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## Media education in the new media environment

### Report<sup>1</sup>

Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

Rapporteur: Ms Nino GOGUADZE, Georgia, European Conservatives Group

### Summary

The new media environment facilitates access to multiple sources of information but exposes users to the threat of information disorder. Media education is an essential tool for dealing with this threat.

There is a need to sensitise all members of society, and young people in particular, to the dangers of manipulation, indoctrination, radicalisation and hate speech; to increase their ability to distinguish opinion from objective facts and quality information from propaganda or false news, and to help them develop a critical approach to the media. It is also necessary to strengthen the training of journalists with a focus on accountability and professional ethics.

Media education should be provided at school and continue as part of a lifelong learning process. All stakeholders – public institutions, ministries, schools, universities, media, media regulators, civil society, private initiatives, internet intermediaries – must engage in multi-stakeholder collaboration and strengthen their coordination in the development and implementation of their strategies and actions.

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1. Reference to committee: [Doc. 14448](#), Reference 4358 of 22 January 2018.



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## A. Draft resolution<sup>2</sup>

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes that digitisation, mobility and online communication have brought indisputable benefits for the public, who today can enjoy a wide range of sources of information and unprecedented access to cultural, historical, political, economic and technical information. Furthermore, the open nature of digital platforms facilitates participatory, transparent and effective democracy.
2. At the same time, in the digital age, threats to fundamental rights, democracy and the rule of law are increasing. Large segments of the public, and especially young people, are turning to social media as their main source of news, but they are vulnerable to information disorder. Hate speech and incitement to violence hamper social peace. Disinformation and propaganda influence not only elections and referenda, but also daily life; they have a negative effect on citizens' political commitment and on their trust in traditional media.
3. People have a right to be properly informed in order to make informed choices, and member States must protect this right. In this context, media education is a key tool for strengthening media pluralism and the quality of media content, which are essential for the safeguarding of our democratic societies.
4. Action must be taken to raise awareness among members of society, and among young people in particular, regarding the challenges and risks brought by the new media environment; to increase their ability to distinguish information from opinion and objective facts from propaganda or false news; to make them conscious of possible manipulation, disinformation or hate speech; and to immunise them against indoctrination and radicalisation. It is equally necessary to step up the training of journalists: responsibility and professional ethics should be a priority for journalists in their work, as they are prerequisites for people's trust in the media and in quality journalism.
5. Media education should address all members of the public. It should start at school and continue as part of a life-long learning process, aiming to enable all individuals to exploit the potential of media for access to culture, entertainment, learning and intercultural dialogue, to help them acquire a critical approach to media as regards both quality and accuracy of content, to develop their digital skills and knowledge of existing protection tools, and to improve their online behaviour.
6. Although in several member States media education is part of the school curriculum, it is not always clear exactly how this education fits into the syllabus. Every so often, there is no consistency in the methodology and objectives pursued. Media literacy needs are evolving at a rapid pace, at times faster than media literacy curricula are developed and delivered in classrooms. Teachers need more support and training, but initial and in-service teacher training is not always provided and not always updated.
7. Moreover, the promotion of media literacy is not a task that the education system and teachers or the media themselves could perform alone. States' policies should not be limited to the educational sector, but take a cross-sectoral, multi-actor approach, seeking to involve other relevant actors that could play an important role, for instance, media regulatory authorities and social media. All relevant stakeholders in the process of media education – public institutions, ministries, schools, universities, media (in particular public service media), media regulatory authorities, civil society, private initiatives, internet intermediaries – need to enhance co-ordination of their strategies and actions, and proceed to a multi-actor collaboration. However, effective co-ordination is hampered by the lack of comprehensive up-to-date information and overviews of ground activities regarding member States' policies and best practices in the field and by the absence of platforms which could facilitate cross-sectoral co-operation at national level.
8. Funding is usually "heterogeneous", with a complex interplay between different types of financing, and it often lacks transparency. Sometimes no precise actor has the overall responsibility for the whole process; this can make it difficult to secure long-term funding for media and information literacy projects and can make it hard to see which sector or organisations should be providing leadership. Funding initiatives by tech giants are welcome but they are wholly voluntary and random; the focuses of these initiatives, the selection of applicants, the amounts, frequency as well as terms and conditions of the financing awarded are decided according to corporate interests. These initiatives should be complementary to, rather than a substitute for, structured systems and schemes of non-commercial funding. Without adequate resources, media education will remain contingent on private and voluntary endeavours, whereas sustainable solutions are needed.

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2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 30 September 2019.

9. In this context, the Assembly recalls to member States [the Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)1](#) on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership, [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)2](#) on the roles and responsibilities of internet intermediaries, and [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)7](#) on Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment. Also building on guidelines therein, the Assembly recommends that member States:

- 9.1. develop a co-ordinated national media literacy *policy* and ensure its operationalisation and implementation through annual or multiyear action plans and by providing adequate resources for these purposes;
- 9.2. support the creation of a co-ordinated national media literacy *network* comprising a wide range of stakeholders, or the further development of such a network where it already exists;
- 9.3. actively exchange and promote in relevant international forums positive practices developed within national networks;
- 9.4. encourage internet intermediaries to support media and information literacy strategies;
- 9.5. proceed, together with relevant actors at national level, to a mapping of media literacy practices, ensuring that it is repeated at periodic intervals, is promoted accordingly and its outcome is made available online;
- 9.6. promote media education at all levels of formal education and post-school ongoing education, embedding media literacy in educational establishments and curricula;
- 9.7. ensure adequate training for teachers, particularly as regards initial and in-service training;
- 9.8. support journalism education and trainings through an independent adequate funding mechanism while ensuring an equitable distribution of the financial support and fully respecting professional and academic independence in the organisational matters;
- 9.9. introduce in the mission of public service media, where this is not yet the case, the duty to provide media literacy, to fight digital divide, to ensure safety for young audiences in the online environment; in this context, allocate to the public services media the resources necessary to develop media education projects and integrate them in their programmes;
- 9.10. enlarge the mandate of media regulatory authorities, for the latter to be more actively involved in the field of media education, notably in the promotion of media literacy in the audiovisual sector; in this connection, ensure that media literacy become an integral part of the mandate of media regulatory authorities, taking as a source of inspiration the Guidelines on how to establish Media Literacy Networks, adopted by the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities in May 2018 may be useful;
- 9.11. support national campaigns for media education as a complementary lever to raise awareness of the importance of the issue and boost co-operation among various stakeholders.

10. The Assembly calls on public service media organisations to:

- 10.1. follow the guidelines on media literacy developed by the European Broadcasting Union, notably in its News Report 2018, “50 ways to make it better”, and take inspiration from extensive examples which involve media literacy and education initiatives;
- 10.2. develop media literacy projects individually and in co-operation with other stakeholders such as community/private media, newspapers, civil society initiatives, internet intermediaries, and in this connection, share best practices with national and European partner institutions;
- 10.3. provide specialist educational content addressed to children and teenagers, also using new techniques adapted to young audience behaviours, in order to develop with them critical approach to information and the media in general, provide advice and tips around digital safety and ethical behaviour online, using young presenters, explaining how to distinguish opinions and facts, how to spot disinformation, manipulation and propaganda, how to check sources, to enable the young to act responsibly as both consumer and creator of content in the digital space;
- 10.4. develop online video news services suitable for use on mobile devices, using formats that appeal to and engage specific target audiences, especially youth;
- 10.5. develop focused programmes offering guidance to teachers on how to make, interpret or decode content;
- 10.6. provide in-house training to journalists and other media workers on various professional matters, including ethical aspects and quality journalism.

