, the OSCE and the EU. These organisations have established and continue to work on comprehensive frameworks to guide, facilitate, and to some extent, harmonise the approach taken at national level.

It appears that media literacy is in most cases not extensively developed in primary legislation while secondary legislation offers more detailed information on the approach and strategies employed to promote media literacy. Examination of these legal frameworks and policies shows a growing emphasis on user empowerment, with different types of skills, competences and values placed at their core, depending on factors such as the cultural, societal and political context. Media literacy initiatives to empower users can also benefit from funding schemes, which can be addressed in primary (although less frequently) or secondary legislation.

While not uniformly addressed across all countries, critical thinking is emerging as a fundamental skill for media literacy, as it provides users with essential tools for responsible media consumption. This applies to all segments of the population, and while minors have traditionally received significant attention, there has been a recent gradual emergence of initiatives targeting the elderly. An essential global challenge identified through the examination of these initiatives is the need for the education of educators. Numerous programs are being implemented to tackle this issue.

With the integration of AI into our daily lives, the ability to critically assess media becomes even more crucial. Studies indicate that a portion of minors lacks awareness, understanding, or the ability to identify AI and AI-generated content. This underscores the importance of reinforcing critical thinking skills, especially in recognising the potential risks and issues associated with AI and algorithms, such as deep fakes, content

recommendations, and algorithmic biases. Numerous initiatives are underway to educate individuals, particularly youth, on AI technologies and equip them with the tools and competences to mitigate these risks. Achieving a society well-versed in media, digital, algorithms, and AI requires collaboration and a multi-stakeholder approach involving AI experts, fact-checkers, media literacy practitioners, developers, and journalists.

Media literacy has evolved and been renewed several times to keep pace with developments in the media sector. It is now evolving towards other new forms of literacy, such as AI and algo-literacy. These encompass much broader skills and competences than those addressed in this report and are still in the process of being fully addressed. It remains to be seen how this will develop and where it will lead.

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