

Fostering *freedom*
MEDIA LITERACY
— across the OSCE region —

By Martina Chapman
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#MFL

This publication was commissioned by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. It is part of the project “Promoting Media and Information Literacy in the OSCE participating States”.

The views, findings, interpretations, recommendations and conclusions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the OSCE and/or its participating States.

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ISBN: 978-92-9271-380-5

**A report for the OSCE
Representative on
Freedom of the Media
exploring how Media
Freedom Literacy can be
fostered across the OSCE
region**

April 2024

By Martina Chapman and Asja Rokša-Zubčević

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1 Executive Summary

This report forms part of a project designed to support policy-making processes, cross-sectoral collaboration and public awareness of media freedom literacy in the OSCE participating States.

Media literacy (ML) or media and information literacy (MIL) is understood as an umbrella term encompassing a range of skills, competencies and knowledge that can empower citizens to make informed decisions in relation to the media content that they consume, create and disseminate - thereby influencing and strengthening democratic societies. As such, it is a critical skill-set for the preservation/development of democratic values and principles.

Acknowledging the nexus between media freedom and media literacy, this report aims to provide a practical tool which would help to advance media freedom literacy across the OSCE region. It is hoped that by exploring the concept of media freedom literacy and trying to describe it in terms of competencies and skills, urgent attention can be drawn to the need for citizens to develop a set of skills that are critical to the effective functioning of democratic societies.

Based on the working definition of media freedom literacy (MFL) that was developed by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, a draft framework was created which identified four broad competency areas and associated skills which could help to foster media freedom literacy. The competency areas are:

- Understanding and valuing the democratic functions of the media and other information providers
- Valuing the importance of information pluralism
- Critically evaluating content
- Recognising and valuing the production of information and media content based on journalistic standards

While the notion of media freedom literacy is just emerging, prompted by the increasing threats to media freedom, media plurality and the quality of information available to citizens, a review of key legislative/regulatory obligations in this area shows that the MFL competencies proposed in this report are, to a large extent, already included in legislative and regulatory frameworks across the OSCE region.

Recognised as a key part of countering many media-related issues such as disinformation and hate speech, managing online safety and security and facilitating democratic engagement, media literacy has been rising on international policy agendas for a number of years. As a result, there are already a significant number of legislative, and regulatory mechanisms and obligations, that address different aspects of media literacy, including many which relate to media freedom literacy.

Of particular note are the numerous Recommendations made by the Council of Europe, as well as a range of pieces of EU legislation such as the 2018 [‘Audiovisual Media Services Directive’](#), the [‘Digital Services Act’](#) the [‘Media and Audiovisual Action Plan’](#), the [‘European Democracy Action Plan’](#) the [‘European Media Freedom Act’](#) the [‘Recommendation on internal safeguards for editorial independence and ownership transparency in the media sector’](#), the [‘Code of Practice on Disinformation’](#) and the [‘Digital Education Action Plan 2021 – 2027’](#).

Also, throughout the OSCE region, legal obligations relating to media literacy and by extension media freedom literacy, are now being applied to a range of stakeholders, including media regulatory authorities, video-sharing platforms and other media actors.

A set of eight broad recommendations are made to help foster media freedom literacy:

1. Adopt a ‘Cradle to Grave’ approach: As with ML and MIL, MFL should be viewed as a life-long learning process with different citizens requiring different support at different stages of their learning journey. As such, States, media and other stakeholders should be prepared to lead on, participate in, and fund MFL projects on a long-term basis. This approach involves leadership and input from a number of stakeholders.

2. Maximise impact via a multi-stakeholder approach: Working in partnership is recognised as a key aspect of delivering significant MIL projects with initiatives involving cross-sector collaboration generating significant reach, engagement and impact.

3. Empower citizens with timely and relevant information: Legislation for, and regulation of, online media is particularly complex. Considerable efforts are likely to be required to ensure that citizens fully understand the principles of related laws and what the impact and positive benefit of new regulation will be for citizens in terms of media freedom.

4. Insist on transparency from all stakeholders: In line with recommendations from UNESCO and European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA), transparency should be a common over-arching principle in relation to the promotion of MFL.

5. Prominence of public interest content: Understanding the value of public interest content is understanding and appreciating the democratic value of the media function and is therefore a crucial part of media freedom literacy. A variety of stakeholders have a role to play in enhancing its prominence.

6. Create an evidence base to develop effective interventions: A robust and well-managed evidence-base may also provide insights about how people understand and make choices when dealing with media, including awareness of irrationalities, biases, inaccuracies and falsehoods. This guidance and data should inform public policies and MFL programmes and interventions.

7. Guarantee availability and access to quality content: Secure supply of high-quality media supports unhindered democratic processes in societies. The availability and prominence of quality media not only provides citizens with necessary information on which to make informed decisions, based on accurate and reliable information, but also addresses the problem of news desertification¹.

8. Raise awareness and understanding of media concentration and media pluralism: Given the substantial cultural and social significance of the media in promoting democratic values and principles, it is more important now than ever before that citizens understand the importance of media pluralism and especially the negative impact of media concentration.

Linked to each of these recommendations are a list of suggested activities for specific sets of stakeholders including government and state agencies, media regulatory authorities, academia/researchers, the education sector, the media, civil society organisations and online platforms.

¹ News desertification refers to the crisis facing traditional news media in areas where digital transformations and dire economic circumstances forces the closure of local news outlets.

2 Introduction

We are at a pivotal moment for democratic development, prompted by a number of factors including the evolving role, reach and impact of digital media.

There is no doubt that digital media and communications technologies, services and platforms have offered citizens incredible opportunities to engage with, create and shape the media environment, but some of these opportunities also come at a cost, the true extent of which is only becoming apparent now.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the near universal access to digital media by citizens, the critical role of informed discussion and debate across society is being undermined in favour of the exploitation of concerns and the extreme polarisation of views (often for financial gain).

In addition, the lack of a 'level playing field' between regulated and unregulated media, as well as a lack of understanding of how different media are funded and operate serves to undermine trust in quality journalism.

These factors are at play at a time when it is more important than ever that citizens recognise that media represent one of the key elements necessary for the functioning democracies.

The role of the media in presenting objective, impartial, accurate information which supports healthy discussion is fundamental to the processes on which a democratic society is built. The media also has a critical role in holding power to account and looking after the interests of ordinary citizens.

But to achieve this, media freedom (the right of journalists, media outlets, and citizens to express themselves freely without undue interference, censorship or fear of reprisal) and media plurality (diversity of voices, opinions and publicly debated issues, but also plurality of online and offline media outlets and co-habitation of public, private and community media) are essential.

Media freedom and media pluralism are central to the functioning of a democratic society as they secure the availability of, and accessibility to, a diverse range of information and views - the basis of which individuals can form and express their opinions and exchange information and

ideas. Furthermore, transparency of media ownership can help to make media pluralism effective by drawing the attention of the public to the ownership structures behind the media – which can influence editorial policies.²

So what can be done to raise awareness of the importance of media freedom across society and foster an environment where citizens are better able to recognise, and access, the different types of media and make informed decisions about the media that they consume and disseminate?

To help address this question, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) initiated a project that aims to support policy-making processes, cross-sectoral collaboration and public awareness of media freedom literacy in the OSCE participating States. Based on results of initial research carried out by the OSCE, as well as the outcomes from an OSCE-wide conference in 2022, a working definition was produced which describes media freedom literacy as:

the knowledge and skills that enhance citizens ability to understand and value the democratic functions of the media and other information providers, online and offline, and the importance of a pluralistic, well-functioning media landscape serving the public interest, including critical evaluation and ethical production of information and media content.

The purpose of this document, developed as part of the RFoM Media Freedom Literacy Project, is to explore the concept of MFL, how it relates to media literacy/media and information literacy and identify the competency areas and associated skills that are fundamental to media freedom literacy.

This report also aims to create a practical tool to help the development of a wider range of interventions to foster MFL.

Chapter 4 aims to describe media freedom literacy and outline the competencies and skills that might promote media freedom.

2 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)1\[1\] of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership - Freedom of Expression \(coe.int\)](#)

Chapter 5 considers the regulatory and legislative landscape that relates to media freedom literacy by focusing on the link between media freedom and media literacy/media and information literacy.

The wider media freedom landscape is explored in Chapter 6, highlighting a number of existing projects that are promoting media freedom literacy in different ways.

A set of recommendations for developing media freedom literacy is made in Chapter 7, along with specific suggestions for key actors including government and State agencies, independent regulators, media organisations, civil society and the academic and education sector.

Finally, Chapter 8 highlights a number of 'case-study' projects to help illustrate the diversity of activity already taking place and to inspire new activity that will help to protect media freedom and media plurality by empowering citizens with media freedom literacy.

3 Methodology

This study is based on a mix of qualitative and quantitative data and analysis gathered from desk research and a bespoke online survey.

Desk Research

The desk research was carried out based on existing documentation. Initial analysis of existing media literacy/media and information literacy frameworks was undertaken to identify skills and competencies that facilitate media freedom literacy (based on the working definition of media freedom literacy (MFL) provided by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

By examining existing frameworks from UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the [EU's 2022 DigComp framework](#)³ four broad MFL competency areas and associated knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours were identified as being likely to enhance the knowledge and skills on media freedom literacy:

- the ability to understand and value the democratic functions of the media and other information providers, online and offline
- the importance of media pluralism
- critical evaluation of media content
- ethical production of information and media content

Further desk research was undertaken to identify the key legislative and regulatory obligations that could support media freedom literacy across the OSCE region, at national and international levels. This research focused on regulatory mechanisms and obligations that address different aspects of media literacy/media and information literacy, viewed through the lens of the competencies noted above.

It should be noted that the list of instruments examined, especially in relation to national laws, is not exhaustive. Instead, it represents an overview of these legislative frameworks. In addition, the focus of the review was limited to media-related legislative and regulatory instruments and guidance.

3 [JRC Publications Repository - DigComp 2.2: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens - With new examples of knowledge, skills and attitudes \(europa.eu\)](#)

Online Survey

To gather examples of (mainly, but not exclusively) media literacy projects that were likely to promote media freedom literacy, an online survey was created using Survey Monkey.

In order to compare potentially diverse projects, a set of common criteria was required. Therefore, the online survey was designed to collect data about projects against a set of four criteria in order to provide some comparative mechanism.

The criteria used in the online survey were based on a review of existing studies considering 'good' or 'promising' practices or approaches including:

- [Study on Supporting Quality Journalism through Media and Information Literacy](#) (Council of Europe)
- [Global Standards for Media and Information Literacy Curricula Development Guidelines](#) (UNESCO)
- [ERGA Media Literacy Report](#)
- [Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28](#) (Council of Europe/European Audiovisual Observatory)

Criteria	Rationale
Learning Outcomes and competencies	How the outcomes of the project/initiative can foster Media Freedom Literacy.
Project Overview	Project name, description, objectives, categorisation, target audiences, budgets, location, timelines, localisation, project partners, evidence base.
Results and Outcomes	Outcomes and outputs of the project/initiative linked to objectives and measuring aspects like reach, awareness, impact and actions undertaken.
Measurement and Evaluation	Evidence of evaluation taking place such as evaluation framework or mechanism to test, iterate and refine throughout project life-cycle.

The survey was promoted among media literacy/media and information literacy networks (often at national levels) as well as via ‘networks of networks’ such as European Platform of Regulatory Authorities’ (EPRA) EMIL network, the European Digital Media Observatory network and the OSCE RFoM’s network.

Over 100 responses to the survey were received. Only responses that promoted the MFL competencies, and provided enough relevant information (such as project description and outcomes), were analysed. 53 responses were analysed covering the 38 countries listed below. Eight projects involved multiple countries and some responses captured large regions such as the EU or the South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and the MENA region. The geographic spread of countries captured across the 53 responses were as follows:

Algeria	Finland	Namibia
Austria	France	Nepal
Belgium (Flanders)	Gabon	Nigeria
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Germany	North Macedonia
Bulgaria	Greece	Romania
Burkina Faso	Ireland	Serbia
Burundi	Jordan	South Korea
Canada	Kenya	Sweden
Columbia	Latvia	Trinidad and Tobago
Cyprus	Lithuania	United Kingdom
Ecuador	Malta	Ukraine
Ethiopia	Mongolia	Uzbekistan
Estonia	Myanmar	

4 Understanding Media Freedom Literacy

Media literacy (ML) and media and information literacy (MIL) are terms that are well understood as concepts that encompass a broad range of skills and competencies which can empower citizens to make informed choices about the media content they consume, create and disseminate on a daily basis - and reflect upon how those choices might influence their daily lives, and the lives of others. For the purposes of this study the terms will be used interchangeably.

Media literacy is a dynamic concept that evolves in response to changes in technology, social norms and societal needs. It is also linked to a range of different policy areas dealing with different types of literacies or knowledge such as online safety and security; data protection; critical thinking; content creation; digital skills etc.

It is widely recognised that media literacy skills are essential skills in a democratic society. However, the range of skills and competencies covered by media literacy is vast. In fact, the 2022 Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp 2.2) identifies 5 competence areas, 21 competencies and notes 250 examples of knowledge, skills and attitudes that help citizens engage confidently, critically and safely with digital technologies, and new and emerging ones such as systems driven by artificial intelligence (AI).

While different types of 'literacies' may be perceived to 'owned' by particular policy areas, the skills and knowledge that underpin many of these 'literacies' are common and can be overlapping or interdependent. As such, it is extremely difficult to try to differentiate between different literacies based on skills and competencies.

As noted in the previous chapter, the working definition of media freedom literacy is the knowledge and skills that enhance the ability to understand and value the democratic functions of the media and other information providers, online and offline, and the importance of information pluralism. This includes critical evaluation and ethical production of information and media content.

The concept and importance of media literacy/media and information literacy is well understood and recognised in a significant number of international and national legislative and regulatory frameworks. However, the notion of media freedom literacy is just emerging,

prompted by the increasing threats to media freedom, media plurality and the quality of information available to citizens.

It is likely that most, if not all, of the skills and knowledge required for media freedom literacy will overlap, to some degree, with media literacy skills and knowledge.

To help draw attention to the particular set of skills and knowledge that will empower citizens to recognise, value and demand media freedom and media plurality, a MLF framework was created which identified four broad competency areas and associated skills. (See Table 1 below.)

The purpose of developing this media freedom literacy framework is to:

- a. Help describe in more detail what media freedom literacy means
- b. Explore how existing media literacy and media and information literacy policies and strategies might also foster media freedom literacy,
- c. Explore how existing media literacy initiatives and interventions might be fostering media freedom literacy,
- d. Support the development of new interventions and approaches to fostering media freedom literacy.