11. The Assembly calls on the European Broadcasting Union to:
  - 11.1. continue to promote its guidelines regarding media and information literacy, and encourage European public service media to fully apply them, keeping in mind their particular role vis-à-vis the public of all ages and social categories;
  - 11.2. further develop innovative collaborative media literacy initiatives among its members, looking for synergies with other quality news partners;
  - 11.3. provide its members with advanced strategies regarding media and information literacy in their projects and encourage active co-operation between the latter;
  - 11.4. organise systematic workshops and trainings for its members on media literacy and encourage the exchange of good practices in the field;
  - 11.5. actively take part in, and contribute to, targeted studies focusing on media and information literacy.
12. The Assembly calls on the Association of Commercial Television in Europe to:
  - 12.1. encourage its members to consider the crucial importance of media literacy and to develop specialised programmes targeting the young audience in particular;
  - 12.2. develop in this field co-operation with public service media and other types of media and proceed to exchanges of good practices that may be fruitful and useful.
13. The Assembly calls on professionals and organisations in the media sector to:
  - 13.1. consider complex challenges faced today by journalists and other media actors in the multi-media ecosystem, and develop professional training focused on legal, digital, ethical, verification/fact-checking, security and other dimensions, organised either by media organisations themselves or by journalists' unions or other partner organisations;
  - 13.2. ensure that professional education organised by journalism schools or as specialised programmes offered by universities is available for journalists on a permanent basis;
  - 13.3. co-ordinate efforts between the main journalists' organisations, such as the European Federation of Journalists, the European Journalism Training Association, the Ethical Journalism Network, the European Journalism Centre, the Global Editors Network, in order to enable members to collaborate on exchanges and teaching and research projects in the field of journalism education, and to elaborate a clear, accurate, detailed and up-to-date overview of journalism education and training programmes at national and European levels.
14. The Assembly calls on internet intermediaries to:
  - 14.1. actively co-operate with public, social and private entities to promote and support media literacy, notably to counter disinformation, hate speech, including sexist hate speech targeting women, and online misbehaviour;
  - 14.2. support the development of appropriate programmes and tools in the domain of media and information literacy and, in particular of specific tools to be used in the process of media education in schools and during journalists' training;
  - 14.3. further expand support for independent networks of fact-checkers and tools to stimulate quality journalism.

## B. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Nino Gogvadze, rapporteur

### 1. Introduction

1. Today's media environment is a multi-media ecosystem: the institutional media remain central players, but strategic communicators, whether political, religious or commercial, are also active and effective in this ecosystem, and digital communication is becoming increasingly prominent. In this complex context, it is sometimes very difficult to distinguish accurate and reliable information from fabricated and deliberately misleading information.
2. New media technology and services have disrupted the traditional media structures and have opened up the public sphere, but they have also brought challenges, such as an increasing lack of distinction between editorial and advertising content; online safety and security; data protection / exploitation; the digital divide and the disadvantages linked to digital exclusion; and the rapid dissemination of disinformation and hate speech.
3. Media literacy is often identified as a way of countering these challenges; it is regarded as being almost as important as the ability to read and write, and that is reflected in the national curricula of some countries. However, media literacy is an evolving process that needs constant updating. It is a life-long learning journey that stretches beyond formal education. Media literacy should not only concern children or youth: there are many other groups in society that need extra-resources and extra-training in media literacy, in order for them to participate effectively in the digital public sphere, e.g. the elderly and people with physical or cognitive disabilities.
4. Traditionally, the responsibility for media education fell mainly to the education sector and to a lesser extent to the media sector. Many public service media have been active in media education since the very beginning. However, in recent years, the range of actors involved in media education has been growing and today it reflects the broad range of sectors linked to media literacy. The promotion of media literacy is not a task that the education system and teachers or the media themselves could perform alone: it is important to involve other relevant actors who can play an important role, for instance, media regulatory authorities and social media. For example, media regulators have recognised the importance of media literacy as a complementary mechanism to media regulation. Campaigns are another channel for media education. With the growing power and dominance of social media and search engines in the multi-media ecosystems, it is very important that they step up to their responsibilities, notably by providing more structured support to the promotion of media literacy.
5. References to media literacy have been slipped into many policy documents at European and national levels. Less common, however, are firm commitments to promote and operationalise media literacy, and that is one of the key challenges. Thankfully, this situation is changing, partly due to the impetus provided by some Recommendations adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. These texts recognise the importance for individuals to develop the cognitive, technical and social skills and capacities that enable them to effectively access and critically analyse media content, and they call on States to develop a co-ordinated national media literacy policy and ensure its operationalisation and implementation through annual or multiyear action plans, providing adequate resources for these purposes.
6. The main difficulty when examining this issue is the absence of comprehensive data sets and overviews of ground activities in European States to promote media education. The existing information is limited to particular sectors. The European Platform of Regulatory Authorities has developed guidelines on how to set up media literacy networks at national level, and certain national authorities have taken initiatives in this connection. Some public service media and community media develop training for their members and target-audiences. While initiatives burgeon, a selection of best practices – on how educational curricula are designed and implemented, how focused courses and cross-curricular approaches are organised and how resources are made available for teachers and educational policy-makers – is still missing. In the present report, I will highlight the main challenges in the area of media education and refer to a number of best practices which could serve as a source of inspiration.<sup>3</sup>

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3. The analysis of these issues is essentially based on the expert report by Mr Tarlach McGonagle, Senior researcher/lecturer, Institute for Information Law (IViR), University of Amsterdam, whom I thank for his excellent work. In the light of hearings held by the Committee on 4 March 2019 in Granada and on 27 May 2019 in Paris, I have incorporated in my report some elements from presentations by Mr Tom Law, Director of Campaigns and Communications, Ethical Journalism Network, Kingston upon Thames; Mr Stéphane Hoebeke, Lawyer at the Legal Department, Head of Media Education, Belgian Radio-Television of the French Community (RTBF), Brussels; Ms Martina Chapman, Independent

7. This report opens with a snap-shot of recent regulatory and policy developments in respect of media literacy and education at the Council of Europe and the European Union. These developments are likely to set the tone for the ongoing and future development of State policies in relation to media literacy and education, which is the next focus of the report. Such policies should target all groups in society, with appropriate differentiation to take their specific needs and circumstances into account. Journalists – and other media actors – are influential makers and shapers of public debate. They face new challenges and ethical choices in the digital age and the training they receive – in journalism education centres and as ongoing professional training – should reflect the dynamics and complexities of the online environment. The training of journalists and other media actors, especially training on ethical issues, is the next focus of the report. Brief attention is then paid to the role of social media and search engines, given that they are increasingly important players in the multi-media ecosystem.

8. As for the terminology in the field, there is considerable diversity: media education, media literacy, (critical) information literacy, digital literacy, news literacy, search engine literacy, etc. are all conceptually congruent.<sup>4</sup> However, it is important not to be distracted by the diversity in terminology and to focus instead on the congruence of relevant goals and processes. Some authors suggest that media literacy suffices as a generic term as it offers a more “holistic” perspective.<sup>5</sup> Other experts propose to make a distinction between “education” and “literacy”, depending on specific contexts. According to them, media literacy means the skills, the knowledge and the confidence to make informed choices about all the content and information that we come into contact with – all competences enabling an individual to critically understand and evaluate media content, comprehend how media production, editorial and funding processes work, how data is used and how algorithms and artificial intelligence can influence media choices. Being media literate also means being able to responsibly and safely use and engage with others in the public sphere and fulfil the creative and participatory potential that new technologies and services can offer. As for media education, the notion should refer rather to the process by which people (of all ages) develop media literacy skills. The notion of media literacy is often used in conjunction with the notion of information, so the expression media and information literacy (MIL) can be encountered quite frequently in specialised literature.

## 2. European law and policy framework: selected recent developments

### 2.1. Council of Europe

9. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has raised its level of engagement with the promotion of media literacy and education in two Recommendations adopted in 2018. Its [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)1](#) to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership and its [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)7](#) to member States on Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment address media literacy and education/digital literacy in explicit, detailed ways.

10. The Committee of Ministers recognises that: “In light of the increased range of media and content, it is very important for individuals to develop the cognitive, technical and social skills and capacities that enable them to effectively access and critically analyse media content; to make informed decisions about which media they use and how to use them; to understand the ethical implications of media and new technologies, and to communicate effectively, including by creating content.”<sup>6</sup>

11. A key Guideline in the context of the present report is: “States should also develop a co-ordinated national media literacy policy and ensure its operationalisation and implementation through annual or multiyear action plans and by providing adequate resources for these purposes. A key strategy could be to support the creation of a co-ordinated national media literacy network comprising a wide range of stakeholders, or the further development of such a network where it already exists. Positive practices developed within national networks should be actively exchanged and promoted in relevant international forums.”<sup>7</sup>

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consultant on Education and media, Ireland; Ms Divina Frau-Meigs, Professor, Expert in media education, Sorbonne, Paris; Mr Giacomo Mazzone, Head of Institutional and Member Relations, European Broadcasting Union (EBU), Geneva; and Ms Sharon Stokes, Head of the BBC Young Reporter, London. I thank all these experts for their contributions.

4. Tarlach McGonagle, “Media Literacy: No Longer the Shrinking Violet of European Audiovisual Media Regulation?”, in Susanne Nikoltchev, Ed., *Media Literacy, IRIS plus 2011-3* (Strasbourg, European Audiovisual Observatory, 2011), pp. 7-27.

5. E.g., N.A. Cooke (2017), Posttruth, Truthiness, and Alternative Facts: Information Behavior and Critical Information Consumption for a New Age. *The Library Quarterly*. 87 (3), 211-221, p. 219.

