

CITIZENS IN A MEDIATED WORLD

Il y avait en Westphalie, dans le château de monsieur le baron de Thunder-ten-tronckh, un jeune gaiçon à qui la nature avait donné les meurs les plus douces. Sa physionomie annonçait son âme. Il avait le jugement assez droit, avec l'esprit le plus simple; c'est, je crois, pour cette raison qu'on le nommait Candide. Les anciens domestiques de la maison soupçonnaient qu'il était fils de la sœur de M. le baron et d'un bon et honnête gentilhomme du voisinage, que cette demoiselle ne voulait jamais épouser parce qu'il n'avait pu prouver que soixante et onze quartiers, et que le reste de son arbre généalogique avait été perdu par .Wnpjre du

**A Nordic-Baltic Perspective
on Media and Information Literacy**

Ingela Wadbring & Leo Pekkala (eds)

NORDICOM

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Preface

In the Nordic countries, media and information literacy (MIL) has been an issue on the agenda for many years. Several formal and informal meetings have taken place where different kinds of MIL questions have been discussed. The last expert meeting funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers was held in Stockholm in October 2013, when Sweden had the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The point of departure for the Stockholm meeting was a new strategy for Nordic cultural cooperation that was launched in 2013, where two themes were The Digital Nordic Region and The Young Nordic Region. Nordicom and the Swedish Media Council arranged the conference and documented it afterwards.

The aim of the Stockholm expert meeting was to put the MIL issue on the political agenda, and to encourage Nordic cooperation in the field with different kinds of actors. The documentation contains a broad description from each country, as well as research articles from well-informed actors in the field. In the conclusions specific calls towards political actors were made, and further exchange of experience and enhancing actors' competence were discussed.

One of the calls from the Stockholm expert meeting was directed towards the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM): A desire for a follow-up meeting. A Nordic MIL network was therefore established in June 2015. The main purpose of the network is to utilise each other as resources, collaborate on initiatives and stand together as one united voice in Europe, and internationally, on topics of MIL.

After a Nordic network meeting in 2015, and on the initiative of NCM, an application for a new MIL conference was submitted to NCM from the Nordic media and media education authorities together with Nordicom. The application was granted, and a follow-up conference was held in Helsinki in May 2016, in liaison with the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day Conference.

The event was organised by NORDICOM (Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research) together with KAVI (National Audiovisual Institute) in Finland, jointly with the Nordic media and media education authorities: Media

Council for Children and Youth in Denmark, Fjölmiðlanefnd (The Media Commission) on Iceland, Norwegian Media Authority and the Swedish Media Council.

However, instead of a Nordic MIL Forum like the Stockholm expert meeting, the 2016 meeting in Helsinki was extended to a Nordic-Baltic venue, encouraged by the NCM. Compared to the Nordic countries, MIL is a rather new question on the agenda in the Baltic States. The media contexts differ between the Baltic States as well as in relation to the Nordic states, and so do the political agendas. The conditions for having an exchange on MIL issues were thus advantageous.

Conference presenters and round-table discussion hosts were asked to report back from the Conference. The aim of the contributions was to provide some light to the current issues being discussed within the field of MIL in the participating countries, and thus contribute to the ongoing discussion.

This publication is the documentation from the Nordic-Baltic conference *Citizens of Mediated World. Nordic-Baltic Perspectives on Media and Information Literacy* on 2 May 2016 in Helsinki. We would like to thank everyone involved in the conference, but especially Anu Löfgren who coordinated the venue with distinction, and the Nordic Council of Ministers who financed the conference.

Gothenburg and Helsinki in March 2017

Ingela Wadbring & Leo Pekkala

Part I. Points of Departure

Citizens in a Mediated World

Introduction

Ingela Wadbring & Leo Pekkala

Digital technology has become a natural part of our daily lives and requires new skills, knowledge and attitudes. Digital technology makes it possible for everyone to create their own media content and share it with others. The digital media culture has become a user-generated culture in which the distinction between reception and perception has been erased.

These developments represent a marked departure from the population's traditional media use and challenge the perceptions about what it means to use and produce media in appropriate and meaningful ways, for example by curating information digitally within our personal network (Mihailidis & Cohen 2013). The use of new media requires different competencies from the population than before, and the MIL-Network will emphasise the encouragement of critical abilities in particular. This is especially challenging for vulnerable groups in society.

In the final report from the expert meeting in Stockholm in 2013, the former director for Nordicom, Ulla Carlsson, was the editor as well as the author of the introduction. Her last words in the introduction were: "Remember, silence is one of the most serious threats against democracy and freedom" (2014, p. 16). The risk of the spread of silence has become even more impending in the last few years, and her final words are even more relevant today than in 2013.

On the one hand, freedom of expression has never been more prevalent than today when everyone has the possibility to express themselves. On the other hand, this possibility is also misused more than ever before. In this media landscape we all have to navigate.

Harassment and hate speech directed towards journalists as well as others who participate in the public sphere and public debate has developed with the advent of social media (cf. Mølster 2015; Löfgren-Nilsson, 2015). Testimonies are heard from public persons that they avoid writing or talking about certain topics, and that they dare not publish texts that can be too challenging for specific groups or states (Häger 2016). There is a risk that fear is spreading, and with increased anxiousness,

journalistic silence may increase. From a democratic point of view this is dangerous. The European Union has reacted strongly to this and highlighted the need for more critical media literacy in support of democratic development and resistance to hate speech and propaganda (European Union Education Ministers 2015).

It is also dangerous with the nonresponsibility that is at hand among some publishers online. Propaganda has always been a tool for those who want to convince the public, and the consignor for such content can be states, political parties or single individuals. It can be more or less organised. Propaganda can be deceitful and discreet, and deceptive content can float around without any intentions behind it.

In order to be able to navigate this digital landscape – which almost no one can avoid – we all need to be media and information literate. However, this does not happen automatically, and there are no natives born with the necessary skills related to this. The myth of so-called digital natives has been proven wrong and continuously demystified (Kupiainen 2013, Mulari 2016). Calling generations with a common denominator is simplifying reality; the fact is that each individual is different and behaves differently in each particular situation. We must also remember that emerging new technologies and new forms of media do not mean that the concept of media literacy would have essentially changed (Jolls & Wilson 2014).

A justification and a definition on media and information literacy

Everyone needs knowledge about the media and information systems in order to express themselves and have a critical awareness towards media and different kinds of information content. Media and information literacy is perhaps the most important and significant tool for developing this kind of knowledge and ability.

Media literacy definitions have been discussed in research literature for decades. Different models on media and information literacy include different parts. Potter (2010) approached the concept with the help of three questions: 1) What are the media? 2) What do we mean by media literacy? 3) What should be the purpose of media literacy? The answers to these questions are complementary to each other and there is no need to try to agree on only one consensus definition. Similarly, a recent review of research articles by Lauri Palsa and Heli Ruokamo (2015) concludes that the definitions are multifaceted and that there is no consensus about the definition. The authors further argue that there is no need to find a general agreement. Rather, multiple media literacies should be discussed, which would possibly help contextualise different media literacy definitions and help both practitioners and researchers to understand each other.

One often used model has been developed by UNESCO and can be used as a framework for MIL. It was mainly designed to be used in schools (Figure 1). The purpose of the model is to strengthen knowledge and be aware of the importance of what one should be paying attention to.



Figure 1. The MIL framework for media and information literacy

Source: UNESCO (2011:19).

In the model, all parts are of equal importance. Such a general model has both pros and cons: it is fuzzy and non-precise, but at the same time also useful depending on the situation, where different parts of the figure can be emphasised. From our point of view, the model is useful in just showing the kinds of areas where knowledge is needed.

The model can be used in varying ways, emphasising different parts of the model. The contextual situation must also be considered, when the model is being used in a particular cultural and political context. Differences may occur, for example, between countries where freedom of speech may be the most important issue and countries where empowerment or fighting hate speech and racism might be their main issue on the agenda. Researchers and professionals in the field of MIL may sometimes feel that conceptual discussions about definitions of MIL are a never-ending process. However, in order to ensure a transfer of knowledge between individuals, organisations and countries and further development of theoretical discussion, a continuous debate must go on.

The need for more international cooperation in the field of MIL became evident at the conference in Helsinki in May 2016. We are all global citizens of today's societies. The values on which our societies are built – such as democracy, peace, economy and

the wish for a good life – are continuously reproduced but also challenged in media-tised culture. Media education can be seen as a “part of a wider movement towards democratisation” as David Buckingham (2003: 9) has written. We have to continue open public discussion about these core values.

The Nordic and Baltic States

In the global context, the Nordic and the Baltic countries are in many ways in a similar situation in terms of society, education and level of digital development. There are also differences, and some of the debated issues relate to history and geopolitical development and position over the last few decades. However, we all have highly educated populations, and all parts of our societies are using increasing amounts of information and communications technology. Consequently, the Nordic and Baltic countries are also facing similar challenges in the promotion of media and information literacy (MIL) and a better media environment for the population in general and children and young people in particular. These challenges include rapid media convergence, the rise of mobile technology and the increasing importance of media culture and education in people’s everyday lives from early childhood onwards. One of the latest challenges comes from disinformation media sites, which seek to dissociate people from organised democratic societies and threaten the basic pillars of society.

These changes make MIL and the skills related to it more important than ever before. The Nordic and Baltic societies share the same basic values regarding digital development, which is most welcome in our societies, seeing as digital development provides huge cultural and educational opportunities as well as a great potential for economic growth. Our approach to digital development is to promote its creative, social and societal possibilities. Accordingly, our approach to MIL emphasises empowerment instead of constraints. We see digital technologies as platforms for experience, creation and knowledge as well as the foundation for active citizenship and participation in society.

Regarding children and young people, our shared values are also reflected in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: all children are seen as active participants with many types of rights in relation to media use and the media environment.

There are some differences between the Nordic and Baltic countries with regards to how much MIL promotion has been supported by governmental policies, and on placing MIL-related obligations on the authorities. The Nordic media education authorities and/or organisations benefit from the cooperation with a large number of private and public actors in the field of MIL promotion. These actors cater for different sectors of society: from the business sector to governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society.

Today, public discussion is spread intertextually over different media, and we all need to learn and practice our media literacy, both as a value and as a practical skill.

Critical media literacy, communication skills and competencies for creative and responsible content production have become increasingly important. What is modern citizenship in a globalised digital media culture? How can media and information literacy contribute to promoting the participation, agency and rights of children and young people? These were only some of the questions the conference was trying to answer.

Outline of the book

The organisation of the chapters in the books follows the conference with the themes that became dominant. Keynote speeches, round-table discussions and panel discussions are therefore presented in a kind of mix, where the topic rather than the form of speech/discussion has been the governing factor.

The first section consists of three points of departure: this introduction which sets media and information literacy in a general context, the introduction speech from the Finnish Minister of Education and Culture, Ms Sanni Grahn-Laasonen, and a note from the European Commission by Mari Sol Pérez-Guevara. The second part consists of two overviews. The first is about news literacy in general, from a democratic point of view, and the second article is specifically about media and information literacy in the Baltic States.

The third and fourth parts of the book consist of themes that were specifically discussed during the conference. The fight against propaganda was discussed at two of the round-table discussions, Latvia and Sweden, and commitment and engagement were discussed at three tables in different ways: Iceland, Finland and Norway. One of the keynote speeches also dealt with this issue, and is therefore presented in this section. Before the conclusions a reflection from the school world can be found, together with a statistical overview.

The book ends with a few conclusions and a discussion on how it is possible to move forward.

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Note from the Finnish Minister of Education and Culture

Sanni Grahn-Laasonen

Ladies and gentlemen, dear participants,

It is my great pleasure to meet you all at this seminar, which is organised as a side event to the World Press Freedom Day.

Media and information literacy is a rich and important area, as this conference programme demonstrates. We also benefit from dynamic Nordic co-operation in this area and I am glad we can interact through this seminar!

Today I want to focus on three issues:

1. Media and information literacy policies in Finland,
2. The introduction of new core curricula for formal education, and
3. The importance of international collaboration for fostering global citizenship and democracy.

1. Media and information literacy policies in Finland

First of all, long term policy work has led to several policies where the importance of media and information literacy is both recognised and promoted. Digitalisation is one of the key elements in our current government policy. We have always used media and information literacy in a broad sense as a concept. It is one of the elements in a number of policies touching the lives of children, young people and adults. I was happy to discover a fresh report on media pluralism confirming this, which stated that Finland 'has a well developed and implemented policy for promoting media literacy.'¹

We have carried out a fresh survey of the outcomes of our National Policy Guidelines for 2013–2016.² One of the strengths of our system seems to be that a large number of organisations are co-operating in the promotion of media and information literacy along these policy guidelines. Non-governmental organisations, the private sector and the public sector are all working together towards commonly agreed goals. The main focus has been on a participatory approach with children and young people.

Grahn-Laasonen, Sanni (2017). Note from the Finnish Minister of Education and Culture in Ingela Wadbring & Leo Pekkala (eds) *Citizens in a Mediated World. A Nordic-Baltic Perspective on Media and Information Literacy*. Göteborg: Nordicom.

2. Introduction of new core curricula for formal education

As regards formal education, the national core curricula for pre-school, comprehensive and secondary education have just been revised in Finland. The national core curricula for pre-primary education and basic education include transversal competence areas called Multiliteracy and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The curriculum for upper secondary education includes the cross-curricular themes 'Multiliteracy and Media' as well as 'Technology and Society'. Competencies related to media and information literacy are practised across different subjects and contents of curricula as part of these wide competence areas. In these competence areas, media and information literacy plays an important part. For example, multiliteracy highlights the importance of multimodality, and the critical abilities to interpret and produce different media.

3. Importance of international collaboration for fostering global citizenship and democracy

Ladies and gentlemen,

A lot of our work in the area of media and information literacy focuses on individual members of our societies, and mostly on children and young people. However, we must remember that we, as a society, need to support them. We must utilise all the resources we have in the public sector, the private sector and the third sector. It is not just the individual person who needs to take responsibility. It is all of us, as a community, and in today's globalised world this means all of us, globally.

This conference is an excellent example of the much-needed international co-operation for enhancing media and information literacy in all of our countries. We enjoy the benefits of living in a global media culture but we also need to face the challenges it creates. Fighting against radicalisation, hate speech and online extremism are concrete examples of areas where we need to join forces.

The digitalised media landscape has changed our lives irreversibly. We are connected globally and most things we do every day are at least partly digital. Quite often we may feel that someone else is controlling this change and we can only adapt, and go with the flow. However, it is important to remember that we are not just passive objects. We are the people who make the change, and together we can make an impact. I am glad to see so many of you here doing just that – making the change.

I wish you all a most productive conference today and in the next few days for those of you who are staying for the main events of the World Press Freedom Day!

Thank you.

Notes

1. Media Pluralism Monitor. <http://monitor.cmpf.eui.eu/mpm2015/results/finland/>
2. http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2013/Hyva_medialukutaito.html?lang=en

EU Policy and Actions Related to Media Literacy*

Mari Sol Pérez Guevara

*Policy officer in charge of media literacy at
DG CONNECT in the European Commission*

We are observing increased interest from many different types of stakeholders in media literacy, from policy makers to regulators, from civil society to media companies, and from journalists to individual citizens and think-tanks. For example, EPRA (the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities) surveyed their members about media literacy in 2008 and 2014.¹ In 2008, only two respondents had a legal duty to promote media literacy. In 2014, 15 regulators were active in this sphere.

Three main reasons, which are deeply interlinked, explain this increased interest:

1. Media literacy is intrinsic to a healthy democracy;
2. Media literacy is a necessary response to a changing and increasingly complex media landscape;
3. Media literacy has been an element in key discussions in recent months in the fight against radicalisation, counteracting political propaganda and the promotion of fundamental rights.

What do we understand by ‘media literacy’?

DG CONNECT launched a revamp of the EU media literacy policy at the beginning of 2015. We started by talking and listening to many stakeholders’ views on media literacy. On that basis, we established a working definition of ‘media literacy’ as an umbrella expression: media literacy includes all technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow a citizen to access the media, to have a critical understanding of the media and to interact with it. All these capacities allow the citizen to participate in the economic, social and cultural aspects of society as well as to play an active role in the democratic process. We understand the concept of ‘media’ also in a broad way: to include all kinds of media – television, radio, press – delivered through all kinds of traditional, Internet and social media channels.

*The views expressed in the article are the sole responsibility of the author and in no way represent the view of the European Commission and its services.

We are aware that ‘media literacy’ has different meanings in different countries and for different stakeholders. It is also a dynamic concept that evolves in tandem with changes in technology and society. However, the key pillar in all possible definitions of media literacy is the development of critical thinking. Digital skills, which we mention explicitly in the Digital Single Market Strategy,² comprise one of the many components of media literacy. Digital skills are about being able to gain access to the digital world. Another linked concept is ‘digital literacy’, which means understanding and making sense of the digital world.