Table 1: Media freedom literacy competency framework

Media Literacy Freedom Competency	Related knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours
Understand and value the democratic functions of the media and other information providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the role of the media to hold those in power to account; • Recognise the value of media to increase civic consciousness and social participation; • Understand rights and responsibilities around access to information, freedom of expression, protection of privacy and data; • Participate in the public sphere by constructively expressing opinions and responding to the opinions of others; • Understand media messages by reading, listening, comparing etc.

Value the importance of information pluralism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the role that independent and diversified media plays in a healthy democratic society, e.g. presenting different points of view and promoting informed debate. • Understand and recognise different funding models for media (e.g. private ownership, public funding, advertising, sponsorship).
Critically evaluate content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate content and services for reliability, independence and impartiality; • Understand how to integrate critical thinking competencies in addressing health literacy, financial literacy, science literacy, intercultural literacy and other forms of social literacy; • Recognise influencing factors such as stereotyping, bias, unfair portrayal, harmful or inappropriate content or context, lack of evidence etc.; • Understand how the presentation of content (style or context) can influence the perception of content.
Recognise and value production of information and media content based on journalistic standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how content is produced; • Distinguish between different types of content such as fact, opinion and advertisement; • Create content in text, images, audio, video and code; • Understand how the production processes, mechanisms and technologies (e.g. algorithms) can influence media choices, patterns of behaviour and diversity of content/views; • Understand how different media are regulated, or not.

5 Overview of key legislative/regulatory obligations

Media literacy/media information literacy has been rising on international policy agendas for a number of years and is widely acknowledged as a key part of the first line of defence in managing a range of media-related issues such as countering disinformation and hate speech, managing online safety and security and facilitating democratic engagement.

There are a significant number of legislative and regulatory mechanisms and obligations that address different aspects of media literacy. For the purposes of this study, the legislative and regulatory landscape is viewed through the lens of the MFL competencies, as well as exploring how some of the main international instruments from organisations such as UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Union prioritise the proposed MFL competencies (an overview of this mapping is provided in Appendix A). Reference is also made to some national frameworks that are applicable to MFL competencies (see Appendix B).

It should be noted that the instruments described here, especially in relation to national laws, are not exhaustive and represent an overview of these legislative frameworks. In addition, the focus of this review has been limited to media-related legislative and regulatory instruments and guidance.

It is notable that the MFL competencies proposed in this paper are, to a large extent, already incorporated into an array of legislative and regulatory frameworks, obligations and guidance across the OSCE region, providing a strong foundation on which to build and evaluate new media freedoms literacy initiatives.

5.1 Supra and international legislative and regulatory obligations and commitments

OSCE RFoM

Noting the nexus between media freedom and media literacy, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media aims to support policy-making processes, cross-sectoral collaboration and public awareness in the OSCE participating States (pS) on media freedom literacy. The

need for governments to promote media and digital literacy (including the MFL competencies outlined above) by engaging with media outlets, civil society and other stakeholders, has been stressed in various RfOM documents including:

[Policy Manual: Spotlight on Artificial Intelligence and Freedom of Expression](#) released in January 2022 which calls on pS to establish sustainable media and digital literacy programmes for all groups in society. The Policy Manual also recommends increasing digital literacy so that individuals are empowered to better manage their own media consumption and use of internet intermediaries' services.

[Communiqué on Media Freedom during Elections](#) highlighting the need for equipping the citizenry with the necessary knowledge, skills and tools to navigate the digital information space and calling on the pS to establish a framework where public interest content is promoted in the digital sphere.

[Communiqué on propaganda in times of conflict](#), recommends ensuring media plurality and free media as an antidote to propaganda, but refraining from introducing new restrictions; existing laws can deal with extreme propaganda, invest in media literacy for citizens to make informed choices.

UNESCO

UNESCO has been involved in promoting people's critical information, technology, and media competencies for close to 40 years and has developed a range of resources and supports for Member States.

Its 2013 publication: '[Media and information literacy: policy and strategy guidelines](#)⁴ conceptualises an all-encompassing media and information literacy model that recognises the importance of all forms of online and offline media and recommends processes and practices to enable citizens to: "effectively create and use information and media content ethically, as well as engaging with media and other information providers in their social, economic, political, cultural and personal lives."⁵

'[Global Media and Information Literacy Week](#)', proclaimed by the UN General Assembly Resolution of 25 March 2021, is marked by UNESCO

4 Grizzle, A., Moore, P., Dezuanni, M., Asthana, S., Wilson, C., Banda, F., Onumah, C., Media and information literacy: policy and strategy guidelines, Unesco, 2013.

5 Ibid.

annually, with the objective of gathering and mobilising worldwide stakeholders, including Member States, international organisations, civil society and the private sector, to undertake activities related to the promotion of media and information literacy. Member States are also urged to ensure that their plans, policies and strategies to counter disinformation and misinformation are in keeping with the principles of independent and pluralistic media and the right to freedom of expression and opinion.

UNESCO's 2023 '[Guidelines for the governance of digital platforms](#)' identifies responsibilities for online platforms and other stakeholders and highlights the importance of cooperation and of a multistakeholder approach to safeguarding freedom of expression and the right to information while dealing with dis- and misinformation, hate speech, and conspiracy theories. It articulates five principles to be adhered to in online sphere, including human rights due diligence, adherence to international human rights standards, transparency, as well as making information and tools available for users and accountability.

UNESCO also supports its Member States to formulate media and information literacy policies by providing them with technical guidance and resources to be adapted to local context. The '[Global Standards for Media and Information Literacy Curricula Development Guidelines](#)' are intended to be used by stakeholders, particularly policymakers, media, libraries, digital platforms, education and training institutions, and Non-Governmental Organisations as a benchmark towards articulating common media and information literacy competencies.

The '[Global Media and Information Literacy Assessment Framework: country readiness and competencies](#)' encourages Member States to take concrete actions to help citizens to become media and information literate. It also invites them to assess how favourable the national environment is for MIL initiatives and to determine existing competencies among key social groups, such as teachers in service and in training.

In addition, the UNESCO MIL Unit recently released a '[Policy Brief responding to AI through the lens of MIL](#)' offering fresh perspectives on how to deal with AI governance and restore trust in media and information. The policy brief offers several recommendations to guide stakeholders in developing frameworks, policies and regulatory mechanisms for generative AI.

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe (CoE) promotes an enabling environment for freedom of expression, underpinned by legal guarantees for independence and diversity of media and safety of journalists and other media actors.⁶

The Council of Europe's Media and Internet division facilitates the work of the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) and has produced a number of Recommendations aimed at Member States that incorporate MFL competencies by way of guidelines relating to ML / MIL. Recently the Council of Europe also developed public-facing tools in the form of an online [Digital Rights Quiz](#) to help citizens understand how fundamental rights apply across all media.

Over the last decade or so, a number of CoE Recommendations have acknowledged the critical role that MIL and by extension MFL, has in empowering citizens with the skills and knowledge to:

- Recognise, use and value quality journalism⁷
- Understand the conditions under which digital technologies affect freedom of expression, how information of varying quality is produced, distributed and processed, and the ways in which individuals can protect their rights⁸
- Enhance awareness of the kinds of personal data that are processed and/or generated by digital devices, software and applications, the processes and user behaviour that generate them, the ways in which algorithms draw inferences from them, and the purposes for which different public and private organisations employ these inferences to influence the attitudes and behaviour of individuals and groups⁹.

6 Council of Europe, Media, available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/media>

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

8 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the impacts of digital technologies on freedom of expression](#)

9 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the impacts of digital technologies on freedom of expression](#)

- Participate with informed understanding in the political life of a country, either as voters or politicians in the new online environment¹⁰.
- Search, acquire and evaluate information from diverse sources¹¹
- Encourage the responsible use of media and platforms, while being mindful that calling for individuals to be responsible does not discharge States, the media and platforms from their respective responsibilities¹²
- Gain a comprehensive understanding of how online infrastructure and economy are operated and regulated and how technology can influence choice in relation to media¹³
- Know and understand how their personal data are collected, stored and used by internet platforms¹⁴

A multistakeholder approach to promoting ML/MIL skills is also strongly advocated for in a range of CoE instruments¹⁵, as is the role of independent national regulatory authorities and/or other bodies in the promotion of ML/MIL¹⁶.

10 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on electoral communication and media coverage of election campaigns](#)

11 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on electoral communication and media coverage of election campaigns](#)

12 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)11 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on principles for media and communication governance](#)

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

14 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the roles and responsibilities of internet intermediaries](#)

15 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the impacts of digital technologies on freedom of expression; Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age; Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)1\[1\] of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership](#)

16 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)1\[1\] of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership](#)

The importance of integrating MIL/MFL skills into the general education curriculum is also recognised in a number of CoE Recommendations¹⁷, as well seeing MIL/MFL as life-long learning¹⁸ and supporting non-formal educational activities and cultural programmes targeting the general public to incorporate MIL/MFL skills to support a pluralistic democratic society, encourage critical thinking, promote equality and intercultural and interfaith dialogue¹⁹.

The role of community media is also recognised as an important way for persons belonging to minorities or other groups with limited access to quality information to access the media²⁰ and public service media and community media were seen to be able to play leading roles in the promotion media literacy by virtue of their objectives, mandates and working methods²¹. See Spotlight 3 (page 25) and Spotlight 6 (page 27) for projects from community media and public service media.

17 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#); [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on electoral communication and media coverage of election campaigns](#); [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age](#); [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)1\[1\] of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership](#)

18 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age](#); [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age](#); [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)1\[1\] of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership](#)

19 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#); [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on electoral communication and media coverage of election campaigns](#)

20 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech](#); [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the impacts of digital technologies on freedom of expression](#); [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on electoral communication and media coverage of election campaigns](#)

21 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)1\[1\] of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership](#)

The need for a strong evidence based informed by rigorous, independent research, is also recognised, which would help to identify gaps in provision, and inform the development of interventions²².

Also, recommended are additional empowerment measures, such as labelling of reliable content, ensuring the transparency of commercial content and political advertising, enhancing the transparency, accountability and explainability of algorithmic systems and introducing alternative forms of personalisation compatible with the public interest²³.

It was also noted that the integration of MIL /MFL into teachers' education and further training is necessary²⁴ and that the promotion of media and information literacy should encompass education about the rights of all stakeholders, including other users and affected parties²⁵.

European Union

Media literacy is embedded in a number of pieces of European legislation. The 2018 revision of the '[Audiovisual Media Services Directive](#)' (AVMSD) governs the EU-wide coordination of national legislation on all audiovisual media (linear TV, Video Service Providers (VSPs and on-demand services). The revised Directive strengthens the role of media literacy in empowering citizens with a particular focus on critical thinking skills (one of the key competency areas of MFL). It requires Member States to promote and take measures that develop media literacy skills (Article 33a of the 2018 AVMSD) and to report periodically on these actions. It also obliges video-sharing platforms to provide effective media literacy measures and tools and to raise users' awareness of those measures and tools. (Article 28b of the 2018 AVMSD).

Although a long time in existence as a term in various projects throughout the OSCE region, the initial inclusion of references to media literacy in

22 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the impacts of digital technologies on freedom of expression; Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age](#)

23 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)11 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on principles for media and communication governance](#)

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

25 [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the roles and responsibilities of internet intermediaries](#)

the 2010 AVMSD, but particularly in the 2018 revision, marked a notable increase of the inclusion of media literacy in subsequent national policies and regulatory frameworks.

The '[Media and Audiovisual Action Plan](#)' (MAAP) published in 2020, aims to boost European media and help maintain European cultural and technological autonomy in the Digital Decade. It also articulates a requirement for a "Media Literacy Toolbox" for Member States, arising from the media literacy provisions and obligations under the revised AVMS Directive.

The European Regulators Group for Audio Visual Media Services (ERGA) produced a '[Media Literacy Took-Box for Video-sharing Platforms](#)', outlining six key principles that VSP's should apply when developing MIL measures – Transparency; Multi-stakeholder approach; Focus on the user/ citizen; Reach; Localisation; and Evaluation.

The '[European Democracy Action Plan](#)' (EDAP), adopted in 2020, aims to strengthen the resilience of EU democracies by a variety of measures clustered around three pillars: strengthening media freedom and pluralism, promoting free and fair elections, and countering disinformation. The 'media freedom and pluralism' pillar, emphasises the role of journalists in ensuring reliable and pluralistic information, and the importance of safeguarding their unhindered and safer working conditions. The 2021 '[Recommendation to strengthen the safety of journalists and other media professional's](#)', calls for vigorous investigation of, and prosecution for, attacks on journalists, increased online safety, provision of various support services etc., and the 2022 '[Proposal for a Directive on strategic lawsuits against public participation](#)' (SLAPP) which introduces procedural safeguards and remedies for cross-border SLAPP cases, including early dismissal of such cases, effective remedies and dissuasive penalties.

The '[European Media Freedom Act](#)' (EMFA) represents new legislation that will regulate the media environment in the EU, as part of the EU's set of rules to curb multiple threats to media freedom in Europe, from attacks on journalistic independence, concentration of media ownership, abusive lawsuits against journalists, etc. This regulation highlights various measures to protect independent media, increasing transparency of media ownership and in government spending towards media. The EMFA builds on the obligations stemming from the AVMSD

and concentrates on efforts to provide for more financial stability and opportunities in the media sector for growth to smaller media companies, in an effort to preserve the functioning democratic values, such as those identified in the related competencies.

The EMFA recognises that interference in editorial decisions of media service providers negatively affects the information rights of users. The ability to critically evaluate content is seen here as closely connected to transparency of media ownership.

Together with the EMFA proposal, the European Commission adopted a [‘Recommendation on internal safeguards for editorial independence and ownership transparency in the media sector’](#), proposing a non-exhaustive catalogue of voluntary measures to media service providers providing news and current affairs content in order to foster independence of their individual editorial decisions, such as rules ensuring the integrity of the editorial content, involvement of editorial staff in governance and decision-making processes and the establishment of internal ethics bodies.

The EMFA is part of the wider EU initiative, the [‘Digital Services Act’](#) (DSA) which aims to create a safer online environment, accountability for online platforms which are identified as online marketplaces, and to address some of the current challenges of the digital environment, including illegal products and activities, hate speech and disinformation, and transparent delivery and control of data protection.

Of particular relevance are transparency requirements relating to recommender systems employed by online platforms to control access to and findability of online content. Empowerment of users in terms of providing better control over how personal data are being utilised by platforms to recommend certain content, as well as options for receiving content not based on algorithmic profiling are other valuable tools in this regard.