6. CM/Rec(2018)1, Preamble, Para. 10.

12. Importantly, the Committee of Ministers states: “In the multimedia ecosystem, media literacy is essential for people of all ages and all walks of life. Measures promoting media literacy should thus help to develop the teaching of media literacy in school curricula at all levels and as part of lifelong learning cycles, including by providing suitable training for teachers and adequate resources for educational institutions to develop teaching programmes and project-oriented learning schemes.”<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, media or digital literacy are particularly important for children.

13. The Committee of Ministers also realises that support measures, including of a financial nature, are necessary to develop and sustain initiatives that promote media literacy and journalism education. In Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)1, the Committee of Ministers encourages member States “to support projects relating to journalism education” (paragraph 2.13). In its [Declaration on the financial sustainability of quality journalism in the digital age of 13 February 2019](#), the Committee of Ministers encourages member States to take media and journalism development measures with different financing models, including private-public partnerships, which are aimed at, inter alia, “developing journalistic skills and training and media literacy programmes for newsrooms” (page 5, point c.) (v)).

## 2.2. European Union

14. As for the European Union, it is useful to flag a recent European-level development concerning media literacy. The goal of promoting and operationalising media literacy received a recent boost when the relevant provision in the European Union’s Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) was revised and strengthened. Until now, the importance of media literacy was explained in the Preamble to the Directive, but the only provision in the substantive part of the Directive dealing with media literacy (Article 33) did not require member States to take any action to promote media literacy. It only required them to report periodically on the application of the Directive, taking into account the levels of media literacy in their national systems.

15. The formal process to revise the Directive provided an opportunity to address this blind spot. New Article 33a(1) requires EU member States to “promote and take measures for the development of media literacy skills”. The explanation of what media literacy entails and why it is important has also been revised in Recital 59 of the Preamble to the Directive.

16. Another interesting addition to the revised AVMSD concerns the obligations of video-sharing platforms. Insofar as such platforms now fall under the scope of the Directive, they must take measures which consist of (“as appropriate”), *inter alia*, “providing for effective media literacy measures and tools and raising users’ awareness of those measures and tools” (Article 28b(3)(j)).

17. The European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) will have the task “to exchange experience and best practices on the application of the regulatory framework for audiovisual media services, including on accessibility and media literacy” (Article 30b(3)(b)).

18. Elements of media literacy are also addressed by the European Commission in the [“Communication on tackling online disinformation: a European approach”](#)<sup>9</sup>. Adopted in April 2018, it outlines four strands for tackling disinformation online at a European level. One of these actions relates to “Fostering education and media literacy.”

19. The above developments, both at the Council of Europe and at the European Union, are indicative of growing awareness in European law- and policy-making circles that media literacy – however termed or defined – needs to be operationalised and rendered meaningful for all sections of society. Recent regulatory and policy developments favour collaborative, multi-actor and multi-sector approaches.

## 3. States’ policies on media education of the public

20. With the increasing development and use of digital technologies in the media environment, there is a pressing need to create and sustain critical-thinking skills for analysing online news content. Citizens who are media literate can ascertain the reliability of news content and sort fact from opinion in order to make more informed choices about their news consumption. Media literacy does not solely refer to news content in the form of texts, but also includes educating people on online persuasion tools and the powerful and potentially manipulative powers of (moving) images.

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7. Ibid., Guideline 5.2.

8. Ibid., Guideline 5.3.

9. <https://library.e.unhcr.org/content/communication-tackling-online-disinformation-european-approach>.

21. National media literacy policies, which connect relevant players and stakeholders and facilitate and promote collaborative and individual initiatives, can be very important for the operationalisation of media literacy. Likewise, it is very important to recognise that a multi-actor approach is called for, with different actors (i.e., State bodies, the media, educators, civil society, individuals, internet service providers, etc.) playing different roles.

22. First, it should be stressed that media education is a lifelong activity and that it rightfully has a place in all levels of formal education, but also as a part of ongoing education. The context in which it is provided (for instance, schools or targeted trainings for the elderly, persons with disabilities, or other specific groups with specific needs) influences its aims and methods. Policies should reflect and embrace this differentiation. There is no “one-size-fits-all” model for media education. Secondly, as already mentioned in the introduction, the term “media education” is an umbrella term. Thirdly, States’ policies should be wide and varied, and certainly not limited to legislative initiatives (which may not even be necessary). Fourthly, States’ policies should not be limited to the educational sector, but take a cross-sectoral, multi-actor approach. Key groups of actors will be identified, with relevant further specification of sub-groups and their particular roles. Among the key groups of actors in this connection are the (audiovisual) media, and more specifically public service media, which are vested with particular tasks in society.

23. It is difficult to find comprehensive, up-to-date information about Council of Europe member States’ policies on the promotion of media literacy. Available data sometimes focuses on the promotion of media literacy in specific contexts or sectors, such as education or audiovisual media. Sometimes the specific focuses of data collected in different States are not sufficiently similar to facilitate straightforward cross-country comparisons. And sometimes the data has not been collected in a systematic fashion or been organised and made available in accessible overviews.

24. Bearing in mind these difficulties in gathering and analysing data about media literacy policies at the national level, it is useful to point to a selection of (recent) studies that help to map national media literacy policies across the Council of Europe area.

25. A major contribution to the pan-European reporting and mapping endeavour was the comparative study conducted under ANR TRANSLIT and COST “Transforming Audiences/Transforming Societies” by a team of national experts, led by Prof. Divina Frau-Meigs.<sup>10</sup> The study included focuses on the definition of media and information literacy in the digital environment and public policies for the implementation of media and information literacy goals. It also gave pride of place to the school system and its resources and training to implement media and information literacy and actors and initiatives outside the school system. Although data in such a dynamic field dates quickly, this study remains an important reference point for overviews, analysis and evaluation of comparative country-specific *educational approaches* to media and information literacy.

26. The dimensions explored by the study are: definition, policy framework, capacity-building (training), capacity-building (resources), funding, other actors, and evaluation.<sup>11</sup> Among the study’s main findings were: (1) there is a “digital undertow” that affects the definition of media and information literacy; (2) a disconnect effect shows weaknesses in the policy framework dimensions of funding and evaluation; and (3) a “trompe l’oeil effect” reveals the compensating efforts produced by other actors to ensure effective implementation of media and information literacy.<sup>12</sup>

27. The first finding reflects the observation made in the introduction to the present report that there is terminological diversity when it comes to media education and literacy. The “digital undertow” refers to the emergence of terms such as computer and digital literacy, with the latter being very much in the ascendant.<sup>13</sup> These are not just new labels, they can also affect how media literacy is understood, conceptualised and taught and promoted. As also noted in the introduction to the present report, media literacy comprises a range of skills – cognitive, technical, and social/civic. When media literacy is taught, there may be more emphasis on digital/technical skills (e.g. under the banner of computer or digital literacy) or on civic skills (e.g. as part of media studies or civic education). Emphases vary. The main concepts and values have been identified and grouped in the study as:

- integration of film, visual, cultural and art studies into media education;

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10. The reporting period for the study stretched from June 2013 to January 2015 and it formed the basis for the following book: Divina Frau-Meigs, Irma Velez and Julieta Flores Michel, Eds., *Public Policies in Media and Information Literacy in Europe*, Routledge, 2017.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

12. (slight paraphrase of original text), *ibid.*, p. 8.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 74 and 75.