1. Media literacy is intrinsic to a healthy democracy

Democracy, by definition, requires the participation of well-informed citizens. Citizens inform themselves through the media. Their relationship with the media needs to take place in a context of critical thinking. This requires some knowledge of how the media works and how media messages are constructed.

Media freedom and pluralism are also necessary conditions for a healthy democracy. A citizen can only be well informed if the media operates in an environment that guarantees its freedom and its pluralism. The European Commission, with the support of the European Parliament, finances a number of projects that contribute to media freedom and pluralism. For instance, we finance the monitoring and mapping of media freedom violations in the EU and a project offering legal support to journalists facing threats. In policy terms, media literacy and media freedom and pluralism go hand in hand, strengthening and complementing each other.

The tight connection between media literacy and democracy provides the framework for European Union involvement in this area. Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union enshrines the fact that the Union is founded on the values of democracy. Media literacy is definitively a tool for citizens to acquire critical thinking and become active in a democratic society.

2. Media literacy as a necessary response to a changing and increasingly complex media landscape

The digital revolution and citizens’ changing behaviour and attitudes are altering the media landscape.

Each of us experiences what the digital revolution means in practice every day: mobile devices, ‘always on’ connectivity everywhere, converging content and more content produced in audiovisual format. We also experience how the digital revolution has changed our attitudes: we are not just passive recipients of media content, but also content creators and media sources, through our involvement in social media. Moreover, we increasingly receive news through social media, rather than through traditional channels. This is particularly true for younger generations. According to the Digital News Report 2016 from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism³, half of their sample use social media as a source of news each week. Around one in ten says it is their main source. More than a quarter of 18-24-year-olds says social

media (28 per cent) is their main source of news, more than television (24 per cent) for the first time.

This change is so radical that now even the media relies on what is shared by individual citizens on social media as a news source. This proliferation of sources brings much new information, many opportunities and a slew of innovation, but it also requires critical thinking and verification tools. Alongside our activities regarding the aspect of critical thinking, the European Commission is also financing two research projects, ‘Reveal’⁴ and ‘In Video Veritas’⁵, aimed at helping professional journalists verify their social media sources. The next step would be to make these professional verification tools available to individual citizens who are social media influencers.

The figures confirm what each of us is likely to already be experiencing about the digital revolution and the changing media landscape in our everyday lives.⁶

- Almost a third of Europeans use social networks every day or almost every day. In the 15-24 age group, three out of four Europeans use social media every day.
- Increasing offer of audiovisual content. Mobile video traffic represents 55 per cent of all mobile data traffic. It is estimated that this figure will increase to 75 per cent by 2019.
- The consumption of media services which are not under the editorial responsibility of a provider is also on the rise. Today, 400 hours of video are uploaded every minute on YouTube.

This complex environment cannot be handled by regulation only. Regulation needs to be complemented with measures that empower the user to be critical of his or her sources of information and media content. This is precisely what media literacy means. Media literacy also means becoming aware of the filter bubbles, which may trap us, either through our own choices and cognitive biases, or by proprietary algorithms used by digital platforms that filter the world to match our taste.⁷

In this context, public service media companies are key media literacy players. They are in a privileged position to offer media literacy resources to citizens. For many of them, this is even a legal task included among their public service duties.

The changing media landscape also throws down challenges to traditional media business models. Legacy media is struggling to find new sources of revenue. Maybe one of the solutions is to ensure citizens are educated as to the benefits of media quality, thus increasing the likelihood that they will be willing to pay or subscribe to quality news and opinion supplied by professional journalists.

3. Media literacy is an element of many debates that are in the news

Media literacy is under discussion because of its links with hot topics: the fight against radicalisation, hate speech online and the promotion of fundamental rights. Media literacy is also seen as a tool to allow citizens to spot and defend themselves against political propaganda.

At a time when every citizen with a mobile connection to social media is a source of news and can create ‘trending topics’, it is crucial that all of us exercise critical thinking towards what we receive and before we post. One of the key criteria for deciding if we should amplify or debunk social messages is respect for EU Fundamental Rights⁸ and the avoidance of stereotypes of any kind. In this case, media literacy means taking up one’s civic responsibility for contributing to a culture of inclusive tolerance and respect online.

What is the role of the European Commission in relation to media literacy?

The European Commission has three roles in relation to media literacy. First of all, we highlight, document and extend good practices in the field of media literacy. Second, we facilitate networking between different stakeholders and Member States. Third, we create synergies between different EU policies and media literacy initiatives. A good number of internal EU policies have links with media literacy. We describe below recent or future activities of the EU that have some links with media literacy.

Media literacy as an element of internal EU policies

1. Media freedom and media pluralism

Media literacy was mentioned in the report of the EU High-Level Group on Media Freedom and Pluralism in 2013⁹:

What is abundantly clear, however, is that a well-educated public will be more resilient to withstand whatever negative influences they may encounter. Media literacy and the ability to perform a choice and critical evaluation of information sources is therefore something that the citizen of tomorrow will need as much as basic and digital literacy.

Media literacy is one of the indicators in the Media Pluralism Monitor. This is designed to identify potential risks to media pluralism in Member States.¹⁰

2. EU research projects funded under Horizon 2020

REVEAL¹¹ is developing IT verification tools for journalists when using social media as a source for news.

The **‘In Video Veritas’**¹² project will build a platform providing services to detect, authenticate and check the reliability and accuracy of newsworthy video files and video content spread via social media.

3. Creative Europe programme

Media literacy is part of the cross-sectoral strand of the Creative Europe programme.¹³ Article 15 of the Regulation foresees that in order to promote transnational policy co-operation, the cross-sectoral strand shall support, inter alia, ‘conferences, seminars

and policy dialogue, including in the field of cultural and media literacy'. However, so far there have not been any dedicated calls for proposals on media literacy under the Creative Europe programme.

The Creative Europe programme finances **film literacy** projects with the aim of developing an audience for European films.¹⁴

4. Education

The Paris Declaration adopted by the EU Ministries of Education on 17 March 2015¹⁵ highlights the importance of strengthening children and young people's abilities to think critically and exercise judgement so that, particularly in the context of the Internet and social media, they are able to grasp realities, to distinguish fact from opinion, to recognise propaganda and to resist all forms of indoctrination and hate speech.

Following the Paris Declaration, the EU has launched a Working Group on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education.¹⁶ One of the topics of discussion for this group is media literacy.¹⁷ The outcome of the discussion is a Compilation of good practices on the use of media literacy to combat radicalisation¹⁸.

5. Youth policy

The European Commission has launched a study on the impact of the Internet and social media on youth participation and youth work in 2016.¹⁹ This study looks at the topic of social and civic education in youth work, including informal learning methods and tools that can lead to the development of relevant skills and competencies. It examines in particular the impact of the Internet, social media and new technology and analyses new, alternative forms of young people's participation alongside new ways of political engagement and interaction. The development of digital skills and new media literacy are be in focus in this research. As there is little sense in restricting young people's access to the Internet, it is rather more relevant to educate them so as they can exploit the new medium to the full with a critical mind and with full awareness of potential threats.

6. Promotion of fundamental rights

The Fundamental Rights Colloquium²⁰ organised by the European Commission on 17-18 November identified media literacy as one of fundamental issues for civic and political participation. It identified as key for the European Commission "to continue a dialogue on media literacy with digital intermediaries such as Facebook, Twitter and Google. The dialogue will aim to identify actions and programmes to provide citizens with knowledge and understanding of the functioning of social media."

7. Europe for citizens programme

The objectives of the 'Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020'²¹ of the European Union include promoting non-discrimination and combating racism,

xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of intolerance. Some projects financed under this programme include media literacy actions, such as the project ‘Bricks against hate speech.’²² The objective of this project is to combat the spread of online hate speech against migrants and minorities through media literacy, and the active involvement of web users and web content producers. Another project is “Media Against Hate project”. In this framework, three international media literacy workshops will take place in Austria, Poland and Germany in 2017²³.

Currently, there is a call open for projects that foster the successful inclusion and participation of European citizens in their host EU country’s civic and political life²⁴.

8. Better Internet for kids, financed by the Connecting Europe Facility

Under the Connecting Europe facility, the European Commission is co-funding a range of better and safer Internet services, both at the European and the national level. The Insafe network of European Safer Internet Centres sees it as a necessary task to empower children and young people to adopt good media habits, and to guide parents and professionals to support children and young people in their use of online media and digital technologies. As such, the network is currently mapping activities and best practices in media and digital literacy across Europe, emphasising that media literacy is the 21st century approach to education. Their website collects best practices in the EU on media literacy²⁵ for children and young people.

9. Fight against radicalisation

On 14 June 2016, the European Commission presented a list of initiatives to support Member States across several policy areas so they can better tackle violent radicalisation leading to terrorism.²⁶ One of the actions is the promotion of media literacy through the Safer Internet Digital Service Infrastructure, funded under the Connecting Europe facility, mentioned above. This structure allows national Safer Internet Centres to raise awareness among children, parents and teachers of the risks children may encounter online, and to empower them to deal with these risks. Some Safer Internet Centres have responded to the emerging issue of online radicalisation, which requires specific expertise to deal with it in an appropriate way. For example, the UK Safer Internet Centre has produced guidance on how to protect children from online extremism. In Austria, the Safer Internet Centre is working on a strategy to handle online radicalisation, collaborating with specialist organisations. The Swedish Safer Internet Centre has developed educational material aimed at strengthening teenagers’ abilities to see through propaganda.

10. Media Literacy in the Audiovisual Media Service Directive (AVMSD)

Media Literacy is mentioned in Recital 47 and Article 33 of the Audiovisual Media Service Directive²⁷:

Recital 47 provides a narrow definition of media literacy: ‘skills, knowledge and understanding that allow consumers to use media effectively and safely.’ It also

states that ‘The development of media literacy in all sections of society should be promoted and its progress followed closely’(...)

Article 33 states that ‘Not later than 19 December 2011, and every 3 years thereafter, the Commission shall submit to the European Parliament, to the Council and to the European Economic and Social Committee a report on the application of this Directive and, if necessary, make further proposals to adapt it to developments in the field of audiovisual media services, in particular in the light of recent technological developments, the competitiveness of the sector and levels of media literacy in all Member States.’

The European Commission put forward a proposal²⁸ to revise the Audiovisual Media Service Directive on 25 May, 2016. This proposal replaces Article 33 with the ‘standard’ provision for monitoring EU legislation.

It also adds a new article (6a.1) that imposes an information obligation on audiovisual media service providers: ‘Member States shall ensure that audiovisual media service providers provide sufficient information to viewers about content which may impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors.’

The reason why media literacy is not mentioned in the AVMSD proposal should be interpreted to mean that the EU places its media literacy policy in a much wider context than just audiovisual media services. Media literacy should cover all media and through all kind of channels and all age groups. Media literacy should be considered from a broad perspective: as a necessary ingredient of a healthy democracy, as mentioned at the beginning of this paper.

The Commission proposal is currently being discussed by the Council and the European Parliament, with a view to its adoption.²⁹ Some of the draft amendments from the European Parliament propose to include references to media literacy in the future Directive, others propose to include a new recital explaining the relevance of media literacy, some propose to include a legal definition of media literacy, some are aimed to include a legal obligation to report on media literacy policies and practices or simply keeping the current reference to media literacy levels. The draft amendments can be consulted in the webpage of the European Parliament³⁰. The evolution of the legislative process can also be consulted online³¹.

Media Literacy in EU external policies

Media Literacy is also an element in EU external policies:

11. Neighbourhood policy towards the East

Media literacy as a tool to fight political propaganda and misinformation. This concerns Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. In its action plan on strategic communication for the Eastern neighbourhood,³² the EU commits itself to ‘work with Member States and key partners to raise awareness

of disinformation activities amongst the general public.' According to this plan, 'EU Member States and partner governments should put in place media literacy actions at all levels. The EU can support these efforts by finding, documenting and promoting best practice in the field of media literacy.' The EU External Service produces a weekly disinformation newsletter, in particular tackling pro-Kremlin disinformation³³.

12. Neighbourhood policy towards the South (Mediterranean countries)

Media literacy projects as a tool to strengthen democratic values.

What tools is the European Commission using to promote media literacy policy in the EU?

1. Compilation of best practices

In early 2017 we will publish a mapping of media literacy practices in EU-28 since 2010. The report describes over 500 most significant media literacy projects and a detailed description of 145 case-studies. It has been compiled by the European Audiovisual Observatory at the request of the European Commission. This report is a wealth of resources that Member States, media industry and civil society can implement

2. Pilot projects

The European Commission launched a call for proposals for pilot projects on media literacy for all on 30 August 2016, with a budget of EUR 250,000 allocated by the European Parliament. The European Parliament³⁴ plans to extend the pilot project for a further year. The objective of the pilot project is to experiment with actions aimed at increasing critical thinking towards the media among citizens of all ages, and to test the feasibility and usefulness of such actions. The target group is citizens of all ages. However, some of the actions should target minorities, low-skilled people and people at risk of being socially marginalised in particular. The European Commission expects the projects to cover a wide range of EU Member States.

3. Co-financing and co-organising conferences

In 2015, the European Commission co-financed the Media Meets Literacy³⁵ conference on 21-22 May in Warsaw. In 2016, we co-financed and co-organised the Media and Learning³⁶ conference in Brussels and the Second European Media and Information Literacy Forum³⁷ in Riga.

4. Organising and chairing the EU Media Literacy Expert Group

This group meets once a year. The last meeting took place on 15 November 2016. Slides³⁸ and the video recording³⁹ of the meeting are available online.

The meeting was devoted to four topics:

1. Media literacy: coordination and synergies with other EU policies within the European Commission (prevention of radicalisation, fundamental rights and citizenship, digital skills, school education, youth policy and film literacy);
2. Media literacy: building bridges between the media industry and the education sector to develop and disseminate critical thinking tools;
3. Media literacy in the digital era: how to empower citizens who are active in on-line platforms with critical thinking tools?;
4. Presentation of the mapping of media literacy practices in EU-28 prepared by the European Audiovisual Observatory.

The group is now also on Twitter @EU_MedLit, and notched up 1100 followers in just a few months. We also produce an e-mail newsletter that is distributed to all Member States and to a large number of stakeholders. If you would like to subscribe, you can send an e-mail to CNECT-MEDIA-LITERACY@ec.europa.eu.

5. Policy coordination

The EU Media Literacy Expert Group also has a role to provide expertise and to ensure policy coordination within the European Commission in matters related to media literacy across various relevant EU policies, as mentioned above.

6. Finally, it is worth recalling the European Council's 'Conclusions on developing media literacy and critical thinking through education and training',⁴⁰ adopted on 30 May 2016

This is a political document that underlines the importance of media literacy in the educational context. It defines media literacy in the context of the mandate of the EU Media Literacy Expert Group.

It invites Member States to reinforce dialogue, co-operation and partnerships between the education and training sectors and the media sector, including journalists. It invites Member States and the Commission to:

- ensure policy coherence in the area of media literacy among relevant policy areas: education, youth, culture and audiovisual and media policy, as well as in the area of counter-terrorism [...]
- encourage the use of funding opportunities offered by all relevant EU funds and programmes (Erasmus+, the Connecting Europe Facility, the European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020, Creative Europe and Europe for Citizens) for media literacy.

Notes

1. <http://www.epra.org/attachments/budva-wg1-media-literacy-background-paper>
2. http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/digital-single-market_en
3. <http://digitalnewsreport.org/>

4. <http://revealproject.eu/>
5. <http://www.invid-project.eu/>
6. Source: Annex VI of the Impact assessment accompanying the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2010/13/EU on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services in view of changing market realities. <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/impact-assessment-accompanying-proposal-updated-audiovisual-media-services-directive>
7. https://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles?language=en
8. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf
9. <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/high-level-group-media-freedom-and-pluralism>
10. <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/media-pluralism-monitor-mpm>
11. <http://revealproject.eu/>
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26. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-2177_en.htm
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29. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2016/0151\(COD\)&l=en](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2016/0151(COD)&l=en)
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35. <http://mediameetsliteracy.eu/>
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38. <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/meetings-media-literacy-expert-group>
39. <https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/meeting-of-the-media-literacy-expert-group-meeting-of-15-november-2016>
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Part II. Overviews

News Literacy

Reinventing the Ideals of Journalism and Citizenry in the 21st Century

Auksė Balčytienė & Ingela Wadbring

Is the concept of ‘news literacy’ something specific, a concept worth distinguishing from a more general understanding of the ‘media and information literacy’ (MIL) idea? Is news (and hence journalism) exceptional?