Risk assessment and mitigation obligations introduced by the DSA for very large online platforms and search engines (VLOPSEs) aim to tackle problems such as negative impacts on fundamental rights (including freedom of expression and information, media freedom and pluralism) and civic discourse or electoral processes (such as disinformation) at source i.e. the way platforms are designed, function or are being used. Some of the mitigation measures envisaged to counter those risks

relate precisely to better informing and empowering users, for example through tools to recognize, understand and flag disinformation, to access authoritative resources, and through media literacy initiatives as provided for in the strengthened '[Code of Practice on Disinformation](#)'.

The Code of Practice on Disinformation – another measure under the umbrella of the European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP) - sets out the commitments and measures aimed at countering online disinformation, such as the demonetisation of the dissemination of disinformation, ensuring the transparency of political advertising, empowering users, enhancing the cooperation with fact-checkers and providing researchers with better access to data.

EU Council '[Conclusions on Media Literacy in an ever-changing world](#)' published in 2020 recognises the important role that National Regulatory Authorities can play in the promotion, organisation and coordination of ML initiatives – such as bringing stakeholders together.

The '[Digital Education Action Plan 2021 – 2027](#)' (DEAP) sets out a common vision of high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education in Europe, and aims to support the adaptation of the education and training systems of Member States to the digital age.

5.2 National legislative and regulatory obligations

The MFL competencies proposed in this document are also observed throughout the OSCE region in national legislative and regulatory obligations. This is largely a reflection of the participating States' legal obligations to ensure the right to freedom of expression and media freedoms, stemming both from their constitutional obligations or national laws, as well as the obligations to observe and implement relevant international legal documents.

Media-related legislation of the EU Member States, as well as the EU candidate countries, reflects the relevant EU legislation, having in mind the obligations of these countries to either transpose relevant EU directives (such as the AVMSD) into their legal and regulatory frameworks, or the fact that this field is increasingly being regulated by means of acts having a direct application in EU Member States (such as the DSA and the EMFA). This applies also to media and information literacy obligations, closely connected with the MFL competency of

critical evaluation of content. In a similar vein, the Council of Europe members are – albeit not in a legally binding manner – covered by numerous CoE instruments that contribute to the MFL competencies.

However, even though they do not fall within the scope of this overview, it is important to note that the MFL competencies also originate, to a large extent, from sources other than the legislative overview provided below (e.g., PBS-related legislation, general media laws, defamation laws, etc.). They are contained in a number of by-laws, regulations, rules or codes – so both binding and non-binding instruments adopted and/or being implemented by bodies such as national regulatory authorities or press councils. The national regulatory authorities (NRA) are generally in charge of implementing the regulatory framework that recognises, supports and safeguards the role of media in a democratic society (e.g. through rules on editorial freedom and independence, due accuracy and impartiality etc.) as well as ensuring the pluralism of information (e.g. through licensing rules, programming obligations etc.). Resources connected to recognition and valuing of ethical production of information and media content can be found predominantly in self-regulatory instruments and practices such as journalists' codes of ethics.

Last but not least, in some countries there are other strategic levers (such as policies, strategies or action plans) that refer to, shape or drive the key MFL competencies. Some of these tools are highlighted below for illustrative purposes to show the diversity of approaches and provide insight and inspiration around the development of media freedom literacy.

EU Member States and Candidate Countries

As mentioned, EU Member States and EU Candidate Countries are bound by the relevant EU legislation outlined in Section 5.1. However, there are several notable examples of policy texts, strategies or approaches at a national level, especially in the field of media and information literacy that are included here for illustrative purposes. In Belgium (Flanders) one of the learning goals of formal education [set by the Government](#), is the critical evaluation of content defined in terms of dealing responsibly, critically and ethically with digital and non-digital media and information. The Flemish Government, through the Minister of Media's policy, funds the '[Nieuws in de Klas](#)' (News in the classroom) project which is featured in case-study #2 on page 45 for more information.

Sweden has a long tradition of safeguarding freedom of the press and freedom of expression both by specific legislation addressing these issues and a number of other policy documents such as [‘Support, anchor, defend – Strategy for a strong democracy’](#) (2018) and the [‘Strategy for a strong library system 2022–2025’](#) (2022). The system of media ethics relies on self-regulation, revolving around the work of the Swedish Media Council and the Swedish Media Ombudsman. Media freedom literacy is a fundamental part of the journalistic process also under the Charter for public service broadcasting. There are a number of organisations promoting media freedom literacy, such as UR (the Swedish public service educational broadcasting company), TU/Mediekompas (see Spotlight #13), Mobile Stories (see case-study #3 on page 46) and Blankspot project (a crowdfunded digital-only platform for long form journalism). Finally, the new Swedish Agency for the Media, established as of 1 January 2024 by merging the Swedish Media Council and Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority, is explicitly tasked with the duty to coordinate national efforts for the strengthened media and information literacy in the general population. Among other duties assigned to this agency is the duty to promote freedom of expression, diversity in the media market, as well as the empowering of minors as conscious media users.

Finland has a unique, all-encompassing approach to media education and literacy, which is supported and promoted by national policy guidelines. The current national policy document [‘Media literacy in Finland. National media education policy’](#) was prepared in 2019 in collaboration between the National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI) and Ministry of Education and Culture. It targets a broad variety of stakeholders that are involved in the promotion, support, research and practice of media literacies and media education, and recognizes media literacy as an important element of civic competence. KAVI has a statutory duty to promote media education in Finland. In 2023, reflecting concerns related to the growing importance of social media as a source of information for citizens, the gradual loss of trust in journalism and other institutions, large-scale disinformation campaigns and the spread of conspiracy theories, [KAVI’s](#) remit was extended to include supporting democracy, social resilience.

In **Latvia**, several national strategic documents directly identify the proposed MFL competencies described in this study. The [‘National](#)

[Strategy for the Development of the Electronic Mass Media Industry 2023-2027](#), developed by National Electronic Mass Media Council of Latvia (NEPLP), acknowledges that “Pluralism of opinion and media environment is essential for a strong information space.” Similarly, the [‘Guidelines for digital transformation for 2021-2027’](#) reinforce that, in the digital environment “both the protection of consumer rights and the protection of Internet users against harmful content are necessary, which are closely intertwined with the issues of public education, basic digital skills, media literacy and information literacy development...”. Finally, the [‘Guidelines for Educational development for 2021-2027’](#) emphasises the value of knowledge society.

Representative examples of other OSCE participating States

The main legislative framework for the United Kingdom is the [‘Communications Act 2003’](#) which gives Ofcom, the national regulatory authority, its regulatory powers, including the duty to safeguard media plurality and promote media literacy. Ofcom’s remit was expanded in 2023 by the Online Safety Act, to regulate certain internet services in order to make their use safer for citizens, at the same time introducing duty of care obligations to service providers in several areas including duties regarding the freedom of expression, empowering users, protecting content of democratic importance, and protecting news publisher and journalistic content. In the context of developing media freedom competencies, the Discussion document: [‘Media plurality and online news’](#), published in 2022, sets the groundwork for understanding the implications for media plurality as a result of the increasing role that online intermediaries have in the news value chain. It also highlights the potential use of specific regulatory tools to help secure media plurality and address possible harms including increasing transparency about how online intermediaries deliver news content; empowering user choice in terms of having more control over the news they see; direct regulatory interventions to secure the maintenance of plurality of news online; and measures to ensure sustainability of news providers in the digital environment. Measures to promote media freedoms and protect journalist are also contained in national policy documents such as the [‘National Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists’](#), which was revised in 2023 with new measures including an online tool to report abuses, broader police and industry engagement and a taskforce dedicated to exploring non-legislative means of combating SLAPPs.

In the **United States of America**, the freedom of the press is enshrined in the First Amendment of U.S. Constitution, prohibiting Congress from passing any law that abridges the freedom of speech or of the press. One of the few legal interventions in this field concerns the set-up of the regulatory authority, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) vested with licencing and rulemaking powers, subject to "public interest, convenience, and necessity." This framework is contained in Title 47 of the '[Code of Federal Regulations](#)' (47 CFR) reflecting the US Congress' policy to promote the availability to the public of a diversity of views and information, through measures to prevent undue market power and the diversification of ownership of the media of mass communications, including television and radio. More recently, the House of Representatives has passed the widely supported '[Protect Reporters from Exploitive State Spying Act](#)' (PRESS) that, if passed by the Senate, should prevent the federal government from carrying out surveillance on journalists or compelling them to disclose certain protected information.

In the field of media and information literacy, organizations such as '[Center for Media Literacy](#)' and in particular the '[National Association for Media Literacy Education](#)' (NAMLE) provide resources and support to media literacy education based on several core principles which not only emphasize empowerment and critical evaluation of media content by individuals, but also a healthy media landscape as a public good; support for the development of a participatory media culture where ethical responsibility is taken for creating and sharing media; and, encouragement of critical inquiry about media industries' roles in society.²⁶ The '[News Literacy Project](#)' focusses on tools for enhancing news literacy which is defined as "the ability to determine the credibility of news and other information and to recognize the standards of fact-based journalism to know what to trust, share and act on".

A notable recent development in **Canada** is the passing of the '[Online News Act](#)' (Bill C-18) in 2023, which aims to ensure that the largest online platforms, such as search engines and social media platforms, compensate news organisations when their content is made available on

²⁶ NAMLE: Core Principles Of Media Literacy Education, available at: <https://name.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/NAMLE-Principles-Final-2.1.pdf>

their services. As pointed out in Article 4 of the Act: “The purpose of this Act is to regulate digital news intermediaries with a view to enhancing fairness in the Canadian digital news marketplace and contributing to its sustainability, including the sustainability of news businesses in Canada, in both the non-profit and for-profits sectors, including independent local ones.” The Act creates a mandatory bargaining framework to ensure that platforms compensate news businesses fairly, if they are not able to come to fair agreements independently. Other requirements include safeguards to protect journalistic independence and support for the participation of independent local, Indigenous and official language minority community news outlets. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is responsible for overseeing the bargaining framework under the Act, as well as developing further regulations to support the implementation of the Act, such as the code of conduct on fairness and transparency, and rules on undue preference or discrimination.

Finally, an issue identified at the level of the OSCE which relates to representation in the media is the topic of gender equality in the OSCE area, with numerous activities undertaken by the office of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Special Representative on Gender Issues (SRGI), and regular reports submitted to the Assembly to keep the gender issue high on the agenda of OSCE parliamentarians. By working in concert with the Gender Unit at the International Secretariat, the SRGI develops best practices to promote gender mainstreaming within the OSCE, as well as in OSCE participating States.

Numerous activities are noted in OSCE participating States in this regard within and outside of the realms of media literacy initiatives, inclusive of, e.g., research and data-collection and various awareness raising activities. For example, media regulatory authorities throughout the region publish (annual) reports on the representation of women on television and radio. As the fair representation of women and men on the airwaves and the fight against discrimination on the grounds of sex are very important, it is essential to support the audio-visual media services, as models of representation and levers for social change, to improve the representation of women and enrich their programming to combat gender stereotypes and violence against women (see case-study 8 on page 51).

6 Programmes and Interventions

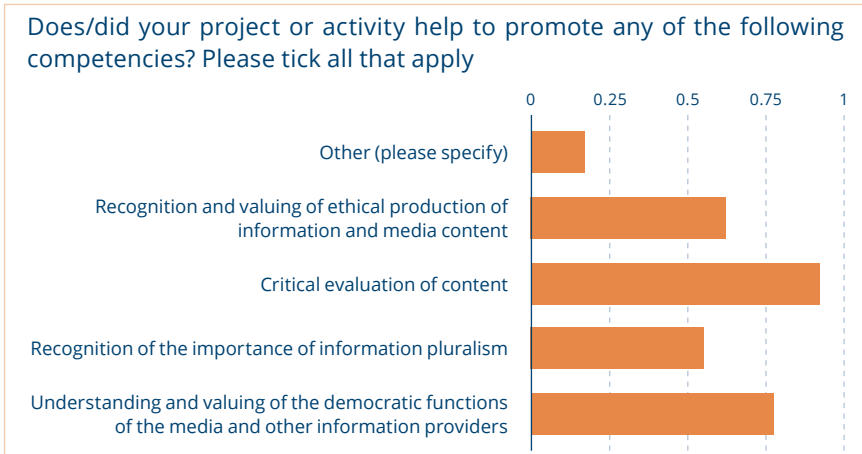
The research undertaken for this study (both the desk research and the online survey) indicates that a significant number of programmes and interventions that are promoting MFL are already underway across the OSCE region. Many, but not all, are 'packaged' as media literacy or media and information literacy projects or interventions, but ultimately these interventions also promote the MFL competencies mentioned earlier.

The information presented in this section should be viewed as a snapshot of activities which can help to illustrate the diversity of projects already being implemented, rather than a comprehensive overview of all types of projects being undertaken to promote MFL.

6.1 Media freedom literacy competencies and skills

Of the 53 respondents to the survey question "Does/did your project or activity help to promote any of the following competencies? Please tick all that apply", Figure 1 below shows that the majority of projects promoted the 'critical evaluation of content' (92%), with 77% of projects promoting the 'understanding and valuing of the democratic functions of the media and other information providers' while 'recognition of the importance of information pluralism' was promoted by 56% of the projects, and 'recognition and valuing of ethical production of information and media content' by 62%.

Figure 1. Competencies promoted across all projects/initiatives.



As shown in Table 2 below, when this is broken down into more detail, a high percentage of the projects reported addressing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours linked to ‘understanding and valuing the democratic functions of the media’.

Overall, 80% of projects reported promoting an understanding of the rights and responsibilities around access to information, freedom of expression, protection of privacy and data, while only 40% of projects addressed understanding of how media was regulated.

Table 2 - Knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours promoted across all projects/initiatives.