- information processing and management skills to enhance employability;
- promotion of civic and political participation and (e-)democracy;
- media ethics and consumer protection;
- technical and production skills.<sup>14</sup>

28. All of this variety has prompted experts like Divina Frau-Meigs to underline the importance of different and complementary skill sets, styling them as multiple literacies or “transliteracies”.<sup>15</sup> Based on their data and analysis thereof, the authors of the study have observed a level of stability at the level of training, next to a growing emphasis on, and expansion of, resources.<sup>16</sup>

29. In most European countries (two-thirds of those surveyed in the study by Ms Frau-Meigs et al.), media literacy is taught as a transversal subject as opposed to a stand-alone subject in the curriculum.<sup>17</sup> Such a cross-cutting approach has benefits for integration in curricula, but it also poses methodological difficulties when it comes to impact-assessment as it can prove difficult to ring-fence specific media literacy efforts. This taps into one of the major challenges facing the further development of media education and literacy, according to the authors of the study, i.e., the evaluation of how effective media education and literacy initiatives are in practice (and determining why they are (not) effective). Funding is very “heterogeneous”, there is a complex interplay between different types of funding, including in the different sectors where media education is promoted. Moreover, there is a lack of transparency about funding and the challenge of making sense of the data that is available is compounded by the diversity of that data. Funding which targets general objectives can have implicit or indirect benefits for media education and literacy initiatives, but any causality may prove difficult to document in concrete ways.<sup>18</sup>

30. Finally, in relation to the study, four problems related to funding that are shared by all countries are described as:

- sustainability;
- co-ordination of media and information literacy (MIL) initiatives;
- sharing existing programmes and products produced in these programmes;
- financial support of innovative products supporting the area of MIL.<sup>19</sup>

31. National law and policy frameworks, as well as their institutional architecture, determine how media literacy is conceptualised, organised and operationalised. Some recent and current media literacy initiatives specifically target online disinformation. Examples include:

- In Finland, the National Audiovisual Institute (under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture) is tasked with promoting “media education, children’s media skills and the development of safe media environment for children in co-operation with other authorities and corporations in the sector”.<sup>20</sup>
- In the Netherlands, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has facilitated the growth of a dynamic *Mediawijzer* network bringing together an extensive range of stakeholders, i.e., over 1,000 organisations and individuals who are actively working on media literacy policies, issues and activities.<sup>21</sup> Law, policy and institutional frameworks can facilitate the development of specific initiatives.
- In Ireland, *Webwise* is the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre. Co-funded by the Department of Education and Skills and the European Union, it “promotes the autonomous, effective, and safer use of the internet by young people through a sustained information and awareness strategy targeting parents, teachers, and children themselves with consistent and relevant messages”.<sup>22</sup>
- In Belgium, the Flemish media literacy centre, *Mediawijs*, focused on educating people about how to engage more critically with “fake news” in 2017.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, every year the media education project, “news in the class”, is organised. It is a collaboration between *Mediawijs*, *Vlaamse Nieuwsmedia*, *Press*

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14. Ibid., p. 105.

15. Ibid. See also pp. 238-239.

16. Ibid., p. 63.

17. Ibid., p. 39.

18. These points have been made more elaborately by the authors of Chapter 6 in *ibid.*

19. Ibid., pp. 212-213.

20. <https://kavi.fi/en/media-education-and-audiovisual-media>

21. <https://www.mediawijzer.net/>

22. <https://www.webwise.ie/>

*and Media*, with support from the Flemish government.<sup>24</sup> This project aims to stimulate students to consult and interpret news sources in a critical way.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, it provides teachers with educational packages, which recently also included one on the countering of “fake news”.<sup>26</sup> Through such packages, students are challenged and learn how to discern false and misleading news and, through such means, they have been exposed to the “filter bubble” phenomenon.<sup>27</sup> Similar initiatives have been launched in Wallonia by the Superior Council for Media Education, such as the “two weeks of media education”, the main topic of which in 2017 was “fake news”.<sup>28</sup> On 18 October 2017, the Council also organised the “day of media education”, which started with a debate around “fake news”.<sup>29</sup> On 31 January 2018, Sven Gatz, the Flemish Minister for Culture, announced that he would organise a “*burgerkabinet*” (citizen cabinet) focusing on “fake news”.<sup>30</sup> This project aims to engage with citizens on how they inform themselves today and on what could be done better.<sup>31</sup> It was possible to share ideas through an online platform until 7 April 2018.<sup>32</sup> Afterwards, a “real” discussion platform was organised in the Flemish parliament with the purpose of issuing policy recommendations.<sup>33</sup>

### 3.1. Media education and the media sector

#### 3.1.1. Audiovisual sector in general

32. The European Audiovisual Observatory has a long-standing interest in media literacy in the audiovisual sector. In 2016, it published an extensive report on the topic.<sup>34</sup> The report maps and describes “the most significant projects in the promotion of media literacy” with national or regional coverage in the 28 EU member States since January 2010.<sup>35</sup> The 547 featured projects, selected by national experts, provide a wealth of examples of how to bring media literacy to life, primarily in the audiovisual sector. More specifically, the report focused “on media literacy projects relating to media services delivered on electronic communication networks, both linear and non-linear, and on information society services where pertinent”.<sup>36</sup> The projects were arranged in seven categories: resources; end-user engagement; research; networking platforms; provision of funding; campaigns, and policy development.<sup>37</sup> The projects were also categorised in terms of the media literacy skills they prioritise: creativity; critical thinking; intercultural dialogue; media use, and participation and interaction.<sup>38</sup> The different sectors involved in the featured projects were also categorised: academia, audiovisual content provider, public authorities, media regulatory authorities, online platforms, civil society, cross-sector collaboration and “other”.<sup>39</sup>

33. The European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) has also shown long-standing interest in, and commitment to, the promotion of media literacy in the audiovisual sector. It is particularly concerned with the role that national regulatory authorities can play. The nature of their role is shaped in part by whether or not they have a statutory duty to promote media literacy and whether or not they have ear-marked funding to take relevant initiatives. Over the years, experiences and (best) practices have been shared in the context of Working Groups. EPRA’s 2017 Comparative Background Paper is a very useful source of comparative information.<sup>40</sup> In May 2018, the EPRA Task Force for Media Literacy adopted Guidelines on how to establish

23. Mediawijs, “Dossier: Nieuws- en Informatiegeletterdheid”, 2017, <https://mediawijs.be/dossiers/dossier-nieuws-en-informatiegeletterdheid>.

24. Nieuws in de klas, “Nieuws in de klas. Jouw afspraak met het nieuws!”, <https://www.nieuwsindeklas.be/contact/>.

25. Ibid.

26. Nieuws in de klas, “Fake news? What’s in a name”, 2017, [https://www.nieuwsindeklas.be/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Fake-News\\_lesmap.pdf](https://www.nieuwsindeklas.be/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Fake-News_lesmap.pdf); Mediawijs, “Fake News? What’s in a name”, [https://mediawijs.be/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/fake\\_news\\_-\\_difference\\_day\\_1.pdf](https://mediawijs.be/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/fake_news_-_difference_day_1.pdf).

27. Vlaamse Nieuwsmedia, “Nieuws in de klas: Fake News op Difference Day”, 2017, <https://www.vlaamsenieuwsmedia.be/newsroom/2017/04/nieuws-in-de-klas-fake-news-op-difference-day>.

28. Conseil Supérieur de l’éducation aux médias, «quinzaine de l’éducation aux médias», [www.csem.be/outils/operations/la\\_quinzaine\\_de\\_leducation\\_aux\\_medias](http://www.csem.be/outils/operations/la_quinzaine_de_leducation_aux_medias).

29. Ibid.

30. Open VLD, “Sven Gatz lanceert het 4<sup>e</sup> Burgerkabinet”, 31 January 2018, <http://www.openvld.be/?type=nieuws&id=1&pageid=96598>.

31. Ibid.

32. <http://www.burgerkabinet.be/>

33. Ibid.

34. *Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28*, European Audiovisual Observatory, Strasbourg, 2016.

35. Ibid., p. 27.

36. Ibid., p. 31.

37. Ibid., p. 40.

38. Ibid., p. 41.

39. Ibid., pp. 42-43.

Media Literacy Networks. This is a check-list for national regulatory authorities planning to establish media literacy networks in their own countries. The Irish Media Literacy Network, set up by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland as part of its broader activities in the area of media literacy, provides a model that is already up and running.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.1.2. Public service media (PSM)

34. Several years ago, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), an umbrella organisation representing the interests of public service broadcasters and media in Europe, organised its Principles on Media Literacy along three main axes: “Bridging the digital divide”, “Inform and empower citizens to democracy [sic]”, and “Creating a trusted space”.<sup>42</sup> It show-cased best practices by its members, grouped along the lines of those three axes. At time of writing, the very useful show-case did not appear to have been updated. However, the EBU’s News Report 2018, *50 ways to make it better*, sets out extensive examples of how to build audience engagement and trust in public service journalism, many of which involve media literacy and education initiatives.<sup>43</sup> The EBU has also been developing resources specifically for, and a show-case of, its members’ approaches to “fake news” and online disinformation. An overview is available in its Perfect Storm publication<sup>44</sup> and an overview of the fact-checking initiatives developed or supported by its members in the Annex to its *Position Paper: “Fake news” and the information disorder*.<sup>45</sup>

35. In the framework of the Eurovision News Exchange, the EBU developed a project for the young, the Eurovision Youth News Exchange – a multi-lateral exchange of items for children’s news programmes and magazines. These daily or weekly programmes cover current events affairs from the children’s perspective, in an accessible language that children can understand. The objective of the programme is to clarify the context of world events, and to give children the tools to understand the news that they are exposed to through the media. Moreover, in its Digital Media Days Conference in 2018, the EBU organised a panel, “Media literacy: ambitious approaches by EBU Members to enlighten the public with critical thinking skills around social media content and misinformation”.<sup>46</sup> The Panel highlighted a number of initiatives by its members, for instance the BBC’s endeavours to offer push-back against “fake news”.<sup>47</sup>

#### 3.1.2.1. The BBC (United Kingdom)

36. The BBC has been working with young people in the area of media and news literacy for around 15 years. It fits in with company’s core purposes: to inform, educate and entertain. BBC Charter states that the company should “provide specialist educational content to help support learning for children and teenagers across the United Kingdom.” In concrete terms, the journalists share their knowledge and skills (to spot disinformation and misinformation, checking sources, knowing the difference between opinion and facts, learning basic skills about filming and story-telling) to enable the young to act as both consumer and creator of content in the digital space. This approach is all the more commendable taking into account the facts: in 2018, the Commission on Fake News and Teaching of Critical Literacy Skills run by an All-Party Parliamentary Group and the National Literacy Trust released a report which states that only 2% of children have the critical literacy skills they need to tell if a news story is real or fake and two-thirds of children now trust the news less as a result of disinformation.