From our point of view, the answer to both questions is unequivocally yes. Whereas the understanding of MIL seems to be intensely discussed and internationally applied, ‘news literacy’ (although lying under the umbrella of the more general MIL declaration) appears to be a detached, specific concept with its own notion and conceptual boundaries. Journalistic news, too, has a history and still progresses within the frame of specific duties and contracts with the democratic society. As we will suggest later in this essay, news literacy can be treated as one specific (and conceptual) way of journalism’s appreciation.

On the whole, media and information literacy is a very general concept that can include almost everything that is mediated or is to some extent informative. It can be applied to the analysis of popular media content, such as sports or advertising on television, to the analysis of classical media, such as brochures and comics, to the examination of games and music, and so on. Still, not everything that is mediated (and appears informative or otherwise useful) can be assessed as being of societal relevance and importance. Indeed, media and information literacy, though by definition explicitly referring to *literacy* as classical learning activity, appears to be a much more multifaceted notion signifying not only the creative mastery of ideas in mediated discourses and texts. Modern versions of MIL comprise such attributes as citizens’ active involvement and service to societal needs by the creation and social sharing of information and news; as such, MIL also nurses societally empowering aspirations which suggest that available means of information and knowledge mediation must be applied for creativeness and individual expressiveness. This statement, as a matter of fact, serves us as the main point of departure in this discussion: though we certainly understand that there are many factors contributing to societal happiness (and democracy is certainly one of them), as seen from longitudinal studies (Inglehart et al. 2008), the sense and awareness of

fairness and equality in society contribute to overall impression of societal agreement and satisfaction. As we are claiming here, predominantly those qualities – of individual inspiration and feelings of self-confidence empowered by modern communications – appear to be acting as ‘societal glue’ installing a more emotionally supportable, sustainable and thus happier form of living and societal welfare.

Though our discussion begins with and explicitly refers to the essentials of good life and societal empowerment, we cannot stay away from a significant number of abrupt encounters that contribute to the ‘dark side’ of communication-saturated life. No matter the roles we ascribe ourselves – citizens or consumers – we need to be informed if we should be able to take relevant decisions. We need to orient ourselves and make decisions about everything – from who should deliver our electricity to who we should elect to govern the country. The electricity decision might not be of great importance, but the election decision is. To be informed requires a fundamental precondition, which is access to accurate, reliable and relevant information.

As children, the school and family is our primary source for learning about almost everything. As grown-ups, we need to find our own sources for all kinds of necessary information. Regarding the goings-on in society, news is our primary source for this kind of information. Still, as we are now well aware, not all news that circulates around meets the standards of reliable and verified journalism, or is produced with an open heart and with good intentions. We have also realised that essential modifications have taken place in the ways in which news and information circulates around. Fundamental shifts have been registered in role exchanges and power games among those who take the lead in news agenda setting and news framing. Therefore, we also need to have a critical approach towards the definition and meaning of ‘news’ and how its fundamental characteristics – of verified information provision, of timeliness and actuality – are defined in order not to be misled. In short, we need to be ‘news literate.’ And this is the main focus of our essay. Briefly, we see two goals in our mission here: the first is to pose relevant questions in the area and conceptual definition of ‘news literacy,’ and the second goal is to stimulate discussion about the two conceptual pillars of democracy – qualitative features of professional journalism and democratic engagement and participation.

Even though any discussion on journalism and democracy also calls to address the cultural issue and tackles comparative aspects, in this essay we have decided to stay on a more general and conceptual (macro) level, focusing on trends and tendencies that modern societies are forced to address. Hence, we will first briefly explain the role of news journalism in society; thereafter we will address the challenges and encounters that news organisations, individuals and societies confront today. As we conclude in this essay, though it is way too early to cast pessimism on the idea of informed and engaged citizens as well as on professional journalism, if not addressed, the critical factors (of circulating fake news, of dominant manipulative discourses, of news sites with radical and propagandist views) might in the long term greatly affect the quality and functioning of democracy within and across European states.

Yesterday's notion on news and democracy

From a normative perspective, journalistic news is distinctive from all other types of informational content because it claims to be content that is actual, factual and verified. Hence we follow the idea that 'journalistic news,' and thus 'news literacy,' is unique in such a way that, in spite of the channel that transfers it, journalism carries an implicit meaning of content with societal value. Because of that embedded collective value, journalism turns into a public good, i.e. into the content that is needed in a democratic society. Or so it was for many years, before things started rapidly changing.

News media and democracy are intrinsically interrelated. The media needs democracy since democracy is the only political system that grants the news media the required freedom to attain its goals of critical journalism and transparent communication. Conversely, democracy needs the media (and thus journalism) because, though dependent on complex causes (including socio-economic status, income and class affiliations), the quality and intensity of political decision-making – such as voting in elections and referenda, taking part in political consultations and deliberation, or forming communities of interests – are also indirectly determined by the qualitative features of information provided in the media (Strömbäck 2005).

Democracy also needs informed, engaged and knowledgeable citizens. The normative viewpoint to democracy envisions people as motivated media users. It expects people to base their political activities and engagements on a deep understanding of essential issues discussed in the media (Schudson 2003; Entman 1989; McNair 2000; Strömbäck 2005). Based on that information, people take part in the political processes and societal life and are able to make reasonable decisions.

Generally, the logic described above forms the basis of two necessities for a functioning democracy – the model of 'informed citizenship' (which views people as knowledgeable actors of daily democratic life) and the mission and functions of 'professional journalism' (which carries the function of detached observer and scrutiniser of elites) (see Figure 1).

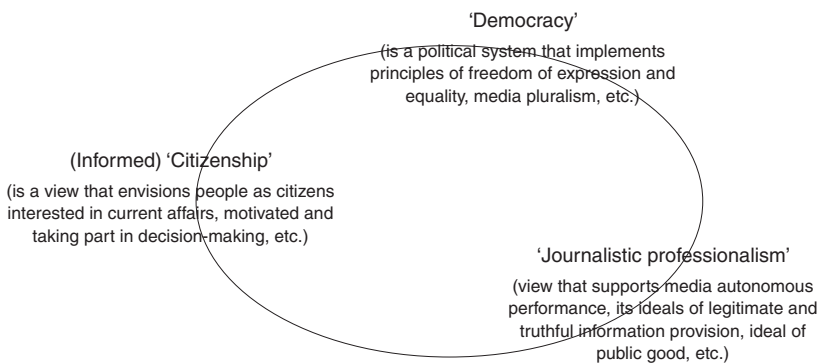


Figure 1. Reciprocal relations between the concepts of 'democracy,' 'citizenship,' and 'journalism'

The conception of ‘informed citizenship’ relies on motivations and abilities of people to use media and take part in public discussions about civic issues, which eventually leads to an understanding about how to participate in a democratic life. Journalism, too, needs to serve the ideal of the public good by making clear distinctions between entertainment and publicly empowering purposes of provided information (Sjøvaag 2015).

There are some evident drawbacks and critical tendencies in society – see below – but people are still inclined to appreciate and live better lives in a democracy, where news plays a crucial role.

As seen from opinion analyses registered by European Social Survey studies, public views of good life and happiness are higher (Figure 2a), societies are trustworthy (Figure 2b), support for democratic institutions (i.e. political parties) is stronger (Figure 2c) and people are less anxious and more optimistic about their future in those European states where positive perception of and actual support for democracy is stronger. It also seems that in those countries where support for democracy is higher, people tend to appreciate the ideals of media freedom and professional journalism (Figure 2d).

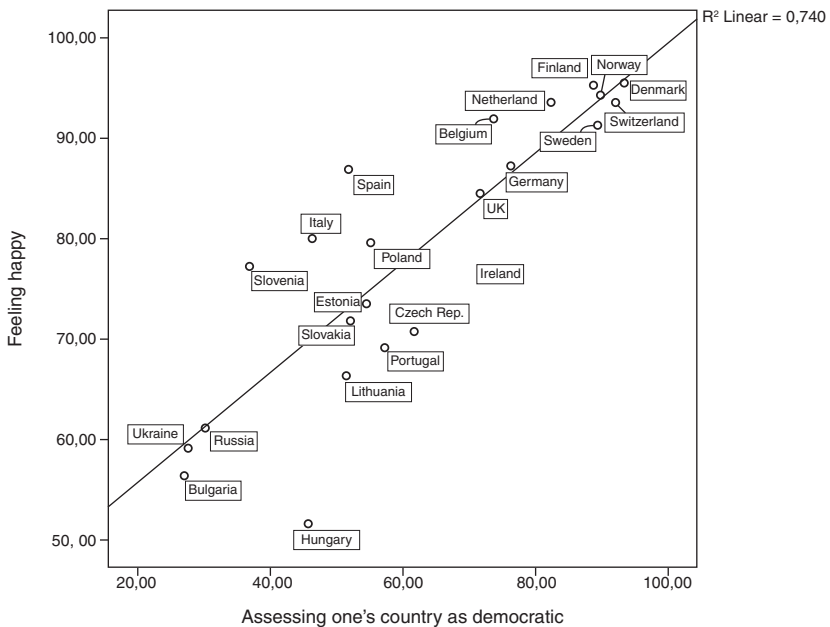


Figure 2a. Satisfied in the way that democracy works in a country by feeling of happiness (per cent)

Source: ESS (2012).

NEWS LITERACY

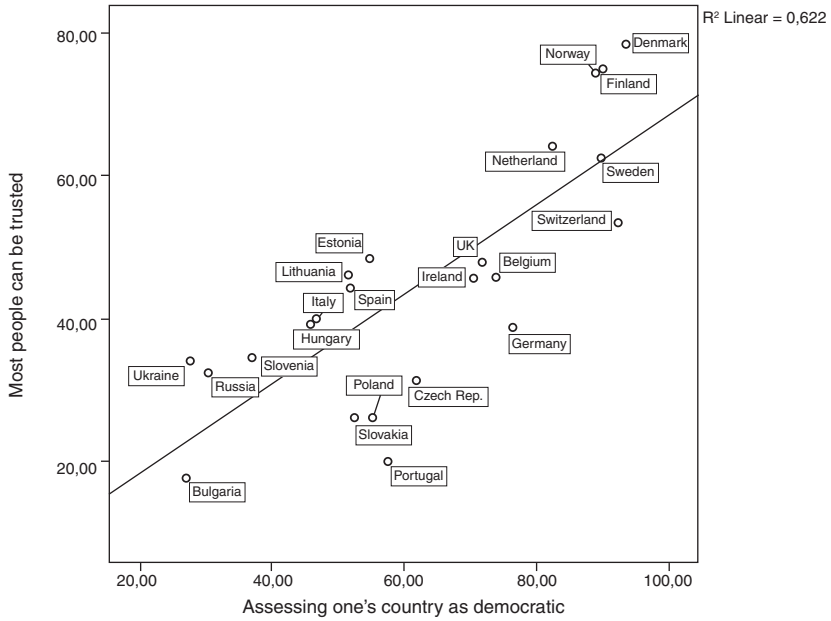


Figure 2b. Satisfied in the way that democracy works in a country by trust in people (per cent)

Source: ESS (2012).

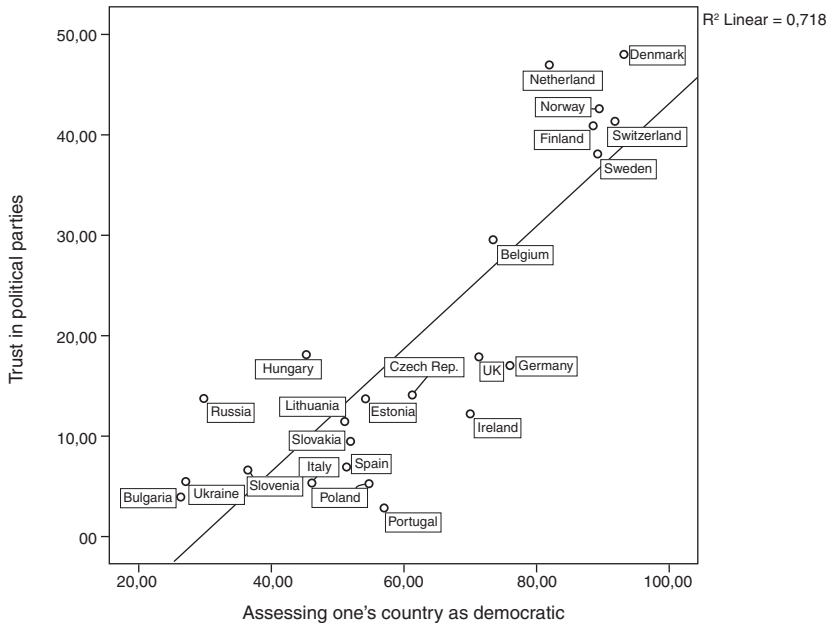


Figure 2c. Satisfied in the way that democracy work in a country by trust in political parties (per cent)

Source: ESS (2012).

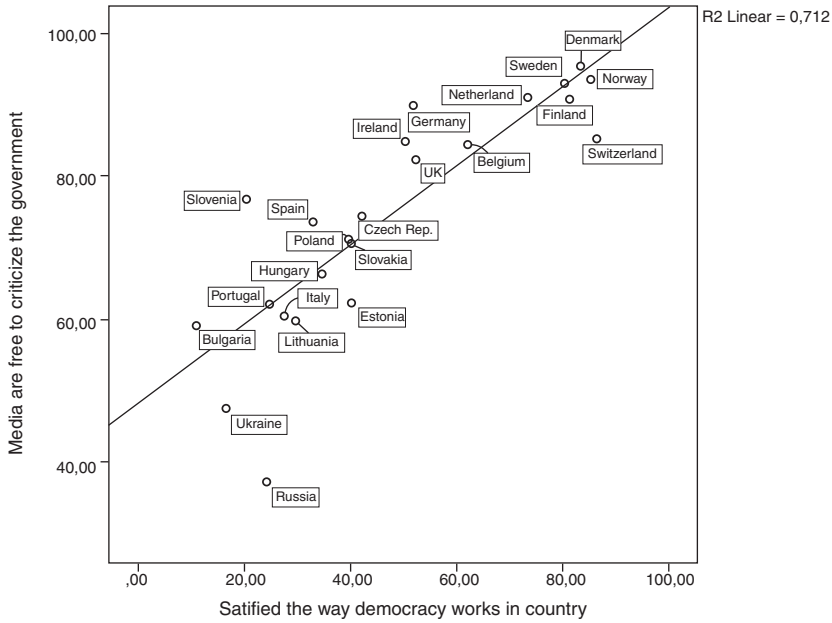


Figure 2d. Satisfied in the way that democracy work in a country by media freedom (per cent)

Source: ESS (2012).

All things considered, democracies of the 21st century are still in need of informed, knowledgeable and engaged citizens. Citizens, too, seem to be motivated and inclined to support democratic ideals. However, something in the contemporary communications sphere has inevitably changed with the advent of ICT. Are the classical concepts of ‘informed citizenship’ and ‘professional journalism’ still valid and appropriate for the current times and news environments defined as hybrid, fluctuating and in flux?

The transforming news environment

While countries with long democratic traditions and strong media brands (mostly Western European and Nordic countries) are still able to keep their standards of journalistic professionalism, many smaller media groups have overstepped the ambition of provision of ‘pure’ journalism. And as observed within and across younger European democracies – as well as in those European states which were severely hit by economic difficulties from the last crisis – hybrid discourses of journalism mixed with PR, content marketing and advertisement proliferate in news portals, magazines, television and social media (Balčytienė & Harro-Loit 2009). Hate speech and harassment as well as information wars and propaganda are also content that could be found online, sometimes with a very similar look to news journalism.

It is not only that the modes of news production and consumption have converged and new ideas and actors have entered the public scene. What seems to be of critical significance is that the meaning as well as the democratic value of the content and news that spreads and circulates around appears to be changed and modified as well. Societal agendas appear to be less structured and considerably messier. Moreover, with communicative means and mediums getting increasingly faster and news more spreadable, the news content that moves throughout the networks gets more emotional, animated and expressive, leading to its impact as being far more affective rather than informative, clarifying or explanatory (Grabe & Myrick 2016, Heinrich 2011, Jenkins et al. 2013).

Aside to changes in the media field, a number of other exemplary trends are also registered, predominantly in the political arena. As noted, public engagement and voting numbers, and hence public participation in regular political activities, have remarkably declined in recent years. Likewise, popular support and trust in democratic institutions has declined and is still decreasing, and societies are becoming more and more socially and politically polarised and divided (Mancini 2013).

This raises a number of critical questions: What happens with news journalism when there are many more new actors taking part in news production and communication? How do these practices change our understanding of journalism?

A significant number of such types of questions were continuously asked in past decades, and professional news media organisations have developed their own editorial ideologies and means (such as codes of professional conduct and internal regulations, etc.) for dealing with unwanted pressures and outcomes (Waisbord 2013, Balčytienė et al. 2015). However, it needs to be stated that those means were developed and functioned adequately in rather stable (political, economic and social) conditions. Today's news environment appears to be less stable and more in flux, thus the circulating content is less professionally supervised and therefore appears more toxic.