Media Literacy Freedom Competency	Related knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours	No. of projects
Understand and value the democratic functions of the media and other information providers	Awareness of the value of social participation.	49%
	Understand rights and responsibilities around access to information, freedom of expression, protection of privacy and data.	80%
	Participate in the public sphere by constructively expressing opinions and responding to the opinions of others.	58%
	Understand media messages by reading, listening, comparing etc.	79%
Value the importance of information pluralism	Understand the role that independent media plays in a healthy democratic society, e.g. presenting different points of view, promoting informed debate, holding power to account etc.	79 %
	Understand and recognise different funding models for media (e.g. private ownership, public funding, advertising, sponsorship).	38%
Critically evaluate content	Evaluate content and services for truthfulness, reliability, independence and impartiality.	74%
	Understand how to integrate critical thinking competencies in addressing health literacy, financial literacy, science literacy, intercultural literacy and other forms of social literacy.	47%
	Recognise influencing factors such as stereotyping, bias, unfair portrayal, inappropriate content or context, lack of evidence etc.	75%
	Understand how the presentation of content (style or context) can influence the perception of content.	68%

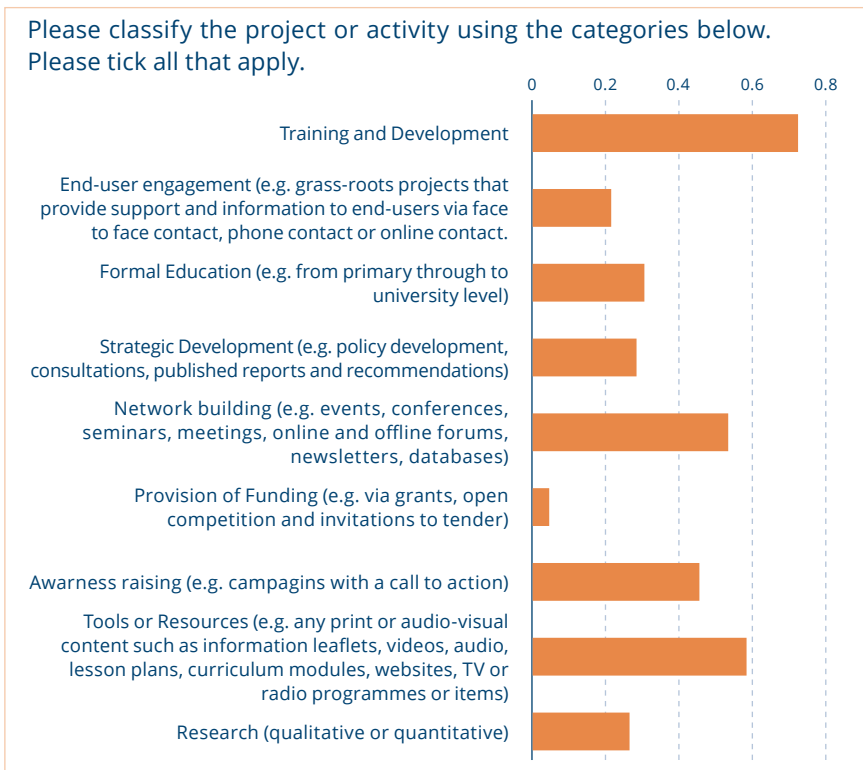
Recognise and value production of information and media content based on journalistic standards.	Understand how content is produced.	68%
	Distinguish between different types of content such as fact, opinion and advertisement.	72%
	Create content in text, images, audio, video and code.	52%
	Understand how the production processes, mechanisms and technologies (e.g. algorithms) can influence media choices, patterns of behaviour and diversity of content/views.	56%
	Understand how different media are regulated, or not.	40%

6.2 Media freedom literacy competencies and skills

In terms of typology, 53 respondents categorised their projects. Respondents were permitted to categorise their projects / initiatives into more than one category to take account of the diverse and nature of the subject matter.

Figure 2 below shows that 'Training and Development' was a feature of the majority of projects (72%) and just over half of the projects were categorised as 'Tools or Resources' (58%). Around half of the projects were classified as 'Network Building' (53%) and 'Awareness Raising' (45%). Less than one third of the projects were classified as 'Formal Education' (30%), 'Strategic Development' (28%) or 'Research' (26%). The least common classifications of project were 'End-user engagement' (21%) and 'Provision of Funding' (4%).

Figure 2 - Project Typologies



Examples of 'Strategic Development' projects are highlighted in Spotlight #1 below as well as case-studies 6, 8 and 9 on pages 49, 51 and 52.

A 'Training and Development' project is illustrated in Spotlight #2 which features the UNESCO Online Course on Media and Information Literacy for Educators and in Spotlight #3 featuring the work of community media.

An example of Finland's approach to formal education projects is outlined in Spotlight #4 below while France's approach is highlighted in Spotlight #5.

For an example of a project which includes end-user engagement please see the case-study 5 on the 'Filter' project from the Ukraine on page 48.

Case-study 4 on the 'Be Media Smart' campaign on page 47 illustrates an awareness raising project, while the Spotlight #6 on the 'BBC Young Reporter' project illustrates an example of a 'Tools and Resources' project, as does the case-study 1 on the 'Media Ownership Monitor' on page 44.

Spotlight #1 on... Multi-Donor Programme for Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists - UNESCO

The Multi-Donor Programme serves to further strengthen UNESCO's work at a global, regional, and national levels, by channelling funds towards emerging priorities and the most pressing needs to achieve its mandate on freedom of expression. It enables UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector to address complex issues through the design and implementation of holistic medium and long-term interventions at national, regional and global levels. The clear advantage of this mechanism is that it allows UNESCO and its partners to achieve greater impact and sustainability, whilst reducing fragmentation of activities in the same field.

Spotlight #2 on... Online Course on Media and Information Literacy for Educators - UNESCO

As part of a joint project between UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education and the International Centre for Higher Education Innovation, a Russian-language version of an online course on media and information literacy was produced.

Consisting of five online modules, the course is aimed at educators and staff members of educational organisations based in Central Asia and other countries. The modules include:

- Introduction to media and information literacy
- Digital privacy and freedom of information on the web
- The space of incorrect information and disinformation
- New technologies and gadgets as the key to students' minds
- The use of interactive multimedia tools in teaching.

Spotlight #3 on... Ethical Media for Active Citizenship - International

The [Ethical Media for Active Citizenship](#) project was designed to provide citizens, journalists and media activists with the skills to manage editorial challenges like fake news/alternative facts, infomercials vs. information, freedom of speech and hate speech and help them to develop diversity and pluralism in media.

Developed by community media producers, trainers and international networks in [Austria \(Commit\)](#), [Belgium \(AMARC Europe\)](#), [Germany \(Radio Corax and Radio Wueste Welle\)](#), [Ireland \(Near FM\)](#), and [Spain \(EMA-RTV\)](#) this series of training activities is designed to help journalists at all levels to report more fairly on minorities.

The training activities provide detailed information on how to prepare and deliver workshops and activities with specific outcomes, for example, on [how to sensitise the participants towards \(structural\) discrimination](#). The activities are [grouped in four categories](#) and resources such as [terminology sheets / glossaries](#) were developed including a series of [training recommendations](#).

Spotlight #4 on... New Literacies development program (2020-2023) – Finland

The aim of the New Literacies development programme was to strengthen media literacy, information and communication technology (ICT) and programming skills for children and young people in early childhood education and pre-primary and basic education. In 2020, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture launched the New Literacy Development Programme 2020-2023. In spring 2021, the development programme published competency descriptions for ICT skills, media literacy and programming skills. The competency descriptions are based on the Early Childhood Education and Care curricula and the Pre-primary and Basic Education curricula.

The National Audiovisual Institute and the National Agency for Education were responsible for developing the descriptions and coordinating the programme and also produced a large amount of free support material and training to support the introduction of the descriptions.

In 2021 and 2022, the Ministry of Education and Culture provided around €10 million in funding for municipalities' projects to integrate competence descriptions and corresponding pedagogies into teaching practices and local strategies. Around 100 municipalities all over Finland provided training and resources for their educational staff to include the competences into local strategies and teaching. The competence descriptions and educational resources developed by the national agencies were produced in 5 languages: Finnish, Swedish, 3 different Sami languages. The descriptions and some resources are also available in English.

The competence descriptions, "[The Finnish framework for Digital Competence](#)" are available online.

Spotlight #5 on... CLEMI

CLEMI is the French Media and Information Literacy Centre. It is a public operator, acting for the French Ministry of National Education and is in charge of MIL in the French educational system. All teachers, regardless of their level and discipline, have access to CLEMI, both at national and academic level, for training, advice or resources. CLEMI's work involves a national team of 22 individuals, a network of 200 local academic co-ordinators, and numerous media partners, all contributing to the development of projects for schools.

Media and information literacy (or EMI – Education aux médias et à l'information) is part of the national curriculum in France. Throughout primary and secondary education, MIL themes are integrated into school programmes. For children aged 11 to 15 there is a specific MIL programme in the curricula.

In high school, the curricula for children aged 14 to 17 includes subjects directly related to the history of the press and the media and the study of how social networks and digital media function. MIL is assessed by teachers in cross-curricular manner.

The role of school-librarians in the promotion of MIL is very important in France and they often act as key contacts and champions for MIL in schools.

Spotlight #6 on... BBC Young Reporter

BBC Young Reporter (formerly known as BBC School Report) is a media skills and news literacy project for 11–18-year-olds across the UK. Working with secondary schools, colleges and youth organisations, the project provides information about broadcasting careers and offers some editorial opportunities for young people to share their stories and report with the BBC. It is a pan-BBC partnership project between BBC News, BBC Academy and BBC Education. Each division has separate funding and staff who work collaboratively to deliver BBC Young Reporter editorial and outreach opportunities.

This is a pan-BBC project with key departments including BBC News, BBC Education (Bitesize/Teach) and BBC Academy. BBC Young Reporter also works in partnership with universities across the UK to deliver a series of media skills/journalism outreach events throughout the year for 16–18-year-olds (i.e. Plymouth, Wrexham, Norwich) and this element is led by BBC Academy.

6.3 Target Audiences

Of the 50 projects who provided information on their target audience in the survey, Figure 3 below shows that the group served by the majority of projects (68%) were young people aged 16 – 18 while third-level students were the most underserved group (16%). There was a fairly equal split between Male (58%) and Female (62%) and Urban (56%) and Rural (50%).

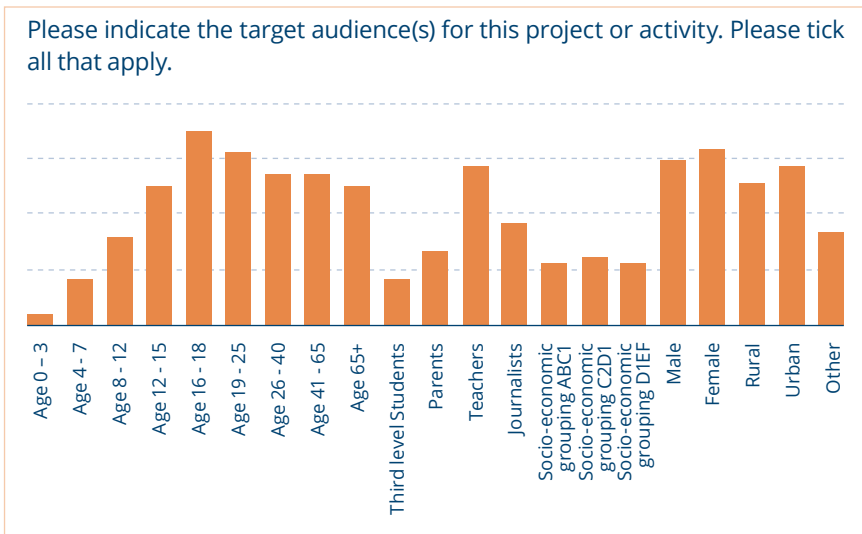
Reflecting that ‘Training and Development’ was the most common categorisation of project type, Teachers (56%) and Journalists (36%) were served by more projects than Parents (26%).

For an example of a project targeting young people see the case-study 2 on the ‘Nieuws in de Klas’ project on page 45 or Spotlight #6 above on the ‘BBC Young Reporter’.

For Teachers see Spotlight # 9 on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that leads to Terrorism (page 29) and Spotlight #10 on Media and Press Week (page 31).

For an example of a project targeting Journalists see the Spotlight #3 above on ‘Ethical Media for Active Citizenship’ and Spotlight #7 below on the ‘National Stakeholder Forum’ from Mongolia.

Figure 3 - Target Audiences



Spotlight #7 on...The 4th National Stakeholder Forum on Media and Information Literacy – Mongolia

Supported by UNESCO, the National Stakeholder Forum has become a leading platform for knowledge exchange and discussion in the field of MIL in Mongolia.

The 4th National Stakeholder Forum on Media and Information Literacy was held in Mongolia as part of the national celebration of Global MIL Week.

Fifteen media organisations were supported to adapt and pilot the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy in Journalism: A Handbook for Journalists and Journalism Educators²⁷.

As a result, fifteen media professionals had the opportunity to improve their MIL skills and knowledge and 100 national stakeholders from governmental and non-governmental sectors in Mongolia participated in the discussions at the Stakeholder Forum on Media and Information Literacy.

6.4 Localisation of projects

Survey respondents were asked whether their projects were localised in anyway and given multiple options of what form the localisation took. Over half (28) of the projects reported that some kind of localisation of the project had been undertaken including:

- Participants from multiple regions/ provinces (7 Projects)
- Local / regional focus across the project content (8 Projects)
- Use of local media or local communities to deliver messaging (5 Projects)
- Resources produced in multiple languages (14 Projects)

A good example of how a project can be localised is illustrated by Spotlight #8 on the 'Very Verified' project below.

27 <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/media-and-information-literacy-journalism>

Spotlight #8 on... Very Verified - Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

Very Verified was created to help Baltic citizens develop skills to evaluate the information that they interact with in their daily lives and to spot manipulation and disinformation. This course aims to equip people with basic media literacy and information verification skills. It also provides educators with easy-to-use blended learning lesson materials that correspond with the course. Anyone can download and freely use the lesson plans and presentations to help others learn these very necessary skills.

Localized to three countries and five languages, the project uses not only different languages but different content for the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian versions, and merged content for English and Russian languages.

Developed by IREX, the product involved content experts for each country/language version.

Monitoring and evaluation is built into the online course with progress assessments and a final assessment.

Several hundred trainers and tens of thousands of students, plus about 15,000 individual online users have been trained using this tool.

This project is potentially scalable as the framework of the course is very general, but cultural context adaptation is required, as media markets are different in different countries.

6.5 Multi-stakeholder approach

The majority of the projects analysed (42 out of 52) reported multiple partners were involved in developing and/or delivering the projects. This finding echoes the findings from the [EU 28 mapping](#) project²⁸ and is in line with the guidelines proposed in numerous Council of Europe recommendations, as well as obligations put on VSPs in the AVMS Directive, as well as advised in UNESCO and EPRA documentation.

28 <https://www.obs.coe.int/en/web/observatoire/-/mapping-of-media-literacy-practices-and-actions-in-eu-1>

Projects that demonstrate the benefits of a multi-stakeholder approach are highlighted in the OSCE project on countering violent extremism and radicalisation in Spotlight #9 below, as well as the Be Media Smart campaign from Ireland in case-study 4 on page 47.