37. There are several areas in which the BBC delivers media literacy to young people via projects such as *BBC Young Reporter*, *BBC Own*, *BBC Bitesize*, *BBC Teach*, *Beyond Fake News*, and each of them has slightly different audiences and objectives. The main United Kingdom media literacy project is the *BBC Young Reporter*, which aims to involve young people, aged between 11 and 18 years in the media/reporting, by

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40. Martina Chapman, Emmanuelle Machet and Tone Gunhild Haugan-Hepsø, Comparative Background Paper, Media Literacy: Focus on the role of regulators, EPRA Working Group 1, 12 December 2017, available at: <https://www.epra.org/attachments/vienna-wg-i-media-literacy-focus-on-the-role-of-regulators-background-document>.

41. Details via: <https://www.bai.ie/en/viewers-listeners/understanding-media/>.

42. European Broadcasting Union Viewpoint, *Empowering Citizenship Through Media Literacy*, February 2012: [https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/EBU-Viewpoint-Media-Lit\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/EBU-Viewpoint-Media-Lit_EN.pdf).

43. European Broadcasting Union News Report 2018, *50 ways to make it better*, Geneva, November 2018, available at: <https://www.ebu.ch/publications/news-report-2018-50-ways-to-make-it-better>.

44. Bill Dunlop, *Perfect storm: the multiple challenges facing public service news, and why tackling them is vital for democracy*. Geneva: European Broadcasting Union, 2017, pp. 13 – 15.

45. EBU, Position Paper: “Fake news” and the information disorder, 18 April 2018.

46. EBU, Digital Media Days, Prague, 8 March 2018, [https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Events/Media%20Online/Digital%20Media%20Days%202018/Agendas/EDMD\\_Day1\\_InteractiveSession.pdf](https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Events/Media%20Online/Digital%20Media%20Days%202018/Agendas/EDMD_Day1_InteractiveSession.pdf).

47. See, for example: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2018/beyond-fake-news>; <https://www.bbc.com/teach/live-lessons/bbc-news-live-lesson/zn4kqp3>.

giving them a voice on BBC platforms, sharing their stories with programme teams and helping them to make and broadcast them via an annual BBC Young Reporter Competition. Participating schools, colleges, youth groups and charities benefit from events, trainings, access to resources and mentorship by BBC journalists. The company offers free online resources which can be used by teachers or individual students. The collection of resources includes focuses on: how to spot a bot, knowing who to trust, recognising fake news, checking the story, numbers and the tricks they play. The Collection also includes guidance for teachers, a series of lessons/lesson plans and an evidence toolkit.<sup>48</sup> In 2017, the company launched a package of new resources around real news specifically aimed at helping young people spot false information. Regarding disinformation, the company also developed an online game which young people can play on laptops or mobile devices.

### 3.1.2.2. RTBF (Public service broadcaster of the French community of Belgium)

38. While novel programme formats can speak to the collective imagination, structured models for promoting media education and literacy throughout a (public service) media organisation can also be suitable for replication. When the necessary financial and editorial investments are made to integrate media education throughout an organisation, it can yield sustainable benefits. RTBF, the Francophone public service broadcaster in Belgium, has developed a policy to integrate media education transversally – across its editorial themes – and vertically in all types of media output. This approach of committing to a culture of media education is a strategy that gives context and direction to the development of individual programmes and services in the longer term.

39. RTBF has drawn up a media education plan every year since 2014, with two main objectives: firstly, to develop with the audience (notably the young) critical thinking and, secondly, to help individuals to communicate and interact in the new media environment. The company broadcast on radio and television and also online. There are programmes about decoding the media, developing critical thinking, professional ethics and the conditions for making news and information more reliable and thereby consolidating public trust. RTBF also organises guided visits and interactive workshops: every year, over 10 000 people come to meet journalists and take part in workshops with a view to better understanding news and information gathering and distribution processes. The staff attend regular training courses, including in co-operation with other partners such as the Media Education Council, the Association of Professional Journalists and the City of Brussels (regarding teacher training).

### 3.1.2.3. Some other European PSM

40. Another noteworthy trend is to develop programme formats that appeal to and engage their specific target audiences, especially youth. The Dutch public service broadcaster's *Jeugdjournaal* is very highly regarded. It provides high-quality reporting by its staff journalists but adapted for the needs and interests of children. The daily broadcast is supplemented by an online presence that has many interactive opportunities and resources that provide extra background and depth to the stories it covers.<sup>49</sup> Other broadcasters have also developed online formats that provide news to younger audience in a style and tone that are closer to them, such as the Swiss French-language channel, SSR, which came up with an online video news service suitable for use on mobile devices.<sup>50</sup> In Germany, *ARD-Aktuell* has developed *Novi*, a newsbot that offers "passive" young audiences "bite-sized" news items via Facebook Messenger twice a day. Key to the format is: "Followers get a message with the main headlines, after which they have the option to 'talk back' and receive additional information. The follow-up questions are pre-designed for the users, with a few multiple-choice options".<sup>51</sup> *L'instant détox*, an initiative by France-Info, styles itself as "Taking the Fight Against Fake News on to the Street", includes live Facebook sessions engaging against disinformation, as well as a YouTube channel.<sup>52</sup> *News Class* is an educational project run by the Finnish public service broadcaster, YLE. It involves students working to create news content with YLE mentor journalists.<sup>53</sup>

48. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/en/collections/youngreporter>

49. <https://jeugdjournaal.nl/>

50. EBU News Report 2018, p. 81.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

52. [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRAbwEqGDnUBt\\_gPOkplGBA/about](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRAbwEqGDnUBt_gPOkplGBA/about). See also, EBU News Report 2018, p. 73.

53. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJ5qjRWH3sk>

### 3.1.2.4. Community media and commercial media

41. Besides public service media, community media also play a very important role in promoting media education and literacy, with training being one of their defining characteristics and goals. Other types of media, such as commercial print media, can also contribute to the development of media education and literacy. Their commercial character does not negate their contribution – as mentioned above, the media education environment is necessarily multi-dimensional, involving a diverse range of actors. One example that has been identified as interesting is Play Bac Presse, a company originally set up in France, which produces newspapers directed at a youthful audience and different age groups within its target audience.