The loss of control for media companies

Not long ago, the most important thing for media companies was *distribution* of media content, while today, *circulation* has become important. The time when media companies had control over the content as well as the dissemination of the content is almost over. Affected by the transformation in the media industry and its social surroundings, news has gradually become a truly social product (Jenkins, Ford & Green 2013). So-called opinion leaders were identified already in the 1940s and 50s (e.g. Katz & Lazarsfeld 1955), but the concept might be even more relevant today than 70 years ago.

Opinion leaders are important in social networks, because they disseminate news from various sources. They activate and motivate the access and spread of the news. Acting as news distributors, they vigorously feed their views to others. Those influenced by opinion leaders remain reasonably passive and only act as followers of others. In

the long run, such practices contribute to inequalities and knowledge gaps; they also bring about critical outcomes, resulting in polarisation of political beliefs, identities and behaviour (Mancini 2013).

Longitudinal research studies show that though personalised information transmission adjusted by individual preferences might increase people's knowledge and interest in some issues (also in political and communal matters), news distributed through social networks might bring some unexpected and critical results (Singer 2015). First, the quality of the distributed information appears to be questionable. Second, such trends greatly contribute to the growing social and political polarisation, and even radicalisation of certain views and beliefs, even in those nations that earlier were described as consensual.

Another tendency is noticed in the news media industry, where the boundaries between news consumption and production are in a continuous process of blurring. Though this is not an entirely new trend, and various aspects of such type of (*prosumer*) capitalism were discussed about already in the late 1980s within the framework of the McDonaldisation theory (Ritzer 2011), the arrival and applications of such logic in the media field seem to cause unprecedented results. A new and concerning phenomenon are new actors who have appeared on the scene and misuse the Internet.

Different kinds of misuse of the Internet

As conditions for the traditional media industry are getting harder and harder, the so-called alternative media and alternative journalism have gained ground at the same time. Some of these types of journalism are characterised by the same ideals as traditional journalism, like citizen journalism, participatory journalism or even social journalism. However, some of the news, outwardly appearing as journalism, follow almost the opposite ideal. The problem occurs when content is presented as news stories, whether true or false, but without any responsible organisation or group behind it, and sometimes with an implicit wish to deceive or incite the reader. If the news audience doesn't show sufficient critical ability, societal debate will suffer.

Naturally, the sender of news is always an individual, but he or she can also act on behalf of others, or by themselves. One approach of analysing the senders is to differentiate the misuse on three levels: individual trolls/flamers, specific kinds of media forms, and organisations/states.

Concerning trolls and flamers, research is not unambiguous on differences between the two concepts. It is normally said that trolls are simply destructive without any obvious intention with their actions, while flamers are as destructive but also have an intention with their behaviour (Buckels et al. 2014, Hardaker 2010, McDermot 2012). Their driving force is often to challenge authorities in whatever possible way (Phillips 2011). On social media, their opinions can become widespread, while it is much harder for them to enter traditional newsrooms.

The next level is specific media. Specific political media has appeared everywhere, sometimes without any responsible editor, and often with the intention to bring its specific opinions to a wider public. Specific media (or even media channels) with strong political opinions is nothing new – Fox News in the US is a good example of this (Mancini 2013) – but the novelty is linked with wide availability and pervasive online applications even in countries previously portrayed as consensual. As cases from the Nordic countries show (Holt 2016), xenophobic and racist sites have emerged with claims of showing their own agenda and their own “truth”.

It can be argued that if states or authorities aim to mislead the public, it is worse than if single individuals do the same thing. For the public, however, the difference is not necessarily obvious. Having a critical approach is even more important when exposed to ‘news’ or other information from someone on the third level, where organisations or states express opinions. These actors have more resources, and their opinion work can therefore be more thought-out and thus more effective. A political populist party, the True Finns in Finland, is one such example (Lindén & Laurent 2015). The True Finns’ rhetoric is full of hate speech, especially directed against everyone not born and raised in Finland, and one part of the rhetoric is to blacklist journalists, researchers and all other politicians. Populist parties in general do not have access to traditional media, but they always have access to social media platforms. Their opinions and statements are designed to become viral, and thus become an issue in the public agenda and public debate.

Is it not easy to see through what comes out of biased, fake or untrue news? For some people it is no problem at all, but the more skilled the sender is, the harder it is to uncover such news. One of the problems is that many of the supporters of populist movements and right-wing parties are keen followers of disinformation media sites and truly believe that these sites are providing the real facts. This means that they do not even try to see the bias, because they think the bias has been revealed by the disinformation site. For such users, such news is the real news.

The inexperienced young news consumers

Before social media appeared on the scene, most news was produced by media organisations. In media organisations, mistakes can happen, and not all news is necessarily reliable and produced with adequate editorial scrutiny. Still, there is always someone who is responsible for what is published. On social media platforms, by contrast, no one is necessarily responsible at all, and the less experience of life one has, the harder it is to find out what is reliable and true, and what is not. Young persons have less experience of life than older ones, and they are the ones primarily receiving news online – via traditional and non-traditional news sources. Even more, for young audiences their main preferred news source is social media, where news from traditional media organisations shares its space with news with unclear status and unclear senders, thus offering an informational buffet instead of a full menu.

However, we would like to emphasise that the following argumentation is not only valid for young persons – and not for *all* young persons – but also for grown-ups without critical abilities. It is nevertheless a fact that young people are more inexperienced due to their age, and get their news from social media to a much larger extent than older ones. We therefore find it reasonable to mainly discuss youngsters.

Algorithms govern the digital flow on social media platforms. The algorithms also set the logic of people's interactions. Scholars disagree, however, about to what extent algorithms govern the flows, and if it is reasonable to talk about echo chambers or not. Some researchers argue that friendship on social media spans over ideological borders, and hence news and other texts as well (Bakshy et al. 2015, Webster 2014). Others argue that our circle of friends tends to have the same political opinion, and that people therefore are not exposed to different judgments (Colleoni et al. 2014). Other studies show that even if exchanges of information on social media have different ideological points of view, people tend to click and read those pieces that correspond to their own views (cf. Bakshy et al. 2015, Barberá et al. 2015). The disagreement between scholars depends, at least to some extent, on the design of the respective studies.

As far as we can see, it is obvious that there is a potential risk that echo chambers develop, at least among specific groups – and young people are particularly vulnerable because of their limited life experience. Young people are sometimes called 'the digital natives,' but being native online is not the same as having a critical mind. Echo chambers are a threat towards individuals who are not media and news literate, and who haven't developed a critical view on everything that is called 'news.'

Today's notion on news and democracy

From a general perspective, there is an increased uncertainty of people's self-confidence in their own abilities to participate in politics. People also appear to be less certain about their own enthusiasm to take part in democratic processes. Furthermore, they express doubts whether information distributed and made widely accessible in networks should be trusted. Simultaneously, people avoid scrutinising information themselves and tend to stay away from further information checking. Only seldom do they look at original sources that the 'news' was built on (Bakshy, Messing & Adamic 2015).

The audience's behaviour also brings serious effects to the media industry and journalistic professionalism. With the increasing use of new media, news flows in social networks appear to be governed not by standards of professional journalism, but rather by the strength of social ties or managerial decisions (Wiik & Andersson 2013). Hence, social networks run on the use of information, the quality and heterogeneity of which might cause unpleasant outcomes. Over time, audiences might display a polarisation of political identities through their knowledge, beliefs, motivations and behaviour (Mancini 2013, Prior 2013). By implication, this transformation is bound to have a significant social impact on having well-informed, motivated and collectively

concerned citizens. It seems as if communication in networks translates into stronger, firmer political identity and attitudes (Pariser 2011). This might lead to an increase in engagement and participation. But this might also increase participation which is based on false information, biased opinions and scattered views.

New forms of media as well as new actors in news production and distribution eventually blur the boundaries of the classical understanding of 'journalistic news.' As a result, professional journalism will change significantly. Criteria such as core journalistic aims and visions to serve the public good might be neglected, ignored and eventually lost. It seems, however, that contemporary media industries do not appear to be interested in playing a primary role as a provider of 'pure' journalism. As a result, journalism appears to be in transition, its ethics in flux, and public trust in democratic institutions is in decline (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. Transformed focuses throughout concepts of 'democracy,' 'citizenship' and 'journalism'

Generally, the quality of the informational product that circulates influences the quality of civic discourse. Previously, the media industry and journalistic professional ideals were the guardians of dominant societal discourses. Since the news environments have dramatically changed and the media industry is undergoing profound changes, the earlier functions of journalism have gradually shifted towards production of visually appealing, entertaining and engaging products as well as content that is easy to disseminate (Jenkins et al. 2013, Tandoc 2014).

Furthermore, new actors have entered the scene of news production, which on the one hand has pluralised the informational space, but which on the other hand has also contributed to the situation where the guidelines appear to be lost (Carlson 2015). If today's news users prefer, share and like stories that feature news in a simplistic manner (or, alternatively, high-brow news), and if news editors take cues from how people use social networks and how the news is circling there, such preference could determine the future product level (cf. Tandoc 2014).

No matter how complex and unstructured the contemporary news environment is or appears to be, journalism – and thus news – matters because of its linkage with

civil society and democracy. ‘Fact checking’ still appears to be the core of journalistic function that modern democracies require. Whether this function will be recreated and carried by professionals alone or in cooperation with others (i.e. more news literate, critical and societally concerned users) remains to be seen.

Some final words

All in all, changes taking place in contemporary news environments have a direct influence on the character and meaning of news – and hence on democracy. Thus a significant number of questions and anxieties seem to be legitimate here: What are the long-term effects and consequences of ICT’s application and how do these affect societal power relations and the structure and functioning of democracy? What happens when people make active decisions to bypass journalistic materials and delve into networked communications and spreading of news? What kind of deals and compromises do people make to compensate the integrity of information that reaches them? How can consensus be formed on issues of mutual concern in such societies where people appear to be relying on varying sources of news?

Media policies in Europe have generally rested on the universal principle that people are viewed as informed and engaged citizens. From what has been discussed above it looks like the critical moment has arrived in Europe: It is time to reassess how the idea of the well-informed citizen and, consequently, equal access and knowledgeable use of information is tackled in hybrid media environments.

We envision that ‘news literacy’ can help us build a conceptual understanding – a kind of needed ‘societal glue’ – which reuses the classical ideals and visions of ‘informed citizenship’ and ‘journalistic professionalism,’ and reinvents those to meet all challenges of the changed media conditions. News literacy, accordingly, is envisioned as people’s concern with journalistic thinking, which eventually should empower people to think and act as citizens, valuing and appreciating professionalism in news and journalism.

For modern societies, the idea of news literacy seems to be of primary significance since it predominantly refers to journalistic professionalism (which rests on the ideal to provide verified and accurate information). ‘News literacy’ as a concept also deals with informed engagement and the motivations of people needed to diagnose truthfulness and hence professionalism in news. As such, news literacy appears to be of specific significance in raising public awareness and understanding of what is behind the so-called free information circulating in interactive media and social networks, i.e. what kind of interests media, politics or business may have, and how these may affect political decisions as well as popular perceptions of the role and functions of professional news journalism.

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Media Literacy and Expanding Public Spaces

Cultures, Policies and Risks in the Baltic countries

Auksė Balčytienė & Kristina Juraitė

Understanding media and its role in education and socialization has been a rather diversified process, in terms of the perspectives, practices and actors involved in media and information literacy (MIL) – from a protectionist and reactive approach, which perceives media as a threat and danger, to the perception of media as a tool of public empowerment, promoting institutional, structural and individual change in contemporary society. What is expected of people in such a society is to acquire the skills and resources necessary to navigate complex and permanently unstable social and technological networks.

Apparently, the abundance of new media and information sources require new competencies and skills for teachers, students and all other actors involved in the learning process. In order to empower students and young people to use media in a creative, responsible and critical way, rather than protecting them from the harmful information and its effects, a consolidation of different stakeholders at the local, national, regional, and European levels is needed, including the main actors in the education system, research and analysis, the media and creative industry, the private sector and civil society.

This overview looks at some of the contextual particularities of political, economic and societal cultures in the three Baltic States and discusses how these are contributing and shaping specific tendencies registered in the climate of media literacy in each country.

Though there seems to be no directly observable relationship between the position of literacy definitions in the media policies and media system specificities of a particular country, media literacy, indeed, is among the key aspects and characteristics of a democratically functioning and participative media system (Jenkins 2006). In present communications' environment, which is indeed far-reaching and rich in content and saturated with views and opinions, people are required to be knowledgeable not only about their basic democratic rights and freedoms of access to information; they must also be perceived as actively experienced with novel means of communication and self-expression (Nieminen 2016; Ahva et al. 2015).

European media policy makers have traditionally perceived and understood information users as citizens. But today's media environments offer to and also require supplementary attachments from their users, suggesting that audiences should also be viewed as clients and customers, and not just as citizens. The customer requests underlining perspective (and predominantly those needs which are associated with openness, plurality and safety of the communications' system), in principle, is an approach that allows people to fully master literacy competences to enjoy self-expression and to contribute to self-actualization, happiness and general societal wellbeing (EU Digital agenda; EU media freedom).

From international assessments, it becomes clear that higher income countries are more advanced in terms of media literacy promotion and development, because they are richer and invest more resources in the development of adequate policies and practices in media education. But, as will be shown here, we would also like to argue that aside from economic and financial pre-conditions, cultural features are of no less significance in the promotion of media literacy and, hence, of participatory societal culture. In the European context, Estonia is a good example of a country that has intellectually and intentionally shaped its strategic development vision in communications aimed at the advancement of societal consensus and solidarity through innovative thinking, creativeness and other advancements in education (and also the promotion of media education and learning).

The Baltic media context:

From media customs and routines, to media literacy

In the three Baltic countries, media trends and developments, as well as the climate of media freedom, are highly influenced by contextual conditions, namely the small market, very liberal regulation, and fragile and fluid media professionalism (Vihalemm 2002, Baerug 2005, Balčytienė 2010, Balčytienė 2012). The ideally favourable conditions for the media industry – unrestricted freedom of the press and an oligopolistic market – do not automatically promote media professionalism, accountability and self-regulation (Loit et al. 2011, Rožukalne 2013). In all three countries, media markets are of an oligopolistic character – as contextually moulded economic opportunities are indeed limited and tiny and, thus, cannot accommodate too many owners – which results in the scarcity of local and regional media, it also disturbs media pluralism and diversity, as well as media professionalism. In most cases, available legislation and court practice do not yet contribute to the process of supporting media professionalism, know-how, and accountability. Additionally, very small and highly concentrated media markets can give jobs for a limited number of journalists; hence news commentators more often than not prioritize loyalty to the employer, rather than to professional ideals (Balčytienė & Lauk 2005). Hence, freedom of the press has become freedom for the press owners and enables the media organizations to abuse freedom of expression by

blocking certain uncomfortable voices. In most cases, in all three Baltic countries, media business strategies follow an opportunistic approach: by focusing on attracting the highest possible share of audience, too few investments go into the promotion of media professionalism, competence, performance analysis, and audience requests' research. This seriously distresses editorial decision-making, as shifts have been noticed towards stricter 'managerialism' with market logic and media instrumentalisation taking over professionalism ideals and standards. In general, risks to media freedom and pluralism in the Baltic countries are relatively small, but obvious deficiencies emerge due to the lack of the regulation of horizontal media concentration and media ownership transparency, inadequate and short-term standards of PSM funding, underdeveloped policies of media literacy, and limited support for minority and community media. Among the most recent representative trends are media ownership changes towards even greater concentration, a rising rivalry among media outlets, continuing audience fragmentation, and dropping institutional trust.

All things considered, in most cases, the Baltic media's response to democratic needs and requirements is fairly mixed – the media seldom functions as a pure and actual contributor to the needs of democracy and the ideals of the public good. Likewise, the general public disappointment with democratic functioning is also due to the interrelated processes of growing commercialization and marketisation of media and politics – the rise of strategic political communications, and the rise of partisan and ideologically tinted journalism. In the same way, the public's trust in and the quality of democracy decreases when media moves into the field of political and economic power sharing and instrumentalisation, and when self-censorship becomes an everyday reality among media professionals. As seen from the table below, though specific general trends are recognized as shifting towards more commercially-oriented content production, even the smallest countries can show great cultural diversity in terms of what types of media are dominating and trusted and what types of content people tend to choose as their daily news experience and practice (if any).

In such a context, media education and literacy is of particular importance in raising public awareness and understanding of what is behind the so called free information, i.e. what kind of interests media, politics or business may have, how these may affect public perceptions and decisions regarding the dissemination of information. Media literacy based on democratic values of participation and critical thinking then becomes crucial to improve media quality, and promote professional journalism and a democratic culture.