Spotlight #9 on... Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that Leads to Terrorism - OSCE

Taking place in South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as well as the MENA region, this project was designed to address how violent extremism and terrorists exploit the 'information disorder' in the online space to polarise, recruit and spread propaganda.

A media and information literacy curriculum, including AI literacy, is tailored to the national/local context by engaging local experts/trainers and delivering the content in local languages, with a special focus on gender and human rights.

The project also adopts a multi-stakeholder approach and partners include law enforcement, government representatives, media regulatory agencies, social workers, mental health professionals, OSCE Field Operations, the RFoM, and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

Initial responses to the training indicate that the multi-stakeholder approach is very relevant and working with others from different sectors on this issue is very important as some of the partners would not otherwise have reason to engage with each other on this topic. For example, government security representatives rarely speak to media regulatory agencies and educators about this challenge.

6.6 Use of Evidence Base

Respondents were asked whether any evidence base was created/used to assist with planning, monitoring, refinement or measuring the success of the project. Of the 52 respondents 24 reported creating or using some form evidence base. This included a wide range of data collection methods and sources including:

- 'Social listening'
- Feedback from previous iterations

- Pre and post implementation surveys
- Data analytics
- Annual satisfaction surveys
- Focus groups
- Literature reviews
- Existing research databases and research papers
- Other national strategies and policies

For an example of a project that was based on insights and had a structured evaluation process, please see case-study 10 on NewsWise on page 53.

6.7 Scalability

The majority of respondents (36 out of 52) felt that their project had the potential to be replicated in other areas/regions/countries and/or scaled up.

A number of the projects noted that they were already freely available for other countries to use and that some had already been replicated in other countries. See Spotlight #10 below on 'Media and Press Week'. In particular, it was felt that digital tools could make replication easier and it was also noted that for long-standing projects like News in the Classroom, there was an existing development process for the project that other countries could easily use.

In some instances, it was noted that the feasibility would depend upon sustainable funding and time to develop a base level of expertise/understanding of the key elements of the project as well as investment in building a broad-coalition participants in the space.

The universality of some of the topics addressed by projects was highlighted as a reason for scalability and replicability such as the 'Guide for Media Representatives and Bloggers on Gender-Sensitive Coverage' (see case-study 7 on page 50). Developed for Uzbekistan, it was suggested that it could be effective in other regions because the principles and practices it advocates could be adapted to different cultural and social contexts.

Spotlight #10 on... Media and Press Week – France

Over the period of one month, [the Media and Press](#) Week delivers events (masterclasses with journalists, special visits from the media, media and literacy workshops) for students across all French schools. In addition, all the printed media are sent to schools for free in order to enable the teachers to organize media literacy classes with those newspapers.

Over 22,000 schools have subscribed to Media and Press Week involving 280,000 teachers and 4.7 million students. The project is supported by 1,800 media partners.

Partners include the French Post (in order to ship all the printed press to schools for free) the media (provides free examples of their newspaper to schools) the journalists (deliver in-person events and masterclasses in schools) the media (facilitate visits to newsrooms and studios for students).

The aim of Media and Press Week is to foster the development of media literacy skills in students and children, and make them aware of the existence of different media and explore how journalists work.

6.8 Evaluation

In recent years there has been an increasing focus on the need to evaluate MIL projects with a view to better understanding what works well, what doesn't work well and how to refine and improve projects.

However, there is also growing acceptance that the development of MIL skills may not necessarily result in rapid or consistent behaviour change, especially online and that the difficulty, and expense linked to measuring the 'impact' of specific projects should not threaten the development of important initiatives.

However, it was notable that 30 out of 52 projects reported that some form of evaluation had taken place. Of those 30 projects, 14 projects reported conducting an informal, internal evaluation, 8 projects reported undertaking a formal, internal evaluation while 8 projects reported that formal, external evaluations were undertaken by people outside the project.

See Spotlight 11 below for a project designed to facilitate better evaluation for MIL projects.

Spotlight #11 on... Media Literacy Evaluation Toolkit

Ofcom's [Media Literacy Evaluation Toolkit](#) was designed as part of the Making Sense of Media (MSOM) programme of work to help improve the online skills, knowledge and understanding of UK adults and children.

Recognising that evaluation can seem complex and costly, this toolkit is designed as a practical guide, to make it as straightforward as possible to build evaluation into media literacy work. The aim is to make evaluation an integral part of media literacy initiatives, with the evidence and lessons learned shared with others in an accessible way. The guidance sets out a practical approach distilled into simplified distinct steps, enabling stakeholders to pick and choose the elements that work best for their particular projects.

7 Guidance and Recommendations for the development of Media Freedom Literacy

When developing Media Freedom Literacy Programmes, relevant stakeholders include government and state agencies, media regulatory authorities, civil society, academia, the research community, media service providers and online platforms, etc.

This section of the report outlines eight broad recommendations to help foster media freedom literacy, drawing on the principles, guidelines and recommendations made by the Council of Europe, the OSCE, UNESCO and various EU bodies.

In addition, this section also provides examples of how different stakeholders have a role in implementing the recommendations.

7.1 Adopt a 'Cradle to Grave' approach to Media Freedom Literacy

As with ML and MIL, MFL should be viewed as a life-long learning process with different citizens requiring different support at different stages of their learning journey. As such, states, media and other stakeholders should be prepared to lead on, participate in, and fund MFL projects on a long-term basis. This approach involves leadership and input from a number of stakeholders.

Government and State Agencies

Government and state agencies should define the promotion of MFL as a key part of ML and MIL and other civic education policies and invest adequate resources in developing strategies for collaboration, communication and education, together with international and civil society organisations, media organisations, public service media and other relevant actors.

Adequate funding and financing instruments should be established for the development of independent media freedom literacy initiatives by civil/educational/media sector. The participation of online platforms could be explored in terms of funding media freedom literacy initiatives, through systems similar to the existing levies/contribution of media actors (audio-visual media, distributors, internet providers, cinemas).

Government and state agencies should also ensure that independent national regulatory authorities and/or other bodies have the scope and resources to promote media freedom literacy in line with their mandates and remits. In addition, they should facilitate strategic co-ordination at a national level, ideally based on a national policy and strategy with actions and measures for implementation and evaluation.

Support should be provided by government and state agencies to promote media literacy through assistance schemes for media, taking into account the particular roles of public service media and community media. Government and state agencies should encourage all media, without interfering with their editorial independence, to promote media freedom literacy through policies, strategies and activities.

Government and state agencies should ensure that all individuals have access to an education that helps them to understand the conditions under which digital technologies affect freedom of expression, how information of varying quality is produced, distributed and processed, and the ways in which individuals can protect their rights.

Joint (formal and non-formal) educational initiatives by public institutions, international organisations, the media, universities, user groups, civil society actors, internet intermediaries and other stakeholders should be encouraged and supported by Government and state agencies, with particular attention paid to programmes for the general public that enhance commitment to human rights as part of a pluralistic democratic society, encourage critical thinking, promote equality and intercultural and interfaith dialogue, and strengthen media freedom literacy.

Support should be provided for the development and the sharing of media literacy teaching and training materials and the development of a systematic approach for developing the professional skills of key actors (e.g. librarians, museum staff, youth workers, teachers, media literacy professionals, journalists), to enable them to effectively help citizens' develop media freedom literacy.

Support should also be provided for capacity-building and training initiatives to facilitate access to the media, such as support for community media, minority media organisations and other public forums where intergroup dialogue can take place (see Spotlight 3 above).

Government and state agencies should demonstrate leadership in this area by actively supporting and funding the development of national networks to facilitate cross-sector communication and collaboration and to map current MIL interventions and target groups.

Education sector

The topic of media freedom literacy and its importance for the health of democratic societies, as well as human rights education, education for democratic citizenship should be included in the curriculum of schools and third-level educational institutions. Many countries address the competencies related to media literacy/media freedom literacy in their curricula, with Finland and France being two notable examples. See Spotlight #5 above for information about France's approach. However, at an international level, there is no consistent policy on what skills should be taught in practice. Developing and supporting the uptake of competency descriptions can help to harmonise teaching at a national level (see Spotlight 4 from Finland above for more information).

An integrated set of core and common learning outcomes could be created that all stakeholders seeking to develop integrated curricula on the competencies within media freedom literacy could draw upon. The UNESCO Global MIL Assessment Framework could be utilised to provide a conceptual and theoretical framework and introduce the rationale and methodology for conducting an assessment of country readiness and existing competencies at the national level.

To better understand the different influences on the production, collection, curation and dissemination of media content, educational resources could be developed relating to media ownership, organisation and financing.

More co-ordination may help to facilitate better utilisation of existing educational infrastructures and exploration of new ones, as well as funding opportunities, to reach all sectors of society, especially those not in formal education and those with specific MFL needs, with particular emphasis placed on the empowerment of vulnerable individuals and groups and those with limited access to quality information.

The Media

Public service media and community media can play leading roles in promoting media freedom literacy by virtue of their objectives, mandates and working methods.

The media should bear in mind MFL competencies when developing programming, especially in relation to lifelong learning/continuing education, and should consider topics relating to human rights, fundamental freedoms and functioning of democracy, and in particular media freedom literacy, respect of journalism ethics and importance of media freedom for the health of democratic societies.

Civil Society

Having one of the leading roles in the implementation of media literacy initiatives, the civil society sector should actively engage in fostering the development of media freedom programmes in line with their existing remits and responsibilities. As trusted third-party intermediaries, civil society organisations are extremely well-placed to be the bridge between citizens and all other stakeholders in the implementation of an array of media freedom projects.

Spotlight #12 on... Media Reform Coalition

The Media Reform Coalition is a research and policy campaigning group based at Goldsmiths, University of London with the principle aims of promoting of independent, pluralistic, accountable and democratic media. They record research outputs and other public impact measures. Over its lifetime the MRC has had a significant impact on UK media policy debates, including shaping the terms of reference and debates around the Leveson Inquiry, informing regulatory and policy consultations by the UK Government, Ofcom, parliamentary committees and law-making, as well as maintaining a strong community of Coalition 'allies' and partner organisations.

The current funders are Goldsmiths, University of London Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust with on-going support and collaboration from campaigners, analysts and independent media workers across the UK's media policy and journalism sectors.

7.2 Maximise Impact via a Multi-Stakeholder Approach

Working in partnership is recognised as a key aspect of delivering significant MIL projects²⁹. Initiatives involving cross-sector collaboration can generate significant reach, engagement and impact.

Given the close correlation between ML/MIL and MFL, it stands to reason that the development of media freedom literacy initiatives (under the media and information literacy umbrella), will also benefit from a multi-stakeholder approach to development and delivery.

Many countries across the OSCE regions already have established cooperative platforms (such as ML/MIL networks) where a variety of relevant stakeholders can contribute expertise and resources and play a specific role in furnishing and furthering media freedom literacy initiatives. This collaborative mechanism can facilitate information-sharing, identification of gaps in provision, effective development and efficient delivery of media freedom literacy initiatives, resulting in innovative approaches, consistent implementation, and reductions in duplication and wasted resources.

Cross-sector collaboration could be utilised for the drafting of a common framework for evaluation that will facilitate the comparison of project outputs and outcomes. This would enable the identification of successful projects or project elements with the potential for replication and scaling up. Key stakeholders should consider how existing MIL approaches, campaigns and resources addressing universal topics, including how social media and search services operate, might be replicated for use in other areas, at national or international levels, or for other target groups, with due respect given to national and cultural differences.

Positive practices developed within national networks should be actively exchanged and promoted in relevant international forums.

Government and State Agencies

Government and state agencies should support the functioning of national or regional platforms through direct funding and by way of strategic co-ordination at a national / regional level.

²⁹ [Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28 - European Audiovisual Observatory \(coe.int\)](#)

Media Regulatory Authorities

Increasingly, media regulatory authorities have statutory duties in the area of promoting media literacy/media and information literacy and one of the methods for doing so adopted by many regulatory authorities is by adopting a coordination role for a national cross-sector platform or network.

Academia/researchers

In-depth insights are a critical component of successful intervention projects. The academic community has a particularly important role in terms of producing and disseminating relevant research related to the MFL, which can be used by other stakeholder to effectively and efficiently develop and deliver MFL initiatives. The academic community also has a role in terms of monitoring the media freedom landscape and raising awareness about emerging risks, vulnerable communities and the effectiveness of specific interventions based on monitoring and measurement programmes developed in collaboration with government and state agencies, media, platforms, fact-checking organisations, civil society organisations and user communities.

Education sector

In adopting a ‘cradle to grave’ approach to fostering MFL, it would be extremely beneficial to have the education sector is involved in any national platform or collaborative approach as an efficient way to engage the population aged 5 to 18 (and by extension reach parents and caregivers) is through school systems.

Spotlight #13 on... Mediekompass - Sweden

Run by Tidningsutgivarna and financed by Swedish Media Publishers’ Association, Mediekompass aims to support Swedish teachers in their teaching methods of journalism and the democratic function of free and independent press and to influence Swedish students in their understanding of the role that independent media plays in a democratic society. The project offers them fun and interesting pedagogies of how different media work and helps students become active in the democratic society.

More than 2000 people (mainly teachers) receive a weekly newsletter which provides access to news quiz activities and other teaching tips. The resources are free to use in all Swedish regions.

The Media

The media and journalists (both individually and via umbrella organisations such as media councils and journalists' associations) have a significant role to play in the promotion of media freedom literacy by demonstrating an ethical approach to their professional activities, and presenting different points of view, promoting informed debate, holding power to account etc.

In addition, the media are critical partners for campaigns and interventions designed to raise awareness of MFL issues with the general public, in conjunction with other key partners.

Spotlight #14 on...Behind the Headlines from The Guardian Foundation - UK

The Guardian Foundation's [Behind the Headlines](#) empowers young people aged 11-25 to understand, critically analyse, engage with and participate in the media. It was originally set up with an Education Centre at the Guardian offices to give young people hands-on experience of news production and media careers in 2002. The award-winning programme has continued to evolve with a range of workshops at the Centre, virtual sessions, guidance for those interested in media careers, Q&A sessions for university groups, teacher training and free downloadable news and media resources. The most recent initiative is the Media Literacy Ambassadors project which trains young people in years 9-13 in the Midlands, Greater Manchester and South and West Yorkshire to teach their peers about fake news, enhancing media literacy skills across year groups and subjects in their school or college. The project prioritises working with organisations where students have above average free school meals or pupil premium levels.

Yearly impact reports are available [online](#).