### 3.2. Media education and (non-)media actors

42. Various public bodies and institutions offering public services, as well as civil society organisations promote media education and literacy in different ways on an ongoing basis. Recently and currently, some initiatives from different sectors have been focused specifically on, and have sought to counter, the harmful effects of (online) disinformation. Examples include:

- Libraries and the promotion of critical thinking: the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has been playing an important role in countering “fake news”, by promoting critical thinking. More specifically, the organisation has developed an infographic setting out eight simple steps on “How to Spot Fake News”.<sup>54</sup> The steps have been derived from a 2016 article by FactCheck.org. The steps are: consider the source, check the author, check the date, check your biases, read beyond, supporting sources? is it a joke? and ask the experts.
- Cross-media initiatives: By pooling together resources, collaborating media can achieve more collectively than would be possible by several separate initiatives. *Faktisk* is a Norwegian ‘fact-checking’ website, launched in July 2017 by four of Norway’s leading news organisations: the newspapers, *Dagbladet* and *VG*, commercial broadcaster TV2 and the public service broadcaster, NRK. It is a non-profit organisation but receives more than 50 percent of its annual budget from its partners. The fact-check is displayed by means of a five-point, colour-coded scale ranging from absolutely true to absolutely false. Once fact-checked, the fact checks can be embedded by everyone in their own work. *Faktisk* has proven to be a big success.
- Fact-checking initiatives: Fact-checking measures consist in checking the accuracy of online content that is presented as truth or fact in order to debunk disinformation. This can either be done internally by technology companies, by independent external fact-checking organisations, or through collaborations between them and/or other actors. Different actors, such as online platforms, news media publishers and broadcasters, and news consumers all have had recourse to such practice.<sup>55</sup> The *International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN)* launched its Code of Principles on 15 September 2016 and it currently counts 67 verified signatories from around the world.<sup>56</sup> The signatories are organisations that regularly publish non-partisan reports on the accuracy of statements by public figures, major institutions, and other widely circulated claims of interest to society. The Code comprises five principles that have to be adhered to and respected by all signatories when conducting their journalistic work. These principles entail the following commitments: non-partisanship and fairness; transparency of sources; transparency of funding and organisation; transparency of methodology; open and honest corrections policy. The aim of this Code is to promote excellence in fact-checking. In order to become a signatory, an extensive accreditation process has to be followed which involves external assessors having to assess the applicant’s respect of the Code of Principles based on a checklist.<sup>57</sup> Fact-checking can have additional value for media literacy and broader educational purposes when routine fact-checking is accompanied or enhanced by the creation of resources, such as video tutorials or clips explaining how to verify the authenticity of photos or audiovisual material.<sup>58</sup>
- Newspapers in classrooms: The most obvious model to highlight is the newspapers in classrooms model which has been in operation for decades in some countries. The model is based on a range of newspapers being made available to students in the classroom, free of charge by news publishers.

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54. <https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/11174>

55. See, in this connection, the Appendix to the *Information Disorder* study, entitled, ‘European Fact-checking and Debunking Initiatives’, pp. 86 *et seq.*

56. <https://ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/know-more/the-commitments-of-the-code-of-principles>

57. <https://ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/know-more/what-you-should-know-before-applying>

58. See, for example, a Tweet by Nieuwscheckers, a Dutch fact-checking initiative based at the University of Leiden, 19 April 2018: <https://twitter.com/nieuwscheckers/status/986898289189687298>

Supporting teaching resources are often supplied to the teachers to help generate discussion and learning in the classroom. In Finland, the Finnish newspaper industry has been co-operating with schools for more than 50 years in this way. In the French-speaking part of Belgium, French media publishers and the *Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles* deliver the “*Ouvrir mon quotidien*” project which provides a range of newspapers to all schools every day. In Denmark, the Association of Danish Media is responsible for delivering Newspapers in Education, and includes a competition involving making a printed paper or a digital news site and the teachers must train in and teach the basics of journalism with the students. In Ireland, Press Pass ([www.presspass.ie](http://www.presspass.ie)) is a News Literacy and Student Journalism programme for secondary school students aged 15-16. Developed by *NewsBrands Ireland*, the representative body for Ireland’s 17 national news publishers, with the support of the Department of Education. The free resources include copies of national and local newspapers, news websites, a student workbook, and a Teacher’s Lesson Plan.

- Workshops and freely accessible resources: workshops can be delivered as part of the curriculum or as a voluntary extra-curricular activity within a school or learning environment. For instance, Lie Detectors is a civil society-led programme delivered in Germany and Belgium, which brings working journalists into schools in order to give young people insights into the work of quality journalists and to de-construct and de-bunk fake news. The journalists who are trained to deliver Lie Detectors workshops in schools are all trained, qualified, paid professionals who share details of their working lives. This helps the students to appreciate what goes in to quality journalism and may even inspire some of them to become journalists. The project is funded by The Wyss Foundation in the USA.
- Collaborative model: A new UK-based programme *Newswise* is a collaboration between The Guardian Foundation, The National Literacy Trust and PSHE Association, and is funded by Google (see also under section 5). *Newswise* is based on the belief that education is one of the most important solutions to the spread of disinformation. It offers free lesson plans and resources for schools, training sessions for teachers and workshops across the United Kingdom. Workshop numbers are limited but the lesson plans and resources are free for every primary school in the United Kingdom to download. Since April 2018 *Newswise* has worked with over 2000 teachers and children and had over 2500 downloads of their online resources. The European *MediaCoach* programme is being developed by a collaboration between civil society organisations and academic institutions and delivered in Cyprus, Greece, Netherlands, Romania, Bulgaria, Portugal and Belgium. It is based on the successful Dutch National *MediaCoach* programme which has successfully achieved the goal of improving media literacy among children, young people and parents by training a large pool of media literate professionals working with youth in schools, youth centres and in non-formal contexts like libraries and museums.
- Voluntary extracurricular media education programs: In Croatia, the Association for Communication and Media Culture built a voluntary extracurricular media education program in order to educate teachers, parents and children in media literacy called *Djeca Medija*. They have produced 850 workshops, lectures and conferences on media education for more than 19,000 participants, primarily on a voluntary basis and have been awarded the Evens Foundation Special Jury Prize for Media Education.
- Development of tools and resources for use inside and outside of classrooms: *Les Clés des médias (Keys for understanding media)* is a project that emerged after the terrorist attacks of 2015 in France. Public authorities and public service media felt that it was urgent to provide new resources to help teachers to organise debates in their classes about freedom of expression. The project was designed to facilitate debate and learning about media issues in school environment or among a larger audience. The objective is to illustrate key issues related to media and news production in order to stimulate debate and to develop critical thinking.
- In Greece, the “*i-create*” platform encourages and supports students' digital and audiovisual creations. Developed by Educational Radiotelevision and Digital Media, Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, this project has been running since 2011 and facilitates the engagement of students in collaborative projects. The platform provides professionally produced content by *EduTV* and allows students and teachers to upload their own short videos or digital content and engage in dialogue, rating, polls, and sharing. The project is aimed at children aged 4 -18 and their teachers.

#### 4. Training of journalists and other media actors

43. In this section I will mainly consider a selection of initiatives by networks of journalism education and training centres, followed by a selection of initiatives by other organisations that are developing online training resources that can be used by a wide community of actors. I will conclude this section with a few brief observations about education and training activities at the national level.

44. In the multi-media ecosystem, where so many actors contribute in different ways to information and communication activities, the need for training goes beyond “traditional” journalists and stretches to what the Council of Europe often calls “other media actors”. While the focus of the present report is on journalists, some of the examples given may also offer relevant opportunities for training for other media actors.

45. Given the complex challenges faced by journalists and other media actors in the multi-media ecosystem, it is important to unpack the different possible components/focuses of “training”. A 360-degree approach to training, which includes legal, digital, ethical, verification/fact-checking, security and other dimensions, is to be favoured. Within such a holistic approach, I would emphasise trainings on ethical issues.

46. The emphasis on ethical issues is well-placed. From time to time, incidents of journalistic deception and fabrication are uncovered. Sometimes such incidents are high-profile, like the recent Claas Relotius Affair in which fraudulent reporting by an award-winning journalist for *Der Spiegel* was exposed.<sup>59</sup> Such incidents, especially high-profile ones involving reputable media organisations, trigger critical public scrutiny and journalistic self-scrutiny. *Der Spiegel* responded to the Relotius Affair by examining and seeking to rectify shortcomings in its own quality assurance mechanisms and editorial checks and balances.<sup>60</sup> Training on ethical issues, both at the level of journalism education and as part of ongoing professional development, is not a guarantee of eliminating ethical failings in practice, but it does offer a strong, structural and sustainable strategy to prevent them in the first place.

47. Conscious of the damage that can be caused by ethical shortcomings and failings, including the undermining of public trust in journalism and the media, various organisations are increasingly investing in ways of (re-)building trust in their journalistic activities. For instance, the Journalism Trust Initiative (JTI) was launched in 2018 by Reporters Without Borders, *Agence France Presse*, the European Broadcasting Union and the Global Editors Network.<sup>61</sup> The JTI is designed to “promote journalism by adherence to an agreed set of trust and transparency standards to be developed and implemented”. The JTI is structured around three work packages: Identity and Transparency; Accountability and Professionalism, and Independence and Ethics.<sup>62</sup> The standards are currently being developed in collaboration with stake-holders.