None of the Baltic countries, in general, has a well established and functioning media literacy policy (Media Pluralism Monitor: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia 2015, 2016). Media literacy issues are very seldom discussed in public, and even then usually understood as digital literacy with such issues as consumer literacy and the effects of advertising, media production, and internet safety are identified.

Estonia, though, is a country that significantly differs from the other two – Latvia and Lithuania. In Estonia, media literacy subjects have been present in the current na-

Table 1. Political and media landscapes in the Baltic countries

	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
General indicators			
Population (Eurostat, January 2016)	1.32 (million)	1.97 (million)	2.89 (million)
Major linguistic and ethnic groups (Eurostat, 2011)	68.6% Estonians, 25.7% Russians, 3.3% Ukrainians and Belorussians	59% Latvians, 28% Russians, 4% Belorussians, 2% Poles, 1% Lithuanians, 5% other	83.7% Lithuanians, 6.6% Poles, 5.3% Russians, 1.3% Belorussians, 3.1% other language groups
GDP per capita (Eurostat, 2015)	13.3 (thsd., EUR)	10.7 (thsd., EUR)	11.6 (thsd., EUR)
Political and social life			
EU and NATO membership	2004	2004	2004
Eurozone membership	2011	2014	2015
Voter turnout in last national parliament and EU parliament elections (Eurostat)	63.5% (in 2011)	58.8% (in 2014)	52.9% (in 2012)
Trust in political institutions (Standard Eurobarometer 83, Spring 2015)	33% parliament, 38% government 15% political parties	17% parliament, 25% government 5% political parties	16% parliament, 34% government 9% political parties
Political interest index (Standard Eurobarometer 83, Spring 2015)	18% strong, 55% medium, 16% low, 11% not at all	12% strong, 54% medium, 22% low, 12% not at all	16% strong, 53% medium, 5% low, 16% not at all
Organizational membership (% of members of trade union or similar organization, European Social Survey, 2014)	11.7%	No data	7.9%
Index of corruption (Transparency International, 2016)*	70	57	59
Media culture and media life			
The year of the publication of a first newspaper	Ordinary Freytags (later Donnerstags) Post-Zeitung, 1675	Rigische Montags (Donnerstags) Ordinari Post-Zeitung, 1680	Kurjer Litewski, 1760
Daily use of media (Standard Eurobarometer 82, Autumn 2014)	83% watch TV 63% listen to radio 42% read printed press 71% use Internet 40% use social networks	79% watch TV 57% listen to radio 30% read printed press 64% use Internet 43% use social networks	83% watch TV 53% listen to radio 20% read printed press 58% use Internet 33% use social networks
Media advertising expenditure (TNS, 2014)	72.2 (million, EUR)	75.6 (million, EUR)	99.1 (million, EUR)
Popularity of the main PSB channel – TV (TNS, 2015)	Audience market share: 15.5% ETV	Audience market share: 10.8% LTV1	Audience market share: 9.2% LRT TV
Media performance assessments and risks			
Media freedom (Freedom House, 2015)**	16	28	25
Risks to media pluralism (Media Pluralism Monitoring, 2016)	3-29%	25-48%	10-56%
Risks to media literacy (Media Pluralism Monitoring, 2016)	25% low	75% high	81% high

* The lower the index, the more corruption is in the country, while 100 (max. score) represents no corruption in the country.

** The lower the index, the more freedom have media, while 100 is max. score to represent no freedom at all.

tional curriculum since 2002¹. Informal educational activities are also rich and varied², though there is no possibility to have a broader overview of those, since many of those are lacking in sustainability. In Latvia, conversely, media literacy is included in the priorities list of media policy document³ that has been developed by the Unit of Media Policy at the Ministry of Culture since 2015. As a result of these political decisions and actions, several practical undertakings are realized: the content of the subject 'Social knowledge' of mandatory education (basic education, from 7 to 9 years) includes few topics about the media operations and media effects; additionally, the content of the subject 'Politics and law' also provides few hours on media (secondary school, from 10 to 12 year). Broadly speaking, many of the informal activities⁴ are developed due to lobbying actions, rather than clearer visions or strategic directions, based on an informed and knowledgeable analysis of the state of the art. The state of media policy development in Lithuania appears to be critical⁵. Despite a general agreement on the importance of MIL in the media-engaged world, national policy measures remain missing (there is no media education curriculum adopted and implemented at the national level). Due to the international policies, especially EU policies and recommendations, the first steps have been taken in integrating MIL into the high school curriculum, both formal and informal education. On the other hand, a number of MIL initiatives and advocacy actions have been undertaken by different stakeholders, including high schools, civil society, private sector, and academia. Though activities and projects appear to have a varied nature, many of those are intended to have only short-term effects, since there is no coordinated activities and all actions are split between two institutions, namely the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Science and Education⁶, and also by the third party sector (such as initiatives supported through the Nordic Council of Ministers network and representatives in Lithuania). Despite all of those diverse initiatives and project outcomes, the critical aspect arises from the lack of coordination, the lack of informed leadership, and the absence of a coordination plan among the actors taking part in this endeavour.

Though there exists similarities in policy actions and practical choices among the three countries, differences are also certainly seen. Attentive media education in Estonia, lobby actions in Latvia and scattered didactic activities in Lithuania produce varied results. Estonia appears to be a country that is most consistently working in the promotion of 'culture of literacy' through such actions as media education and teacher training and varying educational supports. Latvian business investors appear to be more active in promoting public competences and the knowledge of information usage. Lithuania, the largest of the three countries, has the least strategic and intentional development of the related actions. In spite of different meanings given and arrangements of media related education, in all three countries, media literacy training at a school level needs to be strengthened and, as seen from situation analyses, various steps are under way. Still, it is another question whether the teachers will actually be able to support the intended media-enhanced learning process – as the curriculum is not well worded in any of the countries. What is seen from the current situation in

teaching at schools, in all three countries, media related education is mostly focused on digital competencies and far less on the skills of the critical evaluation of various sources, and does not include functional reading and the comprehension of current news, nor identifies the production of media as a learning outcome.

In general, Baltic countries have been lacking in systematic and comprehensive media education policies so far. Conceptual inconsistency, a lack of resources and coordination, a protectionist rather than proactive approach, as well as an emphasis on the digital literacies, rather than more general media education, have been prevailing in the understanding of how MIL policies and activities should be framed. Civil society organizations and other stakeholders (academic institutions, private and public sector) have been filling the niche by implementing a wide range of different initiatives while promoting media awareness and competences⁷. However, these collaborations are often limited by the lack of coordination, financial sustainability, sufficient human resources and a more comprehensive understanding of MIL.

Discussion: Changing media, changing societies

Digital innovations and social media have become dominant communication means, offering information sources for all types of audiences throughout their whole life course. Though technological effects and outcomes of new ICTs application and usage are extensively questioned, most recent studies have observed that intensified use of new technologies and social media bring unique social effects and consequences to political and social life. Numerous studies suggest that having access to digital devices and social networks increases the amount of social capital that a person can have, which, as a matter of fact, contributes to social connectivity, creates new learning possibilities, raises career opportunities, and, along with this, adds to qualitative changes in societal and political life.

Still, despite the growing availability and daily usage and applicability of new technologies in news consumption, becoming an assured, familiarized, informed and accustomed user of digital innovations and online news media is not self-evident. Though inequalities in access to digital networks and its various uses (such as e-business, e-government and other interactive services) are indeed diminishing within and across various European states, these are overtaken by a number of social consequences and adaptation inequalities contributing to 'communication inequality' bringing social, educational, participatory and even economic variations within and across different countries. Hence, a number of questions call to be asked here: How does the inequality in access to information and news channels create inequalities within and across the countries? How could public organizations, such as education and media, contribute to overcoming communication and information inequality gaps among the citizens – more specifically, what is the role of education, as well as of journalism and news media, in helping the overcoming of those divides?

To sum up, MIL is a culturally embedded phenomenon, strongly dependent on the public and political culture, media development, the role of the state, media professionalism, and the nature of a civil society. In the Baltic countries, media literacy appears to be a question of high concern indeed, predominantly within the current state of affairs linked with increased information wars and propaganda (the latter issue became especially sensitive in the context of the informational attacks, trolling, falsification and lies that are incessantly found in media). Though discussions about media and information literacy have been active for quite some time, and the governments have outlined certain directions (such as the activation of media related analysis skills training in the schools), very few thorough and informed policy-making decisions towards active measures for a goal-oriented massive implementation in schools (or elsewhere, like public libraries) have taken place yet in each of those countries. The current situation calls to be defined as an active analysis-oriented stage, when numerous research and methodological projects are funded through different initiatives and programs. More consistent and ongoing media awareness and practice-oriented education is linked with the initiatives and activities of various NGOs and academic institutions; public intellectuals are also active and their ideas are often taken by the leading news media and are reflected in daily reports. Another particularity of the region is a positive influence of different international programs, including the European Commission, Council of Europe, UNESCO, Nordic Council of Ministers and others, which are bringing MIL to the forefront of the public competences necessary for a democratic and sustainable welfare society. In short, though ‘media literacy’ issues find an adequate place in public debates and public agenda, related policies are underdeveloped, and the measures taken only address some specific and fragmented matters (such as pilot studies of young audiences and their media preferences).

Notes

1. In Estonia (Ugur & Harro-Loit 2010; Ugur 2011; Media Pluralism Monitor: Estonia 2016), there exists a cross-curricular theme ‘Information environment’ that should be applied for all school levels, and two mandatory courses in upper high school (‘Media and its influences’ and ‘Practical Estonian language 2’, 35 lessons each). Schools may, if they desire, include voluntary media courses in a school’s curriculum. Depending on the school’s understanding of what media literacy is, these courses may focus on ICTs, multimedia production, critical media literacy, journalistic skills etc.
2. Usually these groups focus on simple video production or, depending on the county’s support, help in producing local newspapers etc. In some schools, school media (newspapers, TV or radio programs) can be considered as non-formal education, whereas in other schools these forms of production are strictly controlled by the school’s management. There are some NGOs (like Kinobuss/The Cinema Bus) that hold short workshops for interested children and youth all over Estonia. Other forms of media literacy, besides simple media production, are hardly represented – perhaps some occasional lectures or workshops in Open Youth Centres on the topic of internet safety should be mentioned here.

Ideas reported here were partially supported through the research project *News Literacy: How to Understand Media*, financed by the Lithuanian Research Council project No.: REP-2/2015, 2015-2016.

3. As reported (Media Pluralism Monitor: Latvia 2016), the media literacy policy document covers activities that are mostly oriented to the basic education system; the general target audience for media literacy are schoolchildren, librarians (many pupils living in the countryside use the Internet in local libraries), and youth policy specialists at local government institutions. Media literacy exists, but only to a limited extent in the education curriculum in Latvia.
4. As suggested (Media Pluralism Monitor: Latvia 2016), the media literacy project 'Cinema in the schools' elaborated by the Latvian Cinema Center has been launched in 2015. This is an educational tool for teachers of any subject (history, literature, geography, physics etc.) to change/replace the content of traditional teaching material with the tasks and examples from new and old films produced in Latvia. The main aim of this project is to educate school children about the national films and to develop their ability of understanding the specific language of the audiovisual medium. A pilot project on digital literacy lessons for basic education was launched by the Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with the Association of Digital Technologies in 2015. Activities of this project are mostly related to the usage of gadgets, applications, technologies and creation of self-produced content. National telecommunication company Latt telecom organizes a program of computer and Internet literacy for seniors. In addition, many adult life-long learning institutions of local municipalities provide computer courses for senior citizens.
5. In Lithuania's Progress Strategy 2030, adopted by the Lithuanian Parliament in 2012, which highlights a national vision, priorities and guidelines for the future national development, media education is underlined as an important premise for a vibrant public sphere, responsible media, as well as a democratic and sustainable society.
6. As reported, (Media Pluralism Monitor: Lithuania: 2016), there are several projects running that actively focus on media literacy education in schools (by producing learning materials, educational applications, giving advice and support). The institution that is most active here is the Education Development Centre (<http://www.upc.smm.lt/veikla/about.php>), which is a co-product of the Ministry of Science and Education. There are projects focusing on media education aspects as non-formal media literacy training, for example, by training media users to be active in media content production. An example of such non-formal education practices could be different short-term programs and courses in media (audiovisual, interactive, cross-media) production and education.
7. For instance, in Estonia, open youth centres foster a number of media education activities, as well as the Estonian Media Educators Union, which provides training and education in media literacy for high school teachers. In Lithuania, the National Institute for Social Integration is paying special focus on the media training and literacy in raising public awareness of the socially vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities, immigrants, disabled people, and other social minorities. The main activities of the institute are mainly targeting young people, as well as a broader society through different communication channels. Other public institutions, such as libraries, should be emphasized as active partners in MIL projects. As an example, in 2008, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation initiated a Libraries for Innovation project in Lithuania, which was aimed at providing all public libraries, especially those in rural areas, with Internet access. The project has been successfully continued since then and is now focusing on digital agenda, digital inclusion and life-long learning goals. Different public libraries are supported by the scheme to implement different activities, including interactive workshops, creative laboratories and other educational initiatives to improve the digital literacies of children, young people, disabled and seniors.

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Part III. The Fight against Propaganda

Latvian Media Policy Responses to the Foreign Information Treaty¹

Roberts Putnis

Let's begin with a fictional construct. Imagine a country in the European Union. In this country journalism is a respectable profession and journalists seek to report the truth as precisely as possible. Clear professional quality and ethical standards are observed. The media tend toward the ideal of reflecting all opinions, and strive to be neutral and objective. Journalists subject themselves to the national legislative framework, which reserves the right to require journalists to claim responsibility for any errors or possible manipulation. This country's journalists have taken it upon themselves to comply with the same ethical standards and the self-regulatory recommendations and criticisms that their organisation follows.

And now, let's suppose that a new television station has been founded, one that is not bound by any standards of quality or professional ethics. It does not respect the legal rules of the game and operates beyond the impact of any national judicial system. No one can sue the station for violations of dignity or require it to publish corrections of false information. Letters concerning ethics violations remain unanswered. What's more, this television station has absolutely unlimited financial resources – the sky's the limit for television expenditures, and always will be compared with other market participants. The station also has unrestricted access to the entire entertainment industry – every singer and TV host wants to appear on their screen. This station dominates pop culture. While these circumstances continue, the station is bound to be the market leader, and soon won't have any competitors left.

Now, let's develop this story: the new television station serves a particular radical nationalist ideology, whose aim is to destabilise society and sow discord among the people of your country. The station owners want your country to leave the European Union and quit NATO. These TV 'editors' and 'journalists', as they call themselves, don't seek the truth. On the contrary: they want to construct your thoughts and opinions to create the impression that there is no truth, only little lies and big lies. They want you to fear refugees, mistrust your national institutions, believe your government is being manipulated by the other EU member states and the US President makes the other

Putnis, Roberts (2017). Latvian Media Policy Responses to the Foreign Information Treaty in Ingela Wadbring & Leo Pekkala (eds) *Citizens in a Mediated World. A Nordic-Baltic Perspective on Media and Information Literacy*. Göteborg: Nordicom.

governments do whatever he wants. Every day, through news and commentary, the station repeats the message that you are God's only chosen nation. Only your nation has retained true traditional values and is able to protect the world from the horrors of modern corruption, such as homosexuality and feminism, among other dangers. The same ideas also flow from entertainment programs that feature your country's most famous TV stars and stage artists. And, your country's religious leaders support it all.

How long will it take for this television station to fundamentally change the society you live in? Which issues appear on the public agenda? How does it affect your public policy? In Latvia, this is not fictitious scenario. Russia and its locally broadcast national television stations are creating that reality here. Approximately one third of the Latvian public consumes Russian television products. This is correlated with Russian as the language of communication at home or in the family, although the correlation is not absolute. Many Latvians, particularly those of the older generation, have a good knowledge of Russian and are comparatively happy to consume Russian state television products. These programmes offer traditional entertainment with a large dose of post-Soviet nostalgia. The entertainment content is intertwined with conspiracy theories; the news is convincingly presented, yet riddled with lies and hate speech; political shows are saturated with nationalist superiority. The Latvian national authorities must find solutions to protect the social order and resist these hostile external influences.

In light of these considerations, the National Electronic Media Council, an independent media watchdog, adopted a decision on 7 April 2016 to prohibit the distribution of the Russian state TV channel *Rossija RTR* in Latvia for a period of six months. The regulator based its decision on instances of hate speech. Indeed, heinous words were broadcast in a media space that protects rights and freedom of speech in a united Europe. The Lithuanian authorities have also been forced to adopt similar decisions. If the national authorities of countries that managed to restore their democratic rights and freedoms with such great struggle and difficulty are forced to take such decisions, it shows how difficult the situation has become. The decision of the Latvian authorities indicates that it sees this step as absolutely necessary, rather than as a trivial decision. Democratic national governments have a duty to act when a threat is posed to the national democratic order.