Online Platforms

Online platforms know more about targeting specific groups of citizens than probably any other stakeholder. It is essential that they are represented on national /regional platforms, especially in terms of awareness-raising activities.

Civil Society

The role of civil society organisations should not be underestimated or overlooked. As organisations who are often on the ‘front-line’ of dealing with social and cultural issues that are impacted by the media, community and voluntary groups can act as trusted third-party intermediaries when trying to reach the public. Similarly, charities, foundations and other civil society organisations have an important role in providing independent support for the development and delivery of media literacy freedom interventions.

7.3 Empower citizens with timely and relevant information

Legislation for, and regulation of, the online media world in particular is complex. Considerable efforts are likely to be required to ensure that citizens fully understand the principles of related laws and what the impact and positive benefit of new regulation will be for citizens in terms of media freedom.

Government and State Agencies

Government and state agencies should introduce legislative provisions, or strengthen existing ones, that promote media freedom literacy with a view to enabling individuals to develop MFL competencies.

States should empower the relevant local actors (which might be the media regulatory authority in charge of compliance of the prominence measures, media and online platforms themselves, civil society organisations, education sector, ...) with the duty to explain the impact of such measures on media freedom, media pluralism, freedom of expression and democracy at large.

Media Regulatory Authorities

The introduction or enhancement of additional regulatory measures could be considered (in line with the regulatory remits of each regulatory authority such as labelling of reliable content, ensuring the transparency of commercial content and political advertising, enhancing the transparency, accountability and explainability of algorithmic systems and introducing alternative forms of personalisation compatible with the public interest. In addition, awareness campaigns about citizens rights and responsibilities are likely to be required, as well as information about how to seek redress when things go wrong.

Spotlight #15 on...Spot It. Flag It. Stop It.

'Spot It. Flag It. Stop It.' is an information campaign from Coimisiún na Méan, the Irish media regulator, about combatting illegal content online, based on the provisions of the EU Digital Services Act. The campaign informs the public that Ireland's Online Safety Framework makes digital services accountable for how they protect people, especially children, from harm online. Information is provided about three different pieces of legislation and gives examples of illegal content as well as the steps that citizens can take should they encounter illegal content online, as well as how to seek redress if users believe that platforms are not meeting their obligations under the legislation.

Online Platforms

Platforms should engage in and promote targeted age- and gender-sensitive efforts to promote the awareness of all users of their rights and freedoms in the digital environment, both vis-à-vis States and intermediaries, including, in particular, information about applicable complaint mechanisms and procedures.

Civil society

Civil society organisations could collaborate with other key stakeholders such as media regulators, the media and the academic community to create and disseminate simple messages and practical advice to help citizens become more aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to media freedom literacy.

The Media

Inspired by Media Literacy Weeks in various countries (an annual event promoting digital media literacy, regularly taking place across the OSCE region), the potential of developing a Media Freedom Literacy day/ week and/or a Journalism Trust week could be explored. The media, are by design, expert communicators can could use their creative talent to deliver media freedom literacy messages in effective and engaging ways – such as 'International media (un)freedom day'³⁰, with coordinated

30 As opposed to and based on the United Nations General Assembly declaration of 3 May as World Press Freedom Day, observed to raise awareness of the importance of freedom of the press and media.

media 'shut-downs' for a (short) period of time, as a vivid example of the impact of a lack of media pluralism.

7.4 Insist on Transparency from All Stakeholders

In line with recommendations from UNESCO and ERGA, transparency should be a common over-arching principle in relation to the promotion of MFL.

Government and State Agencies

Government and state agencies should ensure adoption and implementation of legislative provisions and provide easily accessible, and easily understandable information on structures of (online and offline) media ownership. The same should be ensured for State-aid media support programmes, state advertisement spending, etc.

Online Platforms

Programmes and interventions designed to promote ML, MIL or MFL should raise awareness of the role of algorithms and increase knowledge on how users can manage their use. Programmes and interventions should also highlight any opportunities users have to exercise control over the ways in which their data are used. Platforms could also inform users about the design of the different services and tools they provide, and help users to make informed decisions about the content they consume and share.

Platforms should be transparent with users about how online intermediaries deliver news content and aim to empower users by offering them more control over the news they see.

Platforms should also be transparent about the range of MFL interventions that they are involved in fund/ support and explain the process/criteria for funding and support.

Media Regulatory Authorities

Media regulatory authorities should ensure transparency of media ownership and make it accessible to the public, in order for the users to know with certainty who owns the media.

Media regulatory authorities should also explain their licensing decisions, in a manner which is accessible and understandable to the general public, with a view of their contribution to media freedom and media pluralism.

The Media

Media could volunteer to adhere to the Journalism Trust Initiative ISO standard³¹, and should explain to their users why it matters for democratic societies.

Similarly, media should take appropriate measures aimed at guaranteeing the independence of individual editorial decisions and avoiding conflicts of interest, and inform the users about those measures.

Civil society and the Academic Community

Civil society organisations and the academic community are well-placed to direct a spotlight on transparency issues in relation to the actions and activities of other stakeholders, e.g. investigating the transparency of ownership of digital platforms and media outlets (see case-study 1 on page 44).

7.5 Prominence of public interest content

Public interest content is, in broad terms, journalistic work and media content which deals with issues of interest and relevance to citizens and communities. Such content is usually dedicated to researching/reporting and fostering debate about issues which are essential for democratic societies to function. The provision of public interest information is central to the 'watch-dog' role of journalism, holding those in power to account and looking after the interests of ordinary

31 The Journalism Trust Initiative, initiated by the Paris-based press freedom watchdog and human rights NGO Reporters Without Borders (RSF), supported by partners such as the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and Agence France Presse (AFP), developed Journalism Trust Initiative, designed as an ISO standard, by a panel of 130 experts including journalists, institutions, regulatory bodies, publishers, and new technology players under the aegis of the European Committee for standardisation (CEN) and published as Workshop Agreement CWA 17493 in December 2019. Due to a growing mistrust towards media and journalists, and competition with content on online platforms, this initiative provides structural solutions to restore trust and create favorable conditions for it to recover. Available at: <https://www.journalismtrustinitiative.org/>

citizens³². In addition, initiatives revolving around the provision of public interest information can also effectively deal with the increased problem of news deserts. News desertification refers to the crisis facing traditional news media in areas where digital transformations and dire economic circumstances forces the closure of local news outlets, which in turn makes access to “sufficient, reliable, diverse and independent local, regional and community media and information³³” impossible.

Public interest content does not only come from big media organisations, with vast resources at their disposal, but is often mandated for public media services as well as regional, local and community media outlets. To understand the value of public interest content is to understand and appreciate the democratic value of the media which is a crucial part of media freedom literacy. A variety of stakeholders have a role to play in enhancing its prominence.

Government and State Agencies

Government and state agencies should adopt appropriate and proportionate measures to ensure prominence of public interest content both in traditional and online platforms, and in particular content produced by reliable and professional news organisations. When implementing such prominence measures, states should follow the international standards and best practices.

In addition, government and state agencies should recognise the fundamental role of public service media and community media in promotion of human rights, fundamental freedoms, functioning of democracy and the supply of well-informed public debate/discourse and ensure the independence of media and securing the appropriate level of funding of public and other media, in line with the international standards.

32 The Public Interest, Ethical Journalism Network, available at: <https://ethical-journalismnetwork.org/the-public-interest>

33 “News deserts in Europe : assessing risks for local and community media in the 27 EU member states”, Technical Report, EUI, RSC, Preliminary Report, 2023, Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF), July 2023, available at: <https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/75762>.

Government and state agencies should encourage platforms and media outlets to cooperate on the development of tools and processes that promote the visibility and findability of quality news sources.

Consideration could be given to adopting tax incentives regimes (tax shelter, tax credit, tax rebate, cash rebate, VAT refund, ...) for the production of content related to media freedom literacy, through systems similar to the existing tax shelter benefiting to producers of films and documentaries.

Media regulatory authorities

Media regulatory authorities can apply direct regulatory interventions to secure the maintenance of plurality of news online; and measures to ensure sustainability of news providers in the digital environment.

Media regulatory authorities should be empowered to ensure compliance in relation to prominence of public interest content, through open, transparent, accountable and inclusive co-regulatory regimes involving media, platforms, civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders, in order to meet the requirements of openness and inclusiveness.

Media regulatory authorities should also work with platforms to remove/reduce the impact of platforms' design choices that favour clickbait, polarising content, harmful content and disinformation and promote a well-informed public debate/discourse.

Online platforms

Online platforms should commit to promoting a well-informed public debate/discourse and manage/remove algorithmic/design choices that favour clickbait, polarising and harmful content and disinformation.

Online platforms accepting political advertising should clearly identify such content as advertising, in a manner which is understandable to the general public. When ads are accepted, online platforms should furthermore ensure in their terms of use that any illegal content such as hate content is prohibited and that the funding as well as the political entity at the source of these ads are clearly identified by the platforms and identifiable by users.

Online platforms should collaborate with fact-checking organisations on matters such as the prominence of disinformation, promotion of content to debunk misinformation, and empowerment of users to flag problematic content.

Educational sector

Educational, MIL bodies and learning/continuing education bodies should work with platforms, the media and other stakeholders to help citizens recognise and value public interest information.

The Media

Delivering on the recommended support for the production and dissemination of public interest content should be a key paradigm for the media. Regardless of its size, type and merit, media should also invest in the production of content that is relevant to citizens and communities. Investigative news stories are one example, but there are ample other media products that deal with public interest, such as those related to “administration of justice; public health; animal welfare; environmental issues; police brutality, etc.”³⁴ The media should not underestimate the invaluable contribution of content which falls under the category of factchecking, especially in the contemporary disinformation predominance, clickbait content, etc. Finally, content which explains the production process and importance of provision of such content also contribute to increasing media freedom literacy.

7.6 Create an Evidence Base to Develop Effective Interventions

Considering the novelty and complexity of digitally enabled communication, expert, academic and scientific communities should be empowered to gather and share data and create evidence-based guidance on the opportunities, risks and mitigations required to enhance media freedom literacy. A robust and well-managed evidence-base may also provide insights about how people understand and make choices when dealing with media, including awareness of irrationalities, biases, inaccuracies and falsehoods. This guidance and data should inform public policies and MFL programmes and interventions.

34 The European Court of Human Rights has, on numerous occasions, referred to the scope of public interest content. For references, please see, e.g., *Satakunnan Markkinapörssi Oy and Satamedia Oy v. Finland*, 2017, available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=001-175121>, *Couderc and Hachette Filipacchi Associés v. France*, 2015, available at: <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/?i=001-158861>, etc.

MFL programmes should be inclusive and informed by rigorous, independent research; they should empower individuals by increasing their understanding of democratic functions of the media and other information providers and the importance of information pluralism. They should help citizens to develop strong skills in relation to critical evaluation and recognising content that is based on journalistic standards, as well as empowering individuals by raising awareness of the available redress mechanisms.

Government and State Agencies

Government and state agencies should fund and promote rigorous and independent research on the implications of digital technologies and services on the well-being of citizens as well as research into the operation of algorithms and AI and their influence on public opinion, people's lives, and media consumption as part of a programme of research on media literacy, freedom of expression, media freedom and media pluralism. The results of these studies should be freely available and should inform the adoption and review process of media policies and of media freedoms literacy programmes.

Media Regulatory Authorities

Media regulatory authorities could work with the academic and the research sector to identify gaps in knowledge and commission or carry out research related to various media freedom literacy topics. The results of these studies should be freely available and should inform the adoption and review process of media policies and of media freedoms literacy programmes.

Academia

The academic and research communities should work both independently and in collaboration with other stakeholders to contribute to the creation of national media literacy / media freedom literacy research database which would help to identify gaps in current provision, emerging trends and risks to media freedom literacy, longitudinal measurements of key indicators of media freedom literacy such as trust in media and media ownership, as well as changes over time in attitudes and behaviours relating to media literacy, freedom of expression, media freedom and media pluralism.

Civil society

Many civil society organisations are positioned within the heart of the community and often working with people who are most vulnerable. As such they are very well placed to inform other media freedom literacy stakeholders about emerging needs, risks and trends and help inform the development of research programmes. In addition, civil society organisations are also well placed to assist in the gathering and collection of data. Most importantly, civil society organisations, as trusted third-party intermediaries, are extremely well placed to help deliver MFL interventions right into the heart of communities.

Online Platforms

Platforms should provide vetted researchers with access to non-personal data and anonymised data in order to understand the impact of digital platforms. This data should be made available upon request and on an ongoing basis through automated means, such as application programming interfaces (APIs), or other open and accessible technical solutions allowing the analysis of said data.

Platforms should provide access to non-personal data to journalist and advocacy groups when there is a public interest and the access is proportionate and necessary in a determined context.

Platforms should build reliable interfaces for data access and should provide disaggregated data based on gender and other relevant intersecting factors.

7.7 Guarantee availability and access to quality content

Secure supply of high-quality media supports unhindered democratic processes in societies. The availability and prominence of quality media provides citizens with necessary information on which to make informed decisions, based on accurate and reliable information.

Support should be provided for initiatives that counter disinformation by creating conditions for quality media supply, including financial sustainability and independence, as well as transparent governance.

Government and State Agencies

Consideration could be given to (appropriate) adoption /enhancement measures, such as e.g., tax incentives schemes in order to ensure the financial sustainability of quality journalism, investigative journalism, innovative journalistic projects, transition of print media to the digital environment and digital presence of local and community media.

Media Regulatory Authorities

Media regulatory authorities have a role to play in ensuring that media whose editorial freedom is threatened as a result of the application of platforms' terms of service or content moderation policies, have the opportunity to seek timely and effective remedies. Those remedies should include appropriate information to users about the issues at stake in order to enhance media freedom literacy, platform's design literacy and overall media/digital literacy.

Online Platforms

Platforms should promote a well-informed public debate/discourse by improving platform and algorithmic design choices so that clickbait, polarising content, harmful content and disinformation are not amplified and that quality, accurate and reliable content is easily accessible and findable.

Education Sector/Civil Society

The education sector and civil society organisations have a particular role to play in ensuring that citizens have access to support to help them develop and enhance their media freedom literacy skills so that they are able to recognise and value quality information and content.

7.8 Raise awareness and understanding of media concentration and media pluralism

Diversity of online and offline media voices and opinions and a heterogeneous media scene (including private, public and community media, etc.) is a key pre-requisite for media plurality, which, if ensured, will support the representation of diverse perspectives, and prevent any single group from dominating the crucial decision-making processes in societies.

Media pluralism is connected to the diversity of media ownership, and by extension, the prevention of media concentration, which reduces the plurality of voices, but also places an existential threat to quality journalism and public interest content.