48. The European Journalism Training Association (EJTA) currently has 76 members (journalism centres, schools and universities) in 32 European countries. Its members “work together to improve journalism education in Europe, enabling members to collaborate on exchanges and teaching and research projects, and meet regularly to exchange ideas and information.”<sup>63</sup> One of its current high-profile projects is **EUFACTCHECK**, which aims to “build a sustainable curriculum unit on fact-checking within a European network of journalism schools”. The project will “publish fact-checks and blog posts to test our common methodology during the European elections”. One of its central aims or aspirations, as formulated on its website, is: “Through fact-checking European political claims and trying to tackle misinformation, we want our students and our public to grow a deeper insight and interest in democratic processes, both on national and European level”. One of the EJTA’s previous projects, entitled **Mediahackers**, set out “to enhance digital media competencies to journalists working in all media sectors by providing specialised training courses for new/cross media skills in Cyprus, Germany, Greece, and Romania”. A consortium of partners worked with individual journalists, as well as media and journalists’ associations and unions.

49. The European Journalism Centre (EJC) is a non-profit international foundation “with the mission to improve and strengthen journalism and the news media in the interest of a functioning democratic public sphere.” It has vast experience of providing training and capacity-building activities, which are given an additional, online dimension in the resources and materials it creates. For instance, **Learno.net** is the EJC’s platform for professional video training courses. Its present offering deals largely with an array of digital skills, and it invites suggestions for future courses, which leaves the door open for training courses on ethical issues. The EJC has also done a lot of work on verification techniques and hosts an online **verification handbook** for digital content in emergency news coverage.

50. The Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) is a worldwide alliance of reporters, editors and publishers who are committed to promoting accountable journalism.<sup>64</sup> The EJN’s activities are driven by the five values it places at the core of ethical journalism: “accuracy; independence; impartiality; humanity; and

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59. Ullrich Fichtner, ‘DER SPIEGEL Reveals Internal Fraud’, Spiegel Online, 20 December 2018: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/claas-relotius-reporter-forgery-scandal-a-1244755.html>

60. Spiegel Online, ‘Claas Relotius Affair – The Lessons We Are Drawing’, 7 January 2019: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/claas-relotius-affair-the-lessons-we-are-drawing-a-1246823.html>

61. <https://rsf.org/en/news/rsf-and-its-partners-unveil-journalism-trust-initiative-combat-disinformation>

62. See further: <https://www.cen.eu/news/workshops/Pages/WS-2018-004.aspx>

63. <https://www.ejta.eu/introduction>

accountability”.<sup>65</sup> It “produces resources for working journalists, media trainers and journalism students focusing on how to improve media ethics and ethical communications in the public sphere [...], including in-depth reports, infographics on hate speech and migration coverage, videos on a wide range of ethical issues, as well as [...] podcasts and presentations”.<sup>66</sup> Its Five Point Test for Hate Speech and Five Point Guide for Migration Reporting are presented in clear and succinct language and their infographic format is visually appealing.<sup>67</sup> They have been extensively translated and are widely used as practical tools in trainings and in news rooms. The EJN, in collaboration with the Thomson Foundation, has created an online course in journalism ethics, the Ethical Journalist’s Toolkit.<sup>68</sup> The EJN provides trainings for media professionals and for trainers.

51. The Global Editors Network (GEN), the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), Publishers’ Association of Portugal (APImprensa) and Forum Journalismus und Medien Wien (FJUM) are conducting a project to develop the European Media Literacy Toolkit for Newsrooms around Europe. The partners have invited “publishers, editors, and influencers journalists from five European countries to a series of unconferences and a region-wide hackathon with the aim of collaboratively producing a digital European Media Literacy Toolkit offered to all European newsrooms in order to combat misinformation and amplify quality content to the wider public.”<sup>69</sup>

52. While the availability of an array of online resources, often free of charge, is very welcome, it is difficult to gauge how, and to what extent, they are used in concrete educational and training programmes at the national level in different countries.

53. It is very difficult to have a clear, accurate, detailed and up-to-date overview of journalism education and training programmes at the national level. Relevant information can be pieced together from different sources and resources,<sup>70</sup> but not in a reliably systematic, comprehensive and timely way.

54. At the national level, journalism education is typically organised by journalism schools or as specialised programmes offered by universities. It is essential that the academic and/or professional autonomy of journalism education is effectively guaranteed at all times. The role and involvement of the State should therefore not go beyond ensuring that adequate funding is available for journalism education and that available funding is distributed equitably, so that journalism schools and university programmes can develop and carry out their own curricula without political or other forms of interference. Ideally, training should be financed through an independent funding mechanism. As for the evaluation of the results of the media education, there are many actors involved and for each sector of activity there should be a specific matrix of measurement. While responsibility for journalism education curricula rests with the schools and universities, various intergovernmental and (international) non-governmental organisations provide relevant resources, e.g. UNESCO’s Series on Journalism Education, which includes (compendia of) model curricula and themed resources on topics like, most recently, journalism and disinformation.<sup>71</sup> A handbook called “Journalism, fake news and disinformation” was published in 2018, containing good examples of how journalists reported on disinformation, how they were incorporating media literacy techniques into their reporting so that their audience could better understand how they worked, and by that process build trust. This handbook was a useful tool in media literacy process.

55. Ongoing professional training, on the other hand, is typically organised by media organisations themselves (in-house trainings), or by journalists’ unions or other representative bodies. The selection of training opportunities offered by the latter is often varied, reflecting the 360-degree skill sets needed by journalists in the digital age. The trainings often focus on digital skills (data journalism, web-design, podcasts, vlogging, etc.) and professional administrative skills (fiscal issues, insurance, time-management, etc.).<sup>72</sup>

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64. <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/>

65. <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/videos/5-core-values-of-journalism>

66. <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources>

67. <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/infographics/5-point-test-for-hate-speech-english>

68. <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/courses/ethical-journalist-toolkit>. The course ran last year and is currently being updated.

69. <https://europeanjournalists.org/projects/european-media-literacy-toolkit-for-newsrooms/>

70. See, for example: Georgios Terzis, Ed., *European Journalism Education*, Intellect, 2009; Jan Fredrik Hovden, Gunnar Nygren & Henrika Zilliacus-Tikkanen Eds., *Becoming a journalist: Journalism education in the Nordic countries*, Nordicom, 2016; European Journalism Centre, Media Landscapes series, available at: <https://medialandscapes.org/about>. This series includes a selection of European Countries. One of the focuses of each country report is ‘Education’, which is broken down into ‘Universities and schools’ and ‘Professional development’. The information given under these headings is quite summary in nature.

71. <https://en.unesco.org/unesco-series-on-journalism-education>

Safety, for example in the context of reporting from conflict zones, is another focus. The unions also sometimes co-operate with other partner organisations in order to further expand and diversify the range of trainings they offer. It is important to note that trainings organised by national journalists' unions are often open to free-lance journalists. As for newsrooms, they should care about media literacy, because it is in their interest: a more literate public would more easily recognise and appreciate quality journalism and would wish to pay for it. Thus, media literacy could uphold a business model based on trust, while a business model based on invasive tracking technology on the web, on sensationalism and clicks could decrease the trust in journalism.

56. Depending on the focus of the training, public or private funding may have been secured, but it is common practice in most countries for participants in the trainings to pay a fee. Union members are often entitled to a reduced fee, e.g. members of the Dutch Association of Journalists avail of a discount of 20% – 50% on trainings organised by the association's Academy.

57. It seems that there is less demand among journalists for trainings on ethical issues as part of their ongoing professional development. The perceived need to upskill for the demands of the digital age seems stronger. Ethical trainings are often organised around specific themes and in conjunction with particular organisations. Some examples from the Dutch Association of Journalists include collaborations with the Red Cross, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the *College voor de Rechten van de Mens* (the Dutch national human rights commission).

58. It is very difficult to conduct an impact assessment of trainings as they concern skills and ethics that will be applied by participants in an ongoing way and in very diverse professional settings.

## 5. The role of social media and search engines

59. Internet intermediaries exercise great influence and power arising from their gate-keeping capabilities, especially when they attain dominant positions in specific parts of the multi-media ecosystem. This is particularly true of social media service providers and search engines. In its Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)2 to member States on the roles and responsibilities of internet intermediaries, the Committee of Ministers dwells on how internet intermediaries should respect human rights across all of their operations. At different stages in the Recommendation, the Committee of Ministers calls for States and intermediaries to support media and information literacy strategies.