At the same time, it is clear that Latvian media policy makers consider restrictive and prohibitive measures in the media environment to be extraordinary steps. The only proper method in the fight against hazards in the national information space is establishing an active mediapolicy focused on strengthening the local information area and facilitating media pluralism. This is the ultimate mission described in the policy guidelines for Latvian media 2016-20, which the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers began reviewing in June 2016. The policy planning document sets out the following objectives: the creation of a viable information space with diverse, vital, professional, and transparent democratic media environment that makes it possible for a civil and media literate society to respond effectively to the uncertainties of the information space, and develop a common public opinion.

The Latvian government plans activities in five areas. First, state policy will focus on strengthening diversity in the media environment. Decisions that focus on organising the media market are at the centre of this activity. In the near future, public radio broadcasters will no longer participate in the advertising market; by instigating this new policy Latvia wishes to increase the competitiveness of local market participants with cross-border products. In the light of technology- and globalisation driven market developments, the best way to enhance the competitiveness of a media outlet is to strengthen local competence in content creation. Latvian mediapolicy places the greatest emphasis on the development of the public service broadcasters, who are at the centre of the spectrum in terms of media diversity. Media policy guidelines foresee a gradual increase in public media funding and significant improvements in the public media legal framework. At the moment, a legislative proposal has been submitted for public discussion calling for the creation of a new public broadcasting institute to regulate editorial independence and organisational accountability, significantly strengthening its autonomy. A new management model is simultaneously being created that would ensure that public media oversight would be less dependent on political decisions. There are plans for a new type of state aid to support local and regional media.

The second idea is to promote quality and accountability in the media environment in general. Latvia is one of the few countries that have not formed a single media ethics council or Ombudsman capable of escalating media accountability. The absence of such an institution can be explained by the very specific conditions in which the media environment developed since the restoration of independence. Foreign media investors did not assume leadership in setting standards for the media environment beyond the requirements of their companies, and local capital media organisations often had no interest in the existence of media professionalism and ethical standards. The discussions held by the policy planning group demonstrate that the lack of an ethics council has led to significant divisions between the various public and media sectors, as well as the relatively low confidence that Latvians have in the media and the profession of journalism. Accordingly, the state is planning to take action to support industry efforts to create a unified, self-regulating body that sets ethical and professional standards. The state predicts that such an institution would ease the burden of the media and individual journalists in legal proceedings.

The third course of action is aimed at improving the education of media industry professionals. Professional education in the field of communications in Latvia is segmented. Competition provides the advantage of program diversity, however local resources do not ensure the high level of quality in media education required to meet the growing challenges within the media environment that arise from rapid changes in the market. Improved cooperation between educational institutions has been indicated in the media policy planning process so as to increase the quality of the media education programme. Meanwhile, the dynamics of the mediaprofession makes continuous education necessary. The Latvian government has adopted a series

of measures that will be available to journalism professionals. One of the most recent examples is the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence founded in Riga last year. The centre houses the national public service broadcasters, professional associations, and an academic environment all under one roof. This non-governmental organisation will offer continuing education programs for professionals living and working in the Baltic States and Eastern Partnership countries.

A qualitative media space is not possible without a critical audience that makes demands on media content. The fourth media policy direction comprises initiatives to develop critical thinking and improve public knowledge of media literacy. Media literacy material will be included in the Latvian general education programme and special attention will be given to university content. In 2015, a UNESCO Department of Media Literacy was created at the University of Latvia; this is the central academic institution for media literacy research. Alongside the work of the education institutions, the Latvian National Library will play an essential role in stimulating media literacy. It will serve as an education and service centre for questions concerning media literacy, and as a broad-spectrum multiplier of media literacy throughout Latvia. The public broadcasters will play a no less important role in the promotion of media literacy. Special programmes regarding these issues are in development, as is media criticism of the genre.

Finally, the Latvian media policy plan calls for substantial improvements in the legal framework to promote the security of the media environment. On the one hand, this means strengthening the legal framework for the public service broadcasters, as previously mentioned. On the other hand, a new set of rules is intended to replace the current Press Law, which was written in 1990 when Latvia was still caught up in the emotions of regaining independence. Other rules regulating the media environment will also be updated in accordance with its dynamic development. In this respect, Latvia may soon have one of the most advanced legislative frameworks for media activities.

As you can see from this quick overview in to the comprehensive policy planning document, the Latvian state clearly responding this challenge – on the one hand we must contend with rapid development and global change, but on the other hand, foreign powers are using the freedoms and rights our society provides against the democratic structure of the state; there is no single easy answer to the extremely complex situation we are facing. A number of quick fixes promoting seemingly simple solutions to the threat of hostile foreign information activities have been placed on the Latvian social and political agenda, and proposed at the European level.

One widely discussed idea was the creation of a new channel for the Russian-speaking segments of the Latvian audience. The two large language communities in Latvia are very sensitive to the issue of language use. Because of the extensive Russification operations, which discriminated against Latvians during the Soviet occupation, and the continuing consequences, Latvians still feel that their language is threatened. Latvians are the largest ethnic group in the capital city of Riga making up 46 per cent of the population, but they are still in the minority. In Daugavpils, the second largest

city, Latvians make up only 18 per cent of the population and are an absolute ethnic minority. In the remaining major cities, Latvians account for about half or slightly more than half of the population. In Estonia, which in other respects is similar to Latvia, the Russian minority groups are concentrated in the capital and in the town of Narva in the north-eastern region; this is a significant difference in terms of linguistic security. A dual linguistic environment exists throughout the entire territory of Latvia; the Latvian language is slowly regaining its historic position, but this is not possible without the use of national instruments and support for the project.

In 2012, this general sense of endangerment was significantly increased by the populist promotion of a referendum on Russian as the second official language. 70 per cent of the citizens participated in the referendum, resulting in one of the highest political participation experiences in the history of renewed Latvia. An overwhelming majority, 75 per cent, rejected giving the Russian language official status in Latvia. The authors of the political initiative were the Harmony party, political actors calling themselves social democrats, but in contradiction to social democratic tradition, that party looks out for the interests of only one ethnic minority in Latvia. Despite the burdens of inter-governmental cooperation, these political actors are still working in close cooperation with Russian President Vladimir Putin's nationalist party, United Russia. They have not considered it necessary to review this cooperation after the annexation of Crimea and Russia's incursion into Ukraine in 2014.

In this historical-political context, there is no need to further justify the lack of public and political support for the creation of a new Russian media platform. Professional and media market experts also believe that it would not have been possible to implement the initiative for a number of reasons: Latvian public television has been in a comparatively poor financial situation for some time now, largely due to the global economic crisis, which had a particularly strong impact on the Latvian economy. Accordingly, Latvian TV is faced with the challenge of retaining its place among Latvian audiences – an average of 10 per cent viewing share for the LTV two channels together. This has caused questions about the capacity of LTV to effectively address a new audience. Public television has not offered an integrated strategy for attracting minorities to the Latvian language. Public integration policy requires such strategies to be implemented in Latvia, conceptually blocking policy initiatives that could strengthen or promote bilingualism in Latvia. Public television gave no assessment of the potential influence of a new Russian-language channel on the societal challenges described above.

Returning to the original fictional scenario, let's recall that there are three keys to the success of the Russian state media. In addition to the ability to defy Latvian regulations concerning freedom of speech, Russia has unlimited financial resources compared with market participants of any scale in the Latvian market, e.g. the total volume of their advertising market in 2015 was 77 million EUR. If we count both the total public financing and operating income Latvian public service broadcasters spend less than 30 million EUR/year on content creation. The Latvian media market

will never have the resources available to the Russian media operating the Latvian media market. One reply to this dilemma was that Latvian media has a competitive advantage in terms of local content, which could provide some balance to Moscow's huge financial investments. It might even be possible to agree with this suggestion if it weren't for the fact that one of the most important features of the television business is that entertaining content attracts audience attention. And here Latvian market realities deal a fatal blow to the initial idea. Any new media initiative in Russian will never have access to Russian entertainment products, which ensure audiences for their programming as a whole.

One additional argument against a 'central solution' in the form of a new TV channel was its potentially negative impact on the local media environment. Every major Latvian city, as well as many smaller settlements, has a bilingual press that enjoys high media user confidence. Electronic media are also available throughout Latvia in both Latvian and Russian. The public Russian-language LR4 radio channel is a success story. But these media are subject to the same negative influences that affect the media environment in this country. A new public media channel could potentially have a negative impact on these actors. For these reasons, Latvian media policy makers decided to carry out a media policy guidelines project, which would provide a complex response at the national level to the complex problems the country faces, systemically strengthening and improving the media environment and public media literacy. In parallel to the political consultation process, the national authorities are already actively implementing the first initiatives aimed at the promotion of legal certainty in the Latvian media market, creating a legal framework that corresponds to market developments.

The Latvian approach is clear: the only proper instruments to develop the country's security in the context of external information risk are those that substantially strengthen and promote local media market, ensure the independence of journalists and their ability to carry out their democratic function. But this does not solve the problem of what to do with those players who use the status and associated freedoms and privileges of the journalist against democratic institutions. The author has personally experienced the 'information' methods used by Russia to exploit the rights and freedoms available in a united Europe. At a conference in Helsinki dedicated to World Freedom of the Press Day, during a panel discussion on the hazards of propaganda, a representative of the Russian Ministry of Defence TV channel *Zvezda* asked a question as an 'independent journalist'. All of the techniques of Russian State television were later used – quotes were taken out of context and the speaker was personally discredited. After that the Internet 'did its work'.

As things stand today, the European market has failed to formulate a definition of media that works for the new media environment. How far should hostile media outlets be considered instruments of foreign intelligence, and what privileges and rights they might enjoy? The Audiovisual Media Services Directive, which is currently being reviewed, plays a major role in this area. Existing initiatives do not justify much

hope for advancing the issues addressed in this article. However, by joining forces at the European level we should be able to eradicate 'mailbox media' in third countries that follow the path of least resistance; according to the regulations of the unified EU media market, these companies are free to register in any EU country, even if it is not necessarily the country where their target market is based. The second question that can be answered at the European level is how to ensure at least some minimal requirements for media independence in creating the news and how can we ensure that news content reflects high journalistic quality and professional ethical standards? Dealing successfully with these issues would have a positive impact on increasing the quality of the media environment in the European media market.

However, we must continue to work at developing a framework at the national level that will ensure compliance with all new media market trends, whether they be technological development, content distribution and production platform convergence, or other trends stemming from globalisation. Latvian media policy makers have a clear ambition to offer a modern legal framework within the next two years, updating existing legislation and redefining the legal language of the media environment. Latvia is not alone in this challenge. The search for answers to these questions is on the agenda in almost all neighbouring countries, but that is another story.

Note

- 1 First published in *Resisting Foreign State Propaganda in the New Information Environment: the case of the EU, Russia, and the Eastern Partnership countries*. Foundation for European Progressive Studies, ISBN 978-9934-8536-9-2, UDK 32.019.5, Re708.

Meeting and Treating Extremism

Ewa Thorslund

The Swedish Media Council is just about to update ‘MIL for me’, which is based on the ambition on how to meet – and treat – violent extremist messages in the context of current European political developments. Accordingly, the Swedish Media Council recently conducted a survey on belief in conspiracy theories, media use and trust in society among young people.

The Swedish Media Council is a government agency whose primary task is to promote the empowerment of minors as conscious media users and to protect them from harmful media influence. In order to do so, the council gathers relevant research and disseminates information on media development, media effects and media use regarding children and young people. The agency also looks into trends and developments within defined and related policy areas in order to place these discussions, initiatives and productions into a wider context.

General effects of digitalisation

Digitalisation and changes in the media landscape create a vast amount of both information and disinformation. More information does not necessarily lead to better informed citizens. On the contrary, we have a situation where it is easier than ever to both avoid and seek information and news, to choose your own ‘media diet’, where some talk about ‘digital enclaves’ (or, a Balkanisation of public space) or ‘digital echo chambers’, where people choose information that confirms their opinions and/or perception of reality, which in turn increases the risk of exclusion and even radicalisation in society.

Thus, it is vital in today’s information society that citizens are media- and information-literate; that they can find, analyse, critically evaluate and create information in a variety of media and contexts. Media and information literacy is a crucial ability in the present media landscape where boundaries between text and image – and between being a consumer and a producer – have become blurred.

Violent and anti-democratic content online

In September 2011, the Swedish government tasked the Swedish Media Council to conduct a study on violent and anti-democratic messages on the Internet. This study was concerned with how the Internet and social media are used to promote anti-democratic messages aimed at young people, encouraging the use of violence for a political or ideological cause, and how to equip young people to resist such messages. The study examined how Swedish right- and left-wing extremists and militant jihadists use the Internet for propaganda and recruiting purposes.

The study was one of a total of 15 different measures in the government's Action Plan for Protecting Democracy against Pro-Violence Extremism. The study was submitted to the government in June 2013. A lot has happened concerning violent messages on the Internet since then. At the time of the study, the right-wing extremist web milieu was far bigger than the other two and the jihadist web milieu was concentrated outside of Sweden.

Still, the recommendation was not to try to stop or limit the presence of – or access to – anti-democratic or pro-violence messages on the Internet. Instead, the Media Council suggested stimulating and strengthening young people's general critical and analytical thinking abilities through media and information literacy. Since the state and government are usually the main enemies of extremist movements, the ambition to counteract extremism through national government-sponsored campaigns can easily have the opposite effect – a radicalisation of those individuals who are attracted by extremist thinking.

In 2013 the Media Council received a new mandate from the government to create educational material aiming at strengthening teenager's competencies regarding source criticism and abilities to identify propaganda and disinformation. This work resulted in material called 'MIL for me', which has been disseminated to children between the ages of 12 and 18 all over Sweden, through schools and public libraries. The material has been translated into other languages and is currently being adapted for young people with learning and cognitive disabilities.

Conspiracies online?

As a complement, the Swedish Media Council recently initiated a survey concerning young people and their trust/belief in conspiracy theories. Findings show that there are some demographic- and gender-related differences. For instance:

- Young people (between 15 and 24) from an academic environment...
 - have more trust in public services than those from a non-academic background,
 - are more sceptical – in general – towards the media, but less concerning traditional media.

- Young people (same age group) generally trust public service media to a larger extent than adults
- Boys are more inclined than girls to believe in conspiracy theories
- The two groups among young people who are most prone to believe in conspiracy theories are...
 - those originating from the Middle East
 - Sweden Democrats (nationalists or right-wing populists).

Conclusions

These findings point to the necessity to strengthen resilience against propaganda, disinformation and conspiracy theories among children and young people in order to help them become media literate citizens who actively take part in the democratic process.

The Swedish Media Council concludes that the three round-table sessions led to a dedicated discussion and bilateral contacts during – and after – the Helsinki conference.

Part IV. Commitment is Required

Media and Information Literacy for Children and Parents

Hrefna Sigurjónsdóttir

The SAFT Safer Internet Centre in Iceland focuses on raising awareness and understanding of safer Internet issues and emerging trends online. It is run by Home and School – the national parent association in Iceland, which is an NGO for parents that works on improving education for children on all school levels and promotes good relationships between homes and schools for the benefit of the student. SAFT runs campaigns to empower children and young people and parents, carers and teachers to stay safe online and take advantage of the opportunities that the Internet and mobile technology offers. It is part of the joint INSAFE-INHOPE co-operation on Better Internet for Kids. This is done by collaboration between main stakeholders, with support from the government, through work with youth panels, through a network of parent associations around Iceland and more.

Therefore the subject at hand, MIL for children and parents, is close to us and something we work with on a daily basis. We have some experience and information to give to others and we are also interested in receiving information and best practice on how to achieve our goals, e.g. to educate and inform children and parents about MIL. We believe that cooperation between homes and schools is a very important part of education, and it is crucial to get all stakeholders informed and on the same page. If parents/carers and school educators work together with students, it is much more likely to have some effect.

The question is how we can create good material and content for children, schools and parents? The “dos and don’ts” in that respect, and the best ways to get the message through.

Different practices in different countries

The participants in the round table presented how MIL education is organised in their countries. For example, whether MIL is a part of the national curriculum. MIL is part

of some countries' curricula (e.g. Finland and Iceland) but not others. Everyone was concerned with teacher education and agreed that MIL was missing or was not being addressed sufficiently in teacher education. It is considered important to include it there. As well as being an educational institution, school is a meeting point for the main stakeholders: children, parents and educators. It was considered a barrier that teacher education is not addressing the implementation of MIL. This was a shared concern around the table throughout the discussions. In addition, material on MIL in teacher education is scarce and teachers are so occupied with daily work that they need guidance and help in using existing material. One suggestion was that the main target group should be "teachers to be" or "upcoming teachers".

We also had discussions related to best practices. Denmark and Finland shared some good ideas similar to the ones we have been doing in Iceland. The Nordic Safer Internet Centres have been working together in addition to the Insafe cooperation.