Now, more than ever before, it is crucial that citizens understand the importance of media pluralism and especially, the negative impact of media concentration, having in mind the substantial cultural and social significance of media and their role in promoting democratic values and principles. In addition, citizens need to be able to identify and understand potential conflicts of interest in order to develop well-informed opinions.

Government and State Agencies

Government and state agencies should ensure that media regulatory authorities are involved with competition authorities and other relevant public bodies in the assessment of the impact of media concentrations on media freedom, media pluralism and editorial independence, providing media regulatory authorities specific missions about raising the level of awareness and media freedom literacy regarding media concentration issues.

In addition, funding and support should be made available for rigorous and independent research on the implications of digital technologies and services on media (freedom) literacy, freedom of expression, media freedom and media pluralism, and the results should inform the adoption and review process of media policies and of media freedoms literacy programmes.

Media regulatory authorities

Media regulatory authorities should, in line with their statutory remit, regularly monitor levels of media concentration and the level of media pluralism and make the findings publicly available, and where appropriate and possible, make assessments and recommendations about maintaining a healthy level of media pluralism.

The Media

The media also has a responsibility to ensure transparency regarding the ownership and funding of their organisations and content, and that information should be easily accessible and understandable by the public.

Civil society and the Academic Community

Civil society organisations and the academic community are well-placed to direct a spotlight on transparency issues in relation to the actions and activities of other stakeholders, e.g. investigating the transparency of ownership of digital platforms and media outlets (see case-study 1 on page 44).

8. Media Freedom Literacy Case-studies

In this section a number of projects which promote media freedom literacy are highlighted. It is notable that many of these projects were designed as media literacy or other projects with aims other than promoting MFL.

Case-study 1: The Media Ownership Monitor

The Media Ownership Monitor – Transnational

The Global Media Registry (GMR) is a social enterprise that promotes transparency, accountability and diversity in the information space.

The [Media Ownership Monitor](#) (MOM) project was developed as a mapping tool in order to create a publicly available, continuously updated database that lists owners of all relevant mass media outlets (printed press, radio, television and online media).

MOM aims to shed light on the risks to media pluralism caused by media ownership concentration (for more information: [Methodology](#)). In order to grasp the national characteristics and detect risk-enhancing or risk-reducing factors for media concentration, MOM also qualitatively assesses the market conditions and legal environment.

Since 2015, MOM has been incubated by Reporter ohne Grenzen e. V. – the German section of the international human rights organization Reporters Without Borders (Reporters sans frontières, RSF), which aims to defend freedom of the press and the right to inform and be informed anywhere in the world.

In 2019, the project evolved into the Global Media Registry (GMR), an independent, non-for-profit social enterprise registered under German law. In each country, MOM is implemented in cooperation with a local partner organization. The project was funded by the Federal German Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ).

Another EU-funded project - the [Media Pluralism Monitor](#) (MPM), coordinated by the Centre for Media Pluralism and Freedom at the European University Institute in Florence - delivers complementary results for European member states and some accession countries.

In the selection process, the country ranking in the World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters without Borders, is a first important indicator for deficiencies in media pluralism, media independence and transparency. A low ranking highlights which country might be worth looking in depth into the risk of media ownership concentration.

The political context is also a condition for a successful implementation: on the one hand civil society organisations need to be able to operate relatively freely. On the other hand, the media landscape needs to be open to an extent: in a country where the state has absolute control over media, there would be little or no benefit to researching media ownership.

Case-study 2: Nieuws in de Klas (News in the Classroom)

Nieuws in de Klas (News in the Classroom) - Flanders (Belgium)

News in the Classroom is an educational project led by Mediawijs, in collaboration with the main Flemish news brands. Funded by the Flemish Minister of Media, the project aims to empower young people to actively participate in society. Newspaper packages, themed dossiers, and teaching methodologies are provided for educators, aimed at encouraging young people to reflect on the news, how they form opinions about it, and how they can become critical news consumers.

The project started in 2004 as "Kranten in de Klas" (Newspapers in the Classroom), but evolved to include all forms of news and information in 2016. Over the years, the project has been adjusted to align with the lived experience of young people, keeping in mind the rising popularity of social media, and the prevalence of fake news, hate speech and polarisation.

In 2021, Mediawijs developed 3 new teaching packages, created to teach young people how to deal actively and critically with news, online (dis) information and forming opinions: Newsmakers, Factcheckers and Opinionmakers. The teaching packages are easily accessible, free and built in a modular way, so a teacher can adapt according to the lesson themes. An easily accessible online platform, featuring explanatory videos, exercises, and practical assignments, allows students reflect on all aspects of news, (dis)information and opinions.

According to an impact analysis in 2022, 'Newsmakers' proved to be a successful introduction for those with limited knowledge of news and journalism. 'Factcheckers' contributed to increased self-confidence and certainty in dealing with misinformation, leading students to check sources more frequently. Through 'Opinionmakers', students gained insights into polarisation and hate speech, becoming less inclined to participate in or escalate such behaviours.

In addition to Dutch, most of the materials are translated into French and English, so they can be easily used by other media literacy practitioners.

The results of the 2023 project were:

- 3000 paper news packages (= 1 week all newspapers + news magazines) ordered by teachers for use in the classroom
- 15,000 online news packages (= 3 weeks access to all online newspapers and magazines) ordered by teachers for use in the classroom
- 130 teachers attended the News in the Classroom study day
- 120 teachers attended a News in the Classroom workshop

News in the Classroom is de facto structurally anchored in the operation of the various partners:

- Mediawijs (Flemish Knowledge Center for Digital and Media Literacy)
- Vlaamse Nieuwsmedia (umbrella organisation of the Flemish newspapers)
- WE Media (umbrella organisation of the Flemish magazines)
- Media.21 (umbrella organisation of independent online news providers)
- VRT (Flemish public broadcaster)
- Meemoo (audiovisual archive in Flanders)
- Stampmedia (youth news agency)
- Mediaraven (youth work organisation)
- HUJO (youth work organisation)
- Flemish Minister of Media - Department of Culture, Youth and Media

Case-study 3: Mobile Stories

Mobile Stories - Sweden

[Mobile Stories](#) empowers young people to become responsible and informed citizen journalists, while arming them with both a critical understanding of digital media and the power to influence peers and a wider audience. Harnessing young people's creativity and desire to be heard, the project supports the development of transferable journalistic skills while instilling an understanding of and commitment to journalistic ethics, truth-seeking and fact-checking.

Users are guided through the process of developing a piece of journalistic content through short navigation texts and tips from professional journalists from different European countries with reminders about fact-checking and journalistic code of ethics. Before the student can push the 'Publish' button, a teachers review and approval must take place.

Mobile Stories also collaborates with third party platforms and stakeholders in order to promote young voices in society and give them a wider, potentially global audience. For example, the Young Journalist Award, is a collaboration between Mobile Stories, the publisher association TUs school initiative Mediekompass and the largest news outlet in Sweden, Aftonbladet, and gives young talent a wider platform when the winning contribution is published in Aftonbladet each year.

Mobile Stories nurtures the media literacy framework competences of 'access, analysis, creation, reflection and action-agency' within a single tool. On their journey to becoming creators and publishers of online media, users hone their skills in identifying information, critiquing its quality and credibility and verifying sources; they learn about journalistic ethics and social responsibility in media creation; they develop their online identity and learn about the correct conduct of a 'citizen journalist'; they expand their communication skills and they experience in practice how their online voice can inform and influence their peers, community and the wider world.

Put simply, journalistic interventions put greater emphasis on journalistic knowledge and practice. This may include teaching participants about the difference between news and other types of information such as advertising and opinion pieces. It may also include teaching students about journalistic standards such as the use of sources and writing

conventions. In contrast, media literacy educators tend to focus on the construction of meaning and the implications of those constructions for our understanding of reality. This approach often highlights the role of power - the power of industry actors, corporate power, state power - and calls for reflection on political, social, and personal factors that shape news consumption.

In Sweden, Mobile Stories has reached more than 12 000 students between 12 and 19 years old. An impact measurement survey completed by 1175 students and their teachers showed that 90% of the teachers say that working with Mobile Stories was engaging for their students and 85 % of the students developed their media and information literacy through working with Mobile Stories. Over six in ten (62%) of teachers reported feeling more confident in teaching MIL and have conversations about MIL related topics with their students after working with Mobile Stories.

In a new EU funded project, ProMs, Mobile Stories will be piloted in more EU countries, starting with Ireland, Finland and Romania. The project activities also include training with Trusty with AI, to give a more tailored guidance to each student.

Case-study 4: Be Media Smart

Be Media Smart – Ireland

Be Media Smart is a campaign which raises awareness of the importance of knowing how to verify information; provide tips and guidance on how to check the accuracy and reliability of information, and signpost people to additional sources of support and training.

An initiative of Media Literacy Ireland (an informal alliance of over 300 organisations and individuals working together on a mainly voluntary basis, and facilitated by the media regulator, Coimisiún na Meán), the Be Media Smart campaign encourages people to Stop, Think and Check that the information that they read, see or hear is reliable and accurate.

First launched in 2019 in as part of a European initiative to counter disinformation in advance of the 2019 European elections, the campaign evolved in 2020 to focus on accurate and reliable information about Covid-19, and in 2021 the focus was on making informed choices about the Covid-19 vaccination based on accurate and reliable information.

In 2023, the Be Media Smart campaign message was again delivered across TV, radio and in news publications across community, commercial, public service and social media – in Irish and English. All TV and radio adverts were produced, distributed, and broadcast free-of-charge by MLI members from the media sector with additional support provided through editorial opportunities. The media campaign was boosted by a well-coordinated social media campaign with a diverse range of MLI members using freely available social media assets to promote the campaign and the call to action among their networks. All the Be Media Smart communication directed people to the Be Media Smart website, (available in Irish and English) for advice and support, a FactCheck section and a new 'Ask an Expert' section, where citizens could ask media literacy related questions to a panel of experts.

The 2023 iteration of the campaign showed significant reach. The radio campaign reached over 3.1 million listeners on a weekly basis supported by 33 radio stations. The TV campaign reached at least 5.3 million people to date, supported by all TV national broadcasters. The conservative estimate of reach from news publications is 1, 004,144 people. Online, there were over organic 81,000 impressions across all platforms and an organic reach of 41, 047 across all platforms. For the period 24 October to 30 November, there were 6, 043 page views (up 13% from 5, 306 for the previous period) of the Be Media Smart website and users were up 74% to 3,203. A new TikTok / The Journal initiative resulted in over 6.4 million video views. Print and digital versions of the Be Media Smart ads were carried on 15 different news publications. Five online events were delivered with 119 attendees. According to research carried out by IPSOS B&A between September 2023 and November 2023, awareness of the Be Media Smart campaign message had increased from 15% to 23%, representing a statistically significant increase in awareness. In 2023, the Be Media Smart Campaign evolved to include a pilot community training programme in conjunction with EDMO Ireland to empower teachers, librarians and community leaders with the necessary knowledge, tools, techniques, and resources they need to deliver a media literacy workshop in their communities. The response to this pilot exceeded all expectations, with 118 community leaders being trained to deliver Be Media Smart Workshops within their own communities.

This is a campaign with simple messaging and it has already been replicated in a number of other countries with the potential to spread to more countries.

Case-study 5: Filter

Filter - Ukraine

[Filter](#) is the national media literacy project of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine to increase Ukrainians' resilience to misinformation.

Filter is dedicated to offering creative solutions for tackling misinformation and promoting media literacy and is designed to help organisations develop strategies for addressing the spread of dis- and misinformation, including initiatives for media literacy training and campaigning.

The project's online platform aims to bring together the best solutions and materials implemented by state authorities, public initiatives, international partners and media community in Ukraine and worldwide.

In October 2023, 26,194 participants took the national media literacy test, with 13,980 successfully completing it. The test consisted of 34 questions:

Section 1: Basic concepts of media literacy and information space (8 questions)

Section 2: Social networks (7 questions)

Section 3: Credibility and the impact of news (10 questions)

Section 4: Fact-checking skills (6 questions)

Section 5: Ability to protect personal data and resources (3 questions)

In October 2023, the first television lesson in Ukraine, dedicated to media literacy, reached about a million viewers.

In June 2023, Filter conducted a strategic session on the development of a national media literacy strategy. Over 40 experts participated in the discussions and worked in groups focused on non-formal education, coordination, media and digital literacy, formal education, and media literacy in business. supported by the UNDP and the governments of Japan and Germany.

Filter, in partnership with the study platform Prometheus, launched a [Media Literacy course](#), which has already attracted over 15,000 participants. The course is free and available online, making it accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds. Additionally, educators can also

benefit from the course: the certificate earned from its completion confirms a 30-hour increase in qualification in accordance with the approved program of advanced training of educational workers.

Filter prepared a handbook for journalists on physical and informational security during wartime.

Filter have also facilitated that development of a book for children aged 5-10 about media literacy which is designed not only to develop critical thinking in children but also to help parents with media education for children and has launched a Network of media literacy clubs in Ukraine and work with schools via the Ministry of Education and Science.

Filter also produces material to debunk disinformation from Russia about Ukrainian cities and regions.

Key partners include: UNDP, OSCE, IMS, Swedish Embassy in Ukraine. NGOs: Internews Ukraine, Center of Democracy and Rule of Law, Detector Media etc. Media: Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine.

Case-study 6: Think Critically, Click Wisely

Media and Information Literacy Citizens: Think Critically, Click Wisely – UNESCO

This UNESCO resource links media and information literacy to emerging issues, such as artificial intelligence, digital citizenship education, education for sustainable development, cultural literacy and the exponential rise in misinformation and disinformation.

As part of the new Media and Information Literacy curricula Media and Information Literacy Citizens: Think Critically, Click Wisely, the programme was piloted in classrooms across 7 countries in cooperation with schools connected to the UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet). The countries were Algeria, Canada, Kenya, Nigeria, Ecuador, South Korea, and Trinidad and Tobago.

According to the pre-training survey carried with the educators: An overwhelming 99% of the respondents strongly agree or agree (91% and 8% respectively) that there is a need for MIL in their school. Moreover, the evaluation that was carried out showed that only 35% of participants

were very familiar with Media and Information Literacy concepts and competencies and 65% had moderate to very little knowledge of this area.

The pilot programme resulted in 42 schools across seven countries piloting the UNESCO MIL curriculum with 60 educators trained to integrate MIL in their classroom and over 1000 students trained on MIL.