60. Internet intermediaries have taken some initiatives to support and/or promote media literacy. Examples include:

61. The bulk of Google's funding measures for relevant activities have been conducted under the banner of its Digital News Initiative and in the European context, its Digital News Innovation Fund. In 2018, Google funded a project called *MediaWise* in order to reduce the spread of misinformation.<sup>73</sup> Focusing on the next generation, the initiative aims to teach teenagers how to spot fake news by developing a new curriculum that will be available to schools across the United States. Google funds as well *NewsWise* (see also under 3.2) – a “free, cross-curricular news literacy project for 9 to 11-year-olds across the United Kingdom, set up by the Guardian Foundation, National Literacy Trust and PSHE Association”.<sup>74</sup> *NewsWise* seeks to equip children aged between 9 and 11 years with the skills and knowledge they need to deal with disinformation. It also seeks to “provide high quality news literacy education resources, experiences and support for teachers”.<sup>75</sup> In February 2019, Google issued a white paper, *How Google Fights Disinformation*.<sup>76</sup> It details the main measures Google takes against disinformation in Google Search and Google News; YouTube and Google Advertising Products. It reports that “in March 2018, Google.org (Google's philanthropic arm) launched a \$10 million global initiative to support media literacy around the world”.<sup>77</sup>

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72. See, for example, the trainings offered by the National Union of Journalists (United Kingdom and Ireland chapters); the Danish Union of Journalists, and the Dutch Association of Journalists, which organises its training courses under the auspices of an Academy: <https://www.nvj.nl/nvj-academy>. The Academy cooperates with a range of partners in order to diversify the focuses of the trainings it offers.

73. <https://www.poynter.org/mediawise/>.

74. <https://www.theguardian.com/newswise/2018/jun/12/newswise-who-we-are-and-what-we-do>. The PSHE Association is the United Kingdom national body for personal, social, health and economic education.

75. *Ibid.*

76. Google, *How Google Fights Disinformation*, White Paper, February 2019: [https://storage.googleapis.com/gweb-uniblog-publish-prod/documents/How\\_Google\\_Fights\\_Disinformation.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/gweb-uniblog-publish-prod/documents/How_Google_Fights_Disinformation.pdf).

77. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

62. Following the 2016 US Presidential elections, Facebook announced a number of measures to limit the reach of “fake news”, including a partnership with fact-checking organisations which have signed up to the IFCN’s Code of Principles.<sup>78</sup> This collaboration has suffered some recent set-backs, with various partners such as leading fact-checking agencies, Associated Press and Snopes, pulling out.<sup>79</sup> In order to educate middle-school and high-school students on how to identify fake news and assess information, Facebook partnered with the [News Literacy Project](#), a non-profit education organisation, offering interactive news literacy lessons through a virtual classroom.<sup>80</sup>

63. Another action is the development of an EU-wide [Code of Practice on online disinformation](#), support for an independent network of fact-checkers, and tools to stimulate quality journalism which was signed by Facebook, Google, Twitter and Mozilla, as well as the trade association representing online platforms and trade associations representing the advertising industry and advertisers. Under this Code, the signatories give a commitment to partner with civil society, governments, educational institutions and other stakeholders to support efforts aimed at improving critical thinking and digital media literacy.

64. Also, Facebook has launched the Digital Literacy Library. The website offers free interactive lessons and videos, addressing topics such as privacy, reputation and online security.<sup>81</sup>

65. In 2015, Twitter opened its *Neighbor’s Nest*, a community tech learning centre, where it provides technology access and digital literacy workshops for local residents.<sup>82</sup>

66. In light of present political and societal priorities, various initiatives by internet intermediaries in this connection tend to address the specific problem of disinformation, as can be seen in the few examples above. These examples often involve providing funding for projects and teaming up with other partners in projects that aim to promote media literacy. While welcome, these examples are mainly incidental and represent small sums of money (relative to the turn-over of those corporations). As long as such initiatives by multinational tech companies remain their own initiatives and wholly voluntary, the companies themselves can determine the focuses of the initiatives, the target applicants, the selection criteria for application processes, the amounts of financing involved, the terms and conditions governing the financing, the frequency with which the financing is awarded. As corporate entities, they have corporate interests which can colour their initiatives. Thus, initiatives by internet intermediaries often have added value due to the centrality of intermediaries in the media ecosystem and due to the financial support often offered by the initiatives in question, but they should be given a guarded welcome. They should be seen as complementary to, rather than a substitute for, structured systems and schemes of non-commercial funding.

67. In light of the corporate social responsibility of such “tech giants”, as well as the human rights due diligence that they should show across all of their activities, much more could be achieved in this connection. States should lead the line in teasing out the nature and scope of relevant, structural commitments by multinational corporations.

## 6. Conclusions

68. An overarching conclusion of this report is that there is an ongoing need for constructive multi-actor collaboration in order to promote media education in the new media environment. There is growing attention for media literacy across the Council of Europe 47 member States. The promotion of media literacy, understood as a range of critical, technical and civic skills needed by everyone – not only children and young people – to effectively use the media, passively and actively, and to participate in public debate and public affairs, is being increasingly take up by Council of Europe bodies, like the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly.

69. Yet, considerable challenges remain to advance these ongoing efforts and to render them more effective. The report has shown – even in its relatively limited selection of available examples – that there is enormous variety in how member States organise and promote media literacy. The Committee of Ministers in its Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)1 calls on member States to promote national policies and networks, and

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78. Craig Silverman, ‘Facebook Is Turning To Fact-Checkers To Fight Fake News’, BuzzFeed News, 15 December 2016: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/craigsilverman/facebook-and-fact-checkers-fight-fake-news>.

79. Dave Lee, ‘Key fact-checkers stop working with Facebook’, BBC News, 2 February 2019: <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-47098021>.

80. <https://www.facebook.com/facebookmedia/blog/the-facebook-journalism-project-partners-with-the-news-literacy-project-to-expand-its-news-literacy-classroom-for-students>

81. <https://www.facebook.com/safety/educators/>

82. [https://blog.twitter.com/official/en\\_us/a/2016/twitter-neighborstest-how-we-learn-connect-and-grow-together.html](https://blog.twitter.com/official/en_us/a/2016/twitter-neighborstest-how-we-learn-connect-and-grow-together.html)

to invest in curricular development and in non-curricular initiatives to integrate media literacy into life-long learning schemes. Vision, organisation, collaboration and investment are key words for the realisation of these goals. The above examples document a great wealth of initiatives; the challenge remains to achieve synergies and invest in the structural educational development of media literacy, in close partnership with actors from other sectors. However, without clear mandates and adequate resources, media literacy will remain contingent on private and voluntary endeavours, whereas sustainable solutions are needed.

70. The revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) from the European Commission also strengthens the role of media literacy and requires member States to promote and take measures for the development of media literacy skills, and video-sharing platforms are obliged to provide for effective media literacy measures and tools. Elements of media literacy are addressed as well in the European Commission “Communication on tackling online disinformation: a European approach”, which outlines *inter alia* the need to foster education and media literacy for tackling disinformation online. A positive development aimed at improving critical thinking and digital media literacy is the EU Code of Practice on online disinformation, supporting an independent network of fact-checkers and quality journalism, signed by major tech platforms and advertisers.

71. We can see that there is a significant number of great projects happening, which is a positive trend given that need for media literacy is more urgent now than ever before. At the same time, some challenges persist in relation to media literacy policy implementation and media education, notably:

- *Devolved responsibility*, especially in countries like the United Kingdom and Germany: it is very difficult to create one system or policy that would work for everyone. This is compounded by the fact that there is a constant debate about whether media literacy should be cross-curricular or subject specific.
- *Teacher support*: media literacy needs are evolving at a rapid pace, at times faster than media literacy curriculum can be developed and delivered in classrooms. Teachers need more support and training especially if media literacy is delivered as cross-curricular subject.
- *Funding and co-ordination* at national and international levels: media and information literacy touches on so many policy areas, that there is constant risk of it falling between different policy areas. While everyone can see the benefit of promoting media and information literacy, nobody has the overall responsibility to make it happen. This can make it difficult to secure long-term funding for media and information literacy projects and more importantly, it can make it hard to see what sector or organisations should be providing leadership.
- *Cross-sector collaboration*: The 2016 European Audiovisual Observatory report mapping the most significant projects in promotion of media literacy in the EU 28 member States showed that over two-thirds of the organisations identified in the study, which were promoting media literacy, did not have a statutory responsibility around media literacy. It also showed that “cross-sector collaboration” was a key aspect of delivering a significant media literacy projects. But the same report also shows that there was a lack of platforms at a national level to facilitate effective cross-section collaboration.

72. Given these and other challenges to meet, as well as the complexity of the whole picture regarding media education and media literacy in the Council of Europe area, this report can constitute an intermediary step towards a harmonised action plan at the European level. However, already at this stage, the Assembly could play an instrumental role in encouraging the adoption and implementation of national policy plans for the operationalisation of the promotion of media literacy and education; in fostering the development of national, multi-actor and multi-sectoral media literacy networks; and in boosting stronger internet intermediaries’ commitment and contributions to the promotion of media literacy and education.