Parental cooperation is quite a new thing in the Baltic countries and not as much a part of the school system as it is in the Nordic countries. MIL as a subject is quite new in the Baltic countries as well. Participants from the Baltic States were very interested in adding the parental element and thought it was a good idea worth trying. Finland also agreed that parental participation and engagement is important, as is the question of how you get someone interested in something they don't know they are supposed to be interested in.

The participants agreed that peer-to-peer-education is very important, as is feedback from youth panels – the users. Even though children are super consumers, they might not be super users. According to research, children would love their parents to play games with them and show an interest in what they are doing online. In connection with that, there was some discussion on age restrictions. Social media age restrictions come from US legislation, but parents can use it as an opportunity for conversation with their kids. The important thing is doing this together.

There are many similarities in the Nordic countries when it comes to MIL, and there are many organisations devoted to the issue. Everyone agreed that collaboration between organisations and stakeholders is very important.

Conclusions

Teacher education needs to be reformed everywhere. It seems that it is lagging behind and since the role of the teacher is changing with society and technological advances, it is important to stay on top of things. The key solutions might be collaboration between major stakeholders, teacher guidance, and effective material for implementing MIL in schools. Parents and homes are also resources that can be activated, and they are important factors along with peer-to-peer education. Cooperation is key, everyone should be involved.

Reaching Out for Young Adults

Saara Salomaa

The starting point for developing this discussion about promoting media education for young adults was an overview of Finnish media education policies, which suggested that adults should be more comprehensively catered for in terms of media educational policies and practices (Pääjärvi & Palsa 2015).

In the European Union, media literacy is seen as an important civic skill for everyone (Council Conclusions 2016, Digital Agenda for Europe 2010, Commission Recommendation 2009) and Finland has taken (children's) media literacy seriously. However, media educational activity is most often targeted at minors or professionals working in educational institutions up to and including upper secondary school. But what about young adults? In Finland, according to the Youth Act the definition of young is a person that is under 29 years of age. In the context of this discussion, term 'young adults' refers to people that are between the ages of 18 and 29.

The main question for the round-table-discussion was: *How can we reach different groups of young adults to enhance media literacy for citizens who are at the beginning of their adult lives, and who should do it?*

Promoting media literacy at the national level through education, culture and youth work in Finland

In international comparisons, Finland has appeared as a forerunner, especially from the perspective of how much of the media education is taken into account in the national level policies (Dunås 2013, Ceļot 2009). Mass media education was included in the basic education curricula as far back as in the early 1970s (Kupiainen et al. 2008), and today media literacy is included in the curricula from early childhood education to upper secondary education.

The National Core Curricula for Pre-Primary Education and Basic Education include transversal competence areas called Multiliteracy and Information and

Communication Technologies (ICT). The curriculum for General Upper Secondary Education includes the cross-curricular themes Multiliteracy and Media as well as Technology and Society. Competencies related to MIL are practised across different subjects and contents of curricula as part of these wide competence areas. For example, multiliteracy highlights the importance of multimodality, and the critical abilities to interpret and produce different media.

In the curricula, ICT is seen as both the target of and a tool for education. In the competence area of ICT, information skills and exploratory and creative learning are emphasised. Media culture is seen as an important resource and environment for learning across the disciplines. In the curricula for Vocational Upper Secondary Education, media and information literacy competencies are mainly integrated in mother tongue subject, and ICT in mathematics and science subjects. Special attention is paid to work-related media competencies.

At a higher education level, the University of Lapland and the University of Tampere are offering international degree programmes in media education. Additionally, it is possible to study at least individual media education courses in a number of universities and universities of applied sciences.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) supports the promotion of media literacy through resource allocation, information management and policy development. In addition to the national curricula, media literacies are included in Finland's Digital Agenda 2011-2020, Policies for Audiovisual Culture, Public Library Policy 2015 and Child and Youth Policy Programme 2012-2015. MoEC has also drawn up special policy guidelines for promoting media literacy across different sectors of society (Good Media Literacy 2013). Development work within the field of media education is active and is carried out by multiple organisations. The National Audiovisual Institute KAVI, a government agency under the MoEC, has a legal obligation to promote media education in co-operation with other national and international organisations.

In the field of youth work, the national Development Centre for Digital Youth Work in Finland, Verke, aims to provide professionals with the opportunity to use digital media and technology as part of their work. The Finnish Society on Media Education is an association operating nationwide to support and develop the field of research and practices concerning media education. The Finnish Museums Association and the Finnish Library Association have also been active in studying the potentials and developing pedagogies for promoting media literacies, to name a few important actors from civil society.

Regardless of the efforts, on a practical level the implementation of media education and the promotion of media literacy are not easily realised. The systematic inclusion of media education into everyday work has been a challenge, according to many surveys and studies (MoEC 2013b, Mustikkamäki 2014, Kotilainen and Sintonen 2005). Media education has never had the role of a school subject, and although the status as a cross-curricular theme is natural for multi-sectoral media education, it has also led to a situation where the teaching is often dependent on individual, dedicated

professionals (Vesterinen 2011). The recent curricula have taken this challenge into account better than in the past, but since they came into effect in August 2016, this improvement will have an impact only for future generations of young adults. In youth work, professionals do not always recognise the media educational aspects of their work, which is a challenge for developing media education practices (Tuominen, Holm, Jaakola, Kiilakoski 2016). Additionally, as in all Nordic and Baltic countries, the upper age limit for full-time compulsory schooling is 16 years in Finland. Many youth houses are for under 18's only. Public library policy names only children and students as target groups of their media educational actions, and Good Media Literacy guidelines focus on children, adolescents and also adults, but only those who are either parents or professionals working with minors.

Consequently, not all young adults necessarily participate in any formal education or other institutional actions that are mentioned in Finnish media literacy policies. Even a brief review of national policies shows that promoting minors' media literacy should be broadly catered for within the educational, youth work and cultural sectors, whereas systematic plans to support every adult's competencies are practically non-existent (Pääjärvi & Palsa 2015). This is in stark contrast to the discourse, where media competencies are presented as important civic skills for everyone.

Responses and conclusions based on the conference discussions

Based on the discussions that took place at the conference, similarly to the Finnish situation, most of the actions promoting media literacy across Europe are targeted at minors, families or professionals.

When young people leave mandatory institutional education, it becomes a lot more difficult to reach the entire age group. When media literacies cannot be systematically taught to everyone, media education campaigns and materials have to be even more appealing to young adults so that they are noticed among all the information available online and offline.

It is also a challenge to define what and how exactly MIL could be developed. Young adults' life situations and media educational needs differ significantly from one to another: some of them are still almost children, others are parents themselves. But even if young adults have children of their own, they are not "just" parents – they are also young people with needs to develop their own personal media literacies. Similarly, many young adults across Europe are better educated than their parents' generations were and are eagerly building professional careers, while a great number of their peers are outside the labour market, unemployed and/or without any formal qualifications. Hence, young adults' needs for work-related media competencies can also vary from basic ICT or literacy skills to special professional competencies. Generally, it appears that governments are paying more attention to those young adults who are at risk of marginalisation (due to e.g. unemployment), and are arranging ICT workshops for

young adults, for example, whereas students and employed young adults' working life skills are developed in the context of studies and in-service training courses.

However, Ofcom's (2006) survey suggested that adults would be more likely to develop their media literacies informally with their family, their friends or by themselves. This finding highlights the importance of online materials and social media campaigns that are easy to access and cheap or preferably free of charge, thus making them available to as many people as possible. Good examples can be found from civic society activities online, such as the EU-funded No Hate Speech movement across Europe, or independent civic movements such as popular Finnish Klikinsäästäjä (Save the Click, against clickbait journalism) group on Facebook. MOOCs can also provide important and meaningful forums for developing media literacy among the young adult population. In 2015, UNESCO carried out its first international media and information literacy MOOC, with more than 4 000 people signed into the course and more than 500 of them completing the MOOC.

Discussing the need for adult media education is not a new phenomenon. For example, nearly 15 years ago Tapio Varis (2002) discussed new civic skills and digital time grandparenthood, and also Juha Suoranta (2006) called for research and operational attention on adult media literacy. In a media education research development study conducted by the Finnish Youth Research Association (Vilmilä 2015), several experts expressed their concern about the lack of adult media education. However, adult education has remained in the margins thus far. Adults have indeed been targeted through a number of media literacy development projects, but as an indirect target group, learning how to be better educators for children and adolescents (Palsa et al. 2014). This leaves media literacy aspects related to adult citizens' private or public lives as a marginal subject. These findings should not be overlooked when developing future media educational projects and policies. Media literacy should be seen as part of life-long learning, and therefore media education is every citizen's right.

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Digital Bullying – A Matter of Health

Eva Liestøl

According to the findings from several years of national surveys on digital bullying among children and young people, the number of children who say they have experienced being bullied is unchanged.¹ What do we know about national measures against bullying? Are they not effective?

For some time now, digital bullying amongst children has been on the national agenda in Norway. Measures have been taken by different social institutions to prevent or reduce digital bullying. How do we know that the measures taken are effective? What do we need in order to create more effective measures to prevent digital bullying? These are some of the main questions put forward by the Norwegian Institute of Public Health in a report presented in 2016.

The questions are of obvious interest to both NGOs as well as governmental bodies with a mandate to play an active role in order to secure children's well-being. The report looks into some of the measures taken in several countries, including Norway, Germany, Finland, the USA, Greece, Austria and Italy, and gives an assessment of the evaluation methods that have been used.

First, let us look at a short description of how digital bullying is looked upon from a health perspective. What are the two main measures taken to prevent digital bullying in Norway? What are the assessments made by the Norwegian Institute of Health on the main anti-bullying measures implemented in Norway? Where do we go from here?

Why digital bullying is a national health issue

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health describes bullying as a national health issue, because the consequences are serious and at worst, life threatening. Children who experience bullying tend to feel depressed, develop low self-esteem, and have anxiety issues, headaches, stomach pains, sleep problems and suicidal thoughts. These issues tend to stay with them into adulthood and it is therefore important that measures

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taken to reduce bullying are constantly evaluated. Bullying by means of social media differs from face-to-face bullying because the level of negative impact on a child is more significant.

Pictures, comments and rumours are spread rapidly to many recipients. The bully can remain anonymous. Digital bullying can be difficult to register by those who might otherwise be able to help (i.e. parents and teachers).

Scope and description of main measures in Norway

In Norway, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health identified two main measures, a campaign called Use Your Head (Bruk Hue), and a digital resource called You Decide (Du bestemmer). Use Your Head is a school campaign and has been delivered nationwide, primarily funded by Telenor, Norway's largest telecom company. Since 2009 the campaign has met with over 200 000 children and over 40 000 parents. The dialogue/discussion-based campaign uses dramatised film sequences in order to contextualise recognisable situations that lead to bullying. The Norwegian Media Authority has taken part in the pedagogical content of the campaign.

You Decide is a multi-component digital resource dealing with bullying as well as media literacy issues. It is a joint venture project between the Norwegian Data Protection Authority, the Norwegian Centre for ICT in Education and the Norwegian Directorate for Training and Education, and is designed primarily to be used in schools.

The effect of the Norwegian measures

According to the National Institute of Public Health, we do not know much about the effects of these measures. To be more precise: methods to evaluate the campaigns do not exist. The report from the National Institute of Public Health on the two Norwegian measures concluded that they both lacked robust evaluation.

On a general level, you would expect that a survey might show positive changes, although it would be impossible to confirm a cause-effect relationship. The reason why the Norwegian Media Authority's surveys on children and the media have seen no reduction in the amount of children who report that they have experienced digital bullying might be due to the fact that there is a discrepancy in the understanding of what defines a negative experience as bullying.

Conclusion

The discussions and sharing of perspectives on bullying, measures and effects with the participants in the round-table discussion suggested that we need to learn more from

each other and share best practice. The overview of measures and the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation methods provided by the Norwegian Institute of Public Health should be helpful in the ongoing work to reduce the growth in digital bullying.

Note

1. Medietilsynet / Norwegian Media Authority, Barn og medier 2008-2016. <http://www.medietilsynet.no/barn-og-medier/barn-og-medier-2008-2016/>

The report can be found online:

<https://www.fhi.no/en/mp/children-and-adolescents/childhood-family-and-well-being/facts-about-bullying-among-children/>

From Digital Skills to Digital Citizenship

Insights from Research and Educational Practice

Interview with Kristiina Kumpulainen

Why should educational institutions use digital technologies and media in their curriculum?

The importance of digital competencies for social inclusion, quality of life, competitiveness in the labour market and for economic growth is widely recognised. There is an urgent need for every citizen to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to participate in a complex and increasingly digitalised society. According to the Digital Competence framework set out by the European Commission (<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomp/digital-competence-framework>), the key areas of digital competence are *Information and data literacy, Communication and collaboration, Digital content creation, Safety, and Problem solving*. Digital competencies are also listed among the Finnish government's key projects (<http://www.minedu.fi/osaaminenjakoulutus/?lang=en>). In these policy documents the definition of digital competencies highlights confident, productive, creative and critical usage of digital technologies for diverse purposes in various social contexts. For example, the new Finnish core curriculum for preschool and basic education lists digital competencies as part of what are known as transversal competencies, which every student is entitled to develop. Digital competencies are seen as being intertwined with other transversal competencies, including critical thinking skills and learning-to-learn, interaction and expression, multiliteracy, working life skills and entrepreneurship, as well as social participation and influence. Developing digital competencies is thus considered in Finnish educational policy as a continuum from instrumental skills towards productive and strategic personal competence.

Recent research shows that the majority of children in Finland have access to various media, digital tools, online sites and apps in their homes and communities. The integration of digital tools into early years and primary classrooms has also increased due to the availability and affordability of computers, mobile phones, tablets and other similar technologies. However, the level of digital competencies among children in Finland and throughout Europe is found to be inadequate. It has been reported that young

people are adept at using technologies for operational purposes, but they generally lack more advanced competencies, such as critical literacy. Overall, research indicates that mere exposure to technology does not equate with the development of more advanced digital competencies. Moreover, not all young people have equal opportunities to use digital technologies fully due to various social and cultural factors, lack of interest and confidence or social support. Research also shows an uneven provision of digitally-enhanced learning opportunities for children in formal educational settings.

What is currently known about the ways in which digital tools and technologies are used in formal education to promote children's and young people's digital competencies?

To date, limited attention has been paid to the development of digital competencies among younger learners as part of formal education. For instance, in Finland, research around digital competencies has largely focused on teachers and their professional development, whereas research on the association between children's and young people's engagement with digital technologies and media in formal education and the development of digital competencies has been scarce. Existing research has mainly focused on measuring students' instrumental ICT skills, the use of specific software or apps for disciplinary learning, and supporting children with special needs and learning difficulties. Little attention has been paid to educational activities that position children as active, creative and critical investigators of and with digital technologies. Moreover, at present there is a dearth of knowledge for creating learning opportunities for digital competencies that are inclusive for diverse learners with different capabilities and interests, and that are able to accommodate their different personal circumstances and objectives and combine, for example, formal and informal learning. In sum, these realities point out the urgent need for research and development of innovative pedagogies so as to ensure meaningful learning experiences that enhance every child's and young person's digital competencies at an early stage.

Can you give an example of how digital competencies could be promoted in formal education?

One of the most recent societal phenomena arousing educational interest internationally is the growth of *makerspaces*. These are spaces that are designed to enable participants' active engagement in hands-on creative activities, such as tinkering, playing, experimenting, expressing, iterating, collaborating and reflecting, with a range of digital artefacts using everyday and specialist tools and resources. These may include electronics, coding tools, game-making apps, laser cutters and 3D printers. Makerspaces are listed among the key trends that are accelerating technology adoption in primary and secondary education by the international Horizon Project (<http://www.nmc.org/nmc-horizon/>). In Finland there is also growing interest in makerspaces, in terms of how they democratise educational opportunities for digital and other transversal 21st century competencies.

A variety of benefits have been outlined that can be achieved from participating in making activities based on the intellectual traditions of cognitive psychology, constructivism, experiential learning and design theory. Research suggests that hands-on experimentation and production across multiple media and digital content supports students' creative and critical engagement and learning with digital tools. For instance, through students' engagement in one type of making activity, that of creating electronic textiles, young people can gain a better understanding of the functions of computers and other tools involved in the process. Similarly, by means of designing games, making stories and animations and sharing them with others, young people learn not only computational thinking but also come to understand the cultural and social nature of the digitalised society. Moreover, participation in 'hacker literacies' help young people learn to approach technologies not merely as tools for self-expression and production, but they also learn to reflect on and critically evaluate the societal impacts of technology use.

The opportunities afforded by makerspaces in supporting children's and young people's digital competencies and learning overall warrants further research.

In your research, you use a dialogic approach. What do you mean by that?

My own work in this field of research stems from sociocultural and dialogic accounts of learning and development. This approach takes social practice and discourse as its core units of analysis, examining their display within personal, relational and institutional spheres of activity. It focuses on tool-mediated interactions as we draw upon multiple contexts, including peer relations, family and school, to make meaning with others. It is at the intersection between people's actions, the tools they use and the infrastructures they have access to that new conditions for learning arise and from where new practices emerge. From the dialogic perspective, novel tools and artefacts do not simply represent new ways of resourcing activities; instead, they change the activities by their use and, therefore, modify our ways of thinking and engaging in meaning-making and knowledge creation. It is at the intersection of people's actions, the tools they use and the infrastructures they have access to that new conditions for learning arise and where new practices emerge.

According to sociocultural and dialogic framing, identity is an essential element of engagement and learning. Learning transforms who we are and what we can do. Identities define how we position ourselves and our actions – through which others, in turn, position us. They are also performances we enact as we interact with others, and hence identities are also multiple and shifting. The sociocultural and dialogic approach allows researchers to analyse changes in student engagement, learning opportunity, and identity within and across contexts.

You have conducted an ethnographic study of a year-long school musical project, where the students wrote the script in a collaborative way with specific tools. Can you tell us about the project? How important were the technical tools in the project?

One of my research studies looked into collaborative creative activity in a school community engaging in a year-long musical project. All the students at the school participated in a communal musical production, and during a period of one year, worked together with their teachers and collaboratively produced a number of poems, short films, audio-visual effects, animations, stories, a school musical script, and a composition of the musical melody using various technological tools and devices. The outcome of the students' work, the fantasy school musical 'Magic Forest Musical', was performed on the anniversary of the school's founding. The musical production was an integral part of the official curriculum of the school and not an addition. The data discussed here comes from a three-month phase in the musical project during which 21 fifth- and sixth-grade students (ages 11 to 12) took part in writing the school musical script.

In our research, we focused on the social practices of 21 students who worked with personal laptops, wireless internet access, and a collaborative writing service, at school and out of school, to collaborate on creating a school musical script. Our findings provide evidence of ubiquitous, multimodal and multidimensional, technology-mediated creative learning practices. These blended practices appeared to break away from traditional learning practices, allowing students to navigate in different time zones, spaces and places, with diverse tools situated in their formal and informal lives. This study provides promising findings that begin to uncover how technology-mediated learning practices embedded in twenty-first-century pedagogies can potentially resonate with learners' lives and extend their opportunities for engaging in meaningful and creative learning across time and space.*

Do you think that students' use of ICT in general and in your project in particular make them critically aware of media in some respect?

The complexity of contemporary society calls for new kinds of educational opportunities to serve the multiplicity of needs of all 21st-century learners. Designing learning opportunities that respond to students' holistic learning lives and that reconfigure spaces and places of learning is important in today's education, where an increasing number of students feel disengaged and disconnected from formal education. Moreover, living and learning in a digital and globalised society requires skills and competencies that cannot be adequately addressed by narrow and product-oriented views of education and schooling. Twenty-first century learning requirements, such

* For more information see:
Kumpulainen, Kristiina, Mikkola, Anna, & Jaatinen, Anna-Mari (2013). *The choronotopes of technology-mediated creative learning practices in an elementary school community. Learning, Media and Technology.* DOI: 10.1080/17439884.2012.752383

as critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration and communication, creativity, and new literacy and media skills are challenging or even impossible to promote in an educational environment that is restricted in a specific space and time and that is purely teacher-led and controlled.

It is unwise to assume that the interest, motivation or affinity of all young people will be automatically enhanced by the simple inclusion of digital media technologies in educational contexts. In fact, without a meaningful pedagogical agenda, students can react negatively to the use of technologies and media in formal education, as they may perceive this as teachers' attempts to colonise their free-time domains. Indeed, a number of researchers warn against attempts to motivate and engage students simply through the introduction of consciously fashionable forms of media technology to educational processes and practices. Students are unlikely to be automatically enthused and motivated by the use of digital technologies, social media and gaming for educational purpose, if these technologies are not meaningfully integrated into learning practices and pedagogies that support authentic and transformative engagement and learning.

Today's technologies offer us the ability to pursue progressive educational goals in new ways through the purposeful integration of tools for social connection, knowledge co-creation, and linking the classroom, community and home. From this perspective, the role and position of the school in the digital age needs to be seen not as an opposition to youth cultures or as 'digital enrichment' of traditional schooling, but rather as conceptualising school as an important part of a network of contexts of learning that optimally create a supportive ecosystem for developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to participate in a complex and increasingly digitalised society.

Hot Young Estonians – On Screen or Not?

Kadri Ugur

As a teacher, I often admire young people at upper secondary schools and universities. They are great, often struggling to manage their study, hobbies, sport, social life, work... Their social time has accelerated beyond any expectations, and many of them have achieved by the age 20 more than my generation did in 50 years. It sounds logical that they might be proud of themselves and ready to show off a little. However, the idea of making a small video CV or self-introduction usually meets with a lot of resistance in all my classes. Here are some of the reasons that young people brought up as to why they felt unable to make a two-minute self-introduction. Remember, they are all under 20.

– There is nothing I could talk about for two minutes. Well, I have been a national champion 18 times, but only three times amongst adults – I have nothing to say about myself.

– I don't want others to see me on screen. It doesn't matter that they see me every day in real life.

– I already have a small company of my own and more orders than I can fulfil. I don't need more publicity.

– I hate looking at myself. I hate my voice.

– Why would anybody want to know me? For real?!

– I am afraid of unkind feedback or that my classmates will dislike me.

This systematic reluctance made me and my colleagues wonder about the possible causes of this, and led us to discuss the dimensions of media and communication literacy in the contemporary media environment.

Why are they afraid of the screen?

First of all, it seems that young people in Estonia do not believe that they have anything to say about themselves. If so, this is a serious message to parents and teachers: positive feedback is important for healthy self-esteem. It may seem difficult to compete with social media stars, who look so confident and special. On the other hand, youngsters are often unable to crack the mechanism of *how* stars are made in the media (either mainstream or social media). So, insufficient skills in critical media consumption can make a person's low self-esteem even lower.

A second factor that makes the task of making a video introduction unpleasant is probably the context. Youngsters like taking photos and videos for fun or entertainment. It may be difficult to understand that the same pocket technology that enables you to gain popularity amongst friends can also be used to introduce yourself to others in a rather positive, influential and even professional manner.

Help that can be offered

I have tried to help my students in several ways. First, we discuss the audience, its preliminary knowledge and expectations. The video introduction might be made for a future employer, new schoolmates, potential roommates, admission committee members, and so on. Choosing a clear target group often reduces the anxiety of making a video 'for everybody'. Some students find the right verbal and visual style for a specific target group intuitively, while others need more support before they understand what language (verbal and visual) to use. In some cases I use a little exercise where the students take two selfies: one for grandma and the other for a dating profile.

The next step is often the hardest: finding something good to say about yourself. To help students, I have asked them to write their name at the bottom of a piece of paper, and hand it over to their classmates, who can write something nice about this person at the top of paper and fold it over. This means that the next person can see the name of the person on the bottom, but not the nice things that have already been written. Opening up this folded piece of paper has come as a good surprise for many students, but it does not help everyone. Finding the content for a short video introduction is often a painful process of self-reflection. *What are my strengths? In what direction do I want to develop? What makes me unique?*

A 'talking head' on a screen is not very appealing. This is why we need to discuss the background or environment in which the video could be recorded. Again, for some young people this is a good opportunity to be creative: they can use time-lapse drawings, show different trophies, involve pets and art projects, etc. For others, the 'talking head' looks good enough.

Usually I encourage my students to shoot several takes and choose the one they like best. This gives them the important feeling of control. However, taking several

shots is not always a good idea, since youngsters can get stuck with their own wording and overly complicated syntax. Oral language has its specific features, and these must also be discussed. ‘Back to square one’ is good idea – and if a young person is able to keep in mind his/her target audience, the language usually becomes more natural.

A crucial element of the whole process is feedback. It is really common for the author to close his or her eyes and ears when the video is playing in the classroom. As a teacher, I have to be very careful that only positive feedback is given during the first phase. Questions like ‘What did you especially like about this video introduction?’ help classmates not to criticise, but rather be supportive. After that, the author is usually more open to suggestions on how to improve his/her video. Since the feedback culture in Estonia is quite hostile, it requires a lot of subtlety and moderation skills from the teacher.

Important for the future

Creating a video introduction is a seemingly simple project, but it provides a great opportunity to support several social, media and communication skills:

- self-reflection and the ability to speak about yourself,
- the ability to consider your communication partner or target audience and choose the communication means accordingly,
- verbal expression skills,
- understanding of visual aesthetics,
- using technology meaningfully,
- understanding privacy in the media environment,
- asking for and getting feedback.

Social time is accelerating, so we are forced to process more information than ever before. Decisions must be made quickly – even the decision on what or who to give a ‘like’ to. People’s attention is hard to attract, and attention management is often the key component of success. Every little skill that helps young people to make them be seen in the way they want to be seen can help them to control their own professional or social image. In my view, this means a lot.

Part V. Conclusion

Citizens in a Mediated World

Some Final Words

Leo Pekkala & Ingela Wadbring

At its best, a conference offers new perspectives on the topic at hand. The conference on *Citizens in a Mediated World* in Helsinki in 2016 was not different. Similarities and differences between the Nordic and Baltic countries, as well as the importance of exchanging experiences, is of course the most obvious observation. Another experience was that digitalisation is full of possibilities as well as problems. All the discussions during the conference dealt with digitalisation. Empowerment was, of course, one of the key concepts discussed, but in this final section, we would also like to turn things upside down and flip the normative and natural statement about media and information literacy on its head.

The necessity of empowering people

According to Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014), the digitalisation of everything is comparable to the invention and improvement of steam engines at the beginning of the period that we now call the Industrial Revolution. As with all new innovations that make the world a better place for us to live in, digitalisation will also bring some unwanted consequences. The differences between rich and poor have not been greater than they are now for decades. Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014, 208-214) discuss policy recommendations, the first one they provide being ‘Teach the Children Well’, encouraging governments to invest in education. Discussion about the variety and quality of educational systems around the world has been largely inspired by the PISA research results, with the latest data being published in December 2016 (OECD 2016). The most recent study concentrated on natural sciences, but it also discussed educational equity, which is remarkably weak in many top-performing countries. These results should be taken seriously, since media and information literacy and especially critical media literacy could be key areas to emphasise in order to bring societies towards equity. To be able to participate and belong, we need to educate citizens to become active, as Kellner and Share (2007) argued:

In the 21st century, critical media literacy is an imperative for participatory democracy because new information communication technologies and a market-based media culture have fragmented, connected, converged, diversified, homogenized, flattened, broadened, and reshaped the world.

The quotation mirrors the obvious position of MIL in today's society. We do not want to criticise or challenge this position of MIL, but we want to point out that there may be obstacles en route to a media-literate society.

The other side of the coin

What type of media literacy do we need and what kind of literacy is sufficient for participatory democracy? Kupiainen and Sintonen (2009) discussed different types of media literacy and referred to Plato and his critique of literacy. In his famous Phaedrus dialogue, Plato tells a story about how writing with letters (literacy) was presented to King Theuth of Egypt as a skill that would change everything. However, King Theuth criticised this new skill with a surprisingly modern argument, saying:

Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are no part of themselves, will discourage the use of their own memory within them. You have invented an elixir not of memory, but of reminding; and you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom, for they will read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with, since they are not wise, but only appear wise (Plato, Phaedrus 275a-275b).

King Theuth continues to argue that words (and writing) themselves cannot be of much help without someone's help to interpret them (Plato, Phaedrus 275d- 275e). The above-mentioned sections of the Phaedrus dialogue are still valid for theoretical discussion about media literacy (Kupiainen & Sintonen (2009) or, for example, media ecology (Torvinen 2013).

Part of the media and information literacy education dilemma is that we want to educate critical, informed and media-literate citizens to become active participants of democracy. At the same time, we do not want them to become too critical and active, since that could lead to challenging the ways societies are organised (e.g. Hobbs 1998). This is the other side of the coin.

Individuals could end up being critical of existing values, norms and structures and that way possibly challenge the power structures of society. Several examples of different occurrences can be mentioned. An example of these types of events is the Arab Spring, which started in December 2010, when the internet was effectively utilised against existing power structures. Social media was used for collective activism by the oppressed in a way never seen before – and this in countries with low internet penetration. Another example is when marginalised or oppositional groups start to challenge facts as fake – we talk about fact resistance – or become online trolls and

through threats and hate speech challenge norms and values as well as individuals. Journalism and journalists are clear examples, but other people who act in the public sphere are vulnerable: artists, bloggers, politicians, etc. Criticism can look very different, and some of the expressions are more unpleasant than others.

Mejias and Vokuev (2017) argue that in the long run, “like radio and television, the internet is increasingly becoming – after a brief initial moment of radical possibilities – a conservative form of mass media.” This refers to the increased presence (and in some cases – propaganda) of governments in social media, which again may lead to social isolation of individuals and increased lack of belief of news and official information, thus reducing the possible positive effects of media literacy. Social media algorithms create and enhance information bubbles, reinforcing existing prejudices, and according to Peters (2017), thus making understanding the concepts of ‘facts’ and ‘evidence’ key issues for education in a post-truth world.

A possible synthesising?

One outcome of media literacy education for individuals could be a combined capacity to empower and protect themselves and their families in their everyday mediated lives (see e.g. Hobbs 2010, McDougall et al. 2015). Buckingham (2016) has questioned this push for empowerment and characterised it thus: “... ‘responsibilisation’ – making the individual responsible for their own welfare, rather than the state...” which, according to him, is part of the neoliberal doctrine. This resembles the notion by Cowden and Singh (2015) where they criticise the current neoliberal perspective of seeing students “...as commodities acquiring a marketable value on the one hand and consumers of services on the other.”

The importance of MIL has been recognised widely not only by academics but also amongst political decision-makers. The Council of the European Union adopted conclusions on developing media literacy and critical thinking through education and training in May 2016, in which state that media literacy supports capacities which allow us to think critically while we participate actively in society in the democratic process (Council of the European Union, 2016). Another example of an expression of political will came from the Education and Culture Committee of the Finnish Parliament, which took a strong viewpoint for the need to enhance critical media literacy skills among citizens when commenting on the EU Commission’s proposal for the new Audiovisual Media Services Directive. The Committee wrote that the Member States of the EU should be required to develop national strategies for media literacy from early childhood education right up to higher education, and the fight against racism and hate speech should be conducted primarily by enhancing media literacy (Education and Culture Committee 2016).

Hate speech and threats are devastating for every society. What happens online never disappears, and many people have already been victims of different forms of vulnerability.

Therefore, media and information are necessities, even though the coin has another side as well. And, as King Theuth said in dialogue with Plato, the instructions are important. That means that parents, teachers, friends and peers are important, as well as the societies' view of MIL: a common view of what is true and what is false, as well as what is reasonable behaviour and what is not, is essential in a digital, advanced and global society.

Way forward in the north

The Nordic and Baltic MIL community, including political decision-makers, authorities, academia and NGOs working in the field of media and information literacy, have clearly recognised the need for more cooperation in the Nordic and the Baltic states. This was also one of the clear outcomes of the conference in Helsinki in 2016. There are several opportunities for these different groups to meet regularly:

- The scientific community meets at conferences like NordMedia every second year, or similar conferences in nearby fields.
- Nordic media and media education authorities already meet regularly and have an opportunity to foster cooperation in that way.
- All Nordic and Baltic countries are also members in international networks like *Safer Internet* or the *Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy* (GAPMIL), which provides opportunities for international cooperation.

However, forums like the Nordic and Nordic-Baltic conferences organised in Stockholm and Helsinki are not possible without both contextual and financial support from organisations such as the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Building a meaningful and sustainable network of professionals coming from such diverse backgrounds and organisations takes time and resources. The key issue is therefore twofold: first, political support is required, and second, it must lead to sustainability in terms of funding.

The Nordic Council of Ministers may be an organisation that has these opportunities to build a sustainable mechanism in order to ensure the continuity of the discussion and exchange of interpretations, latest knowledge and best practices in the MIL area within the Nordic and Baltic countries.

One option is to create the conditions to enable the Nordic and Baltic countries to coordinate and organise regular meetings and conferences, in country-wise rotation, in the same way that the presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers rotates between the five Nordic countries, but also including the Baltic States. Some conferences could be more open and some could be thematic, offering opportunities to focus on specific current topics and themes. Different fora could also be organised in cycles, for example a rotation of academic conferences, and conferences for more varied participants.

Whatever the future brings, it will only emphasise the need for more debate and in-depth knowledge on media and information literacy. The Nordic and Baltic States do not form an island, but an important and driving force in empowering and criticising the