In 2023, UNESCO supported an initiative in Colombia, focusing on curricula adaptation and policy dialogue on Media and Information Literacy (MIL). The one-year project, carried out in collaboration with UNIMUNUTO University, targeted 23 primary and secondary schools as well as 2 higher education institutions, impacting a total of 116 teachers. The lessons learned from this phase of the pilot contributed to concrete recommendations for integrating Media and Information Literacy into Colombia's formal, non-formal and informal education systems.

The project also facilitated national consultations involving multiple stakeholders to prepare a background document for a Media and Information Literacy National Policy and Strategy in Colombia.

One important outcome of the project was the creation of 90 meticulously crafted prototype MIL lesson plans. These plans, designed through hands-on exercises, embody essential concepts and pedagogical actions outlined in the UNESCO curriculum. Themes explored include disinformation, information access and utilisation, critical analysis of advertisements, media discourses, political implications of misinformation, citizen participation and identifying reliable sources of information.

Case-study 7: Guide for Media Representatives and Bloggers on Gender-Sensitive Coverage

Guide for Media Representatives and Bloggers on Gender-Sensitive Coverage – Uzbekistan

The [Guide for Media Representatives and Bloggers on Gender-Sensitive Coverage](#) was developed to create gender-sensitivity in the Uzbek media. The guide is part of a broader effort to address gender issues and promote gender equality in media representation and covers various topics, including the concepts of gender and gender equality, gender policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan, gender stereotypes and mass media, and gender equality in mass media.

The guide was developed in response to the need for more balanced and fair media representation of gender issues. It aims to raise awareness among media professionals about the impact of their work on societal perceptions of gender and to encourage more responsible and inclusive reporting practices by providing practical advice on how to achieve this. Key aspects of the guide include: Understanding the difference between "gender" and "sex," and recognising the socio-economic and political implications of gender. Addressing gender stereotypes in media and the role of media in changing these stereotypes. Implementing gender-sensitive approaches in media, including theme development, language selection, and topic description. Monitoring media content and holding media accountable for gender-sensitive coverage.

The project achieved considerable reach, particularly through the involvement of influencers and journalists, who helped disseminate the guide's principles to a wide audience. The initiative successfully brought the issue of gender-sensitive coverage to the forefront, contributing significantly to raising awareness about the importance of this topic in media. The project's owners have noted a shift in the media industry to more serious consideration of gender-sensitive coverage, indicating a growing recognition of the need for balanced representation of gender issues. The project led to a reduction in gender-insensitive coverage in the media, reflecting a positive change towards more responsible and inclusive reporting practices.

The original guide was in Uzbek but it has been translated into Russian and English. This project has the potential to be replicated and in other areas, particularly in the wider Central Asian region and potentially even

in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) space. The guide's focus on gender-sensitive media coverage is a universally relevant issue, and the principles and practices it advocates can be adapted to different cultural and social contexts. The success of the project in raising awareness and impacting media practices suggests that similar initiatives could be effective in other regions where gender stereotypes and biases in media are prevalent.

There are plans to support future iterations of the project including delivering additional awareness seminars and training sessions and adopting a more hands-on, practical approach in these seminars and training sessions, possibly involving interactive workshops, case studies, and real-world examples to help participants better understand and apply the principles of gender-sensitive reporting.

Case-study 8: Code of Conduct in the online sphere during Electoral Processes and Referenda

Code of Conduct in the online sphere during Electoral Processes and Referenda – North Macedonia

The objective of this Code is to increase the transparency of elections, as well as to reinforce citizens' trust by ensuring a favourable environment and conditions for respect for the legally guaranteed rights, the freedom of expression and information, and the privacy and safety of citizens' personal data in the online sphere.

The Code of Conduct³⁵ was developed by the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services with OSCE ODIHR support, together with key non-governmental stakeholders - the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (the main journalist's association), the Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia (the self-regulatory body), the Institute for Communication Studies and the Macedonian Institute for the Media (two of the most prominent organisations involved in the development and professionalisation of media, freedom of speech, media literacy etc.), the Metamorphosis Foundation (factchecker).

35 Code of Conduct in the online sphere during Electoral Processes and Referenda – North Macedonia, available at: <https://izborenkodeksonline.mk/en/>

This Code refers to the online conduct of the political parties, their candidates, and the independent candidates (including on the social networks), broadcasters' online editions, the online media, the fact checkers, the influencers and other entities that may influence the public in favour of a campaign during elections and referenda.

It serves as a good conduct guide aimed at ensuring integrity of information, transparency of the political advertising and its funding, privacy and safety of citizens' personal data processing, as well as preventing the spread of disinformation (false, incomplete, fake or malicious information), hate speech and discrimination on any grounds.

All six stakeholders formed a coordinating body that will be responsible for the Code in practice. The Code and the coordinating body are both active during the election processes, and it was applied for the first time with the announcement of the Parliamentary and Presidential Elections on the February 14, 2024.

A document like this can help in the process of holding politicians, media, influencers... responsible for their online conduct during elections and referenda.

It is anticipated that the Code and the Coordinating body will be active for the future election processes and referenda and lessons from the first use of the Code will be integrated into future iterations.

Case-study 9: MIL / MFL in Jordan

MIL / MFL in Jordan

UNESCO has supported the Government of Jordan³⁶ in advancing, promoting and implementing its national plan on MIL through technical assistance and capacity-building for MIL multi-stakeholders, and contributing to improve critical thinking skills for youth in their quest for civic and social participation, self-protection online, self-expression, quality education, economic development, and to counter disinformation.

36 <https://en.unesco.org/https%3A/en.unesco.org/GMIL/2022>

In 2020, the Jordanian Government approved a four-year national strategy on MIL (2020-2023) under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. In addition to that, the National Center for Curriculum Development (NCCD) has recently launched the curricular framework for “media education” at schools through the integration of media concepts into most subjects across all levels of school education in the Kingdom, including in private and public schools.

The Jordan Media Institute is the implementation arm of the national strategy; the Institute has trained more than 3410 youth, teachers, faculty members, and school students across Jordan on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) skills.

[‘Do You Speak MIL?’](#) is a tool that was developed to provide Community Sector Organisations (CSOs) with a practical and effective tool to help them champion and adopt MIL within their own training programs. The Modules covered include: Foreword Part I – Introduction Working on Media and Information Literacy in Jordan: Sustainable Development, Democracy and Civil Society Diversity and MIL Teaching MIL: Aims, Outcomes Part II – Modules Module One: Understanding MIL Module Two: The Language of the Medium - Off and Online Media Module Three: Journalism, Advertising, Propaganda and Fake News Module Four: Fact-checking: Beyond ‘Fake News’ and ‘Beyond the Headlines’ Fact-checking Tools Module Five: Cyberbullying, Hate Speech and Online Community Module Six: Digital Storytelling and Remixing: Ideas and Tools Module Seven: It’s Your Web - Universal Access, Net Neutrality, Copyright, Censorship and Privacy.

Case-study 10: NewsWise – UK

NewsWise is a UNESCO-awarded UK cross-curricular news literacy programme for 7-11-year-olds.

The programme aims to empower children with the skills and knowledge to engage with news, to feel confident to ask questions and challenge misinformation, and to share their own values and opinions in a fair, responsible and truthful way.

The Guardian Foundation, the National Literacy Trust and the PSHE Association developed the NewsWise programme in 2018, which is based on a shared mission to create a generation of news-literate children. The programme targets schools across the UK with above average 'Free School Meal' rates, as well as schools in areas of multiple deprivation, or underserved communities such as small rural schools.

NewsWise provides free high-quality cross-curricular news-literacy education resources, experiences and support for schools and families. It provides expert teacher training along with workshops and resources to develop children's news-literacy skills and gives them authentic opportunities to get involved in the production of news. In particular, the NewsWise workshop creates a 'newsroom' experience in schools, with pupils taking on editorial roles, identifying trustworthy stories and creating news reports in real time. In addition, the programme delivers family workshops for children and their parents/carers to learn media literacy skills together, and webinars and teacher CPD on news literacy.

The programme is continuously informed by further evidence and research, such as research carried out by the National Literacy Trust in 2019 on [family news literacy](#) and a research trial with the universities of Birmingham and Liverpool, investigating [news literacy and civic engagement](#).

Ongoing evaluation of the programme was designed by the National Literacy Trust and a tripartite model of a "news literate child" was developed. The evaluation includes pre- and post- intervention surveys for participating pupils, involving a "fake news" quiz as well as questions on attitudes, skills and behaviours in order to measure the impact of the programme. Teachers complete a survey that asks about the impact on pupils as well as their own knowledge and teaching practice. There are similar surveys for parents/carers taking part in family workshops as

well as for teachers who have taken part in training. A question on news literacy was included in the National Literacy Trust's Annual Literacy Survey, allowing comparison of the project results with the national picture.

Since March 2018 the programme has reached over 16,000 children, over 3,500 teachers, close to 700 adult family members and worked with 66 journalist volunteers.

Evaluation results show that after taking part in the programme, children had improved news literacy skills, behaviours and confidence and that 68% of pupils could tell if a news story was real or fake, compared to 49% before. Nearly triple the number of pupils said they were interested in the news. Significantly, 88% of pupils said they found it easy to tell if news was trustworthy after taking part, compared to 31% before. This compares with 61.8% of same-age pupils across the UK.

Notably, teachers reported that taking part in the NewsWise programme had also supported both pupils' wellbeing and their civic engagement. Almost 3 in 4 (73.7%) agreed that the NewsWise programme had helped decrease pupils' anxiety about news stories, while 3 in 5 (63.2%) felt that it increased pupils' motivation to make a difference in their community. 100% of teachers said the project increased pupils' engagement with news and journalism; 92% said the NewsWise workshop engaged pupils who were usually more reluctant in the classroom and 100% feel more confident in supporting pupils' news literacy.

Conclusions

Media, as a service to democracy, must fulfil their role in enabling citizens to receive and impart information by abiding to professional standards of independence, impartiality, accuracy and diversity in a pursuit of democratic dialogue, plurality of voices and opinions in a democratic manner.

The nature of media services can neither be defined as solely cultural goods nor simply as economic goods, but a combination of both – as such market conditions heavily influence the state of media pluralism. This is especially true now, when, paradoxically, numerous reports indicate threats to media pluralism, despite the explosion of media outlets³⁷. The right to freedom of expression of both media and citizens can be negatively impacted by weakened media pluralism in society, hindering the enjoyment of a healthy and strong democratic environment.

As demonstrated by the review of the key legislative/regulatory obligations, the MFL competencies proposed in this paper are, to a large extent, already included in legislative and regulatory frameworks across the OSCE region.

Also, throughout the OSCE region, we now see the legal obligations of various stakeholders, such as, media regulatory authorities, video-sharing platforms and other media actors, include statutory duties related to promotion and advancement of media literacy activities.

Collectively, these form a solid base for the introduction of media freedom literacy programmes within the wider arena of media literacy, which will (hopefully) produce more structured and far-reaching outcomes and will ultimately result in increased media freedom literacy for citizens.

With a concerted effort, media freedom could be secured by recognising the critical importance that media freedom literacy has in society and ensuring that adequate visibility and resources are allocated to media freedom literacy interventions, as part of wider media literacy / media and information literacy policies, strategies and national plans.

37 For more details, the suggested reading includes, e.g., reports on Media Pluralism Monitor (MPM), a tool developed by Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom (CMPF), co-funded by the EU, established to assess the risks for media pluralism in EU member states and EU candidate countries, available at: <https://cmpf.eui.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/>.

Appendix A: Identified competencies cross-referenced to relevant legislative frameworks at the level of the Council of Europe, European Union and UNESCO

Legislative/regulatory framework	Institution	Competencies			
		Understanding and valuing of the democratic functions of the media and other information providers	Recognition of the importance of information pluralism	Critical evaluation of content	Recognition and valuing of ethical production of information and media content
Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age	Council of Europe	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)1[1] of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership	Council of Europe	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on protecting and promoting the right to freedom of expression and the right to private life with regard to network neutrality	Council of Europe	✓	✓		

Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4[1] of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors	Council of Europe	✓	✓		✓
Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)5[1] of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Internet freedom	Council of Europe	✓			
Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on a new notion of media	Council of Europe	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the remit of public service media in the information society	Council of Europe	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recommendation Rec(2000)23 of the Committee of Ministers to member states	Council of Europe	✓	✓		
Declaration (2019) by the Committee of Ministers on the financial sustainability of quality journalism in the digital age	Council of Europe	✓	✓	✓	✓
Declaration by the Committee of Ministers on the manipulative capabilities of algorithmic processes	Council of Europe	✓	✓	✓	

Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the role of community media in promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue	Council of Europe	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16[1] of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate speech	Council of Europe	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the impacts of digital technologies on freedom of expression	Council of Europe	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the roles and responsibilities of internet intermediaries	Council of Europe	✓	✓		✓
Declaration by the Committee of Ministers on the financial sustainability of quality journalism in the digital age	Council of Europe	✓	✓	✓	✓
Revised 2018 Audiovisual Media Service Directive	European Union	✓	✓	✓	✓
Proposed European Media Freedom Act	European Union	✓	✓	✓	✓

Commission Recommendation (EU) 2022/1634 of 16 September 2022 on internal safeguards for editorial independence and ownership transparency in the media sector	European Union	✓	✓		✓
Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings ("Strategic lawsuits against public participation")	European Union	✓	✓		
European Democracy Action Plan	European Union	✓	✓	✓	✓
Commission Recommendation of 16.9.2021 on ensuring the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists and other media professionals in the European Union	European Union	✓	✓		
Digital Services Act	European Union	✓	✓	✓	
Code of Practice on Disinformation	European Union	✓	✓	✓	

European Parliament Resolution of 11 November 2021 on strengthening democracy and media freedom and pluralism in the EU: the undue use of actions under civil and criminal law to silence journalists, NGOs and civil society	European Union	✓	✓	✓	
Media and information literacy: policy and strategy guidelines	UNESCO	✓	✓	✓	✓
General Assembly Resolution , MIL Week 25 March 2021	UNESCO	✓	✓		
Guidelines for the governance of digital platforms: safeguarding freedom of expression and access to information through a multi-stakeholder approach	UNESCO	✓	✓	✓	✓

Appendix B: Reference list of national legislative frameworks in OSCE region applicable to media freedom literacy competencies

Country	Legislation
Albania	Law no.97 2013 on Audiovisual Media in the Republic of Albania
	Law 7756/1993 For the Press (repealed)
Andorra	Law on public broadcasting and television and creating the public company Ràdio i Televisió d'Andorra SA, of 13 April 2000 (as amended by Law 20/2012 , of 18 October)
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THERE IS NO SECURITY
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Fostering *freedom*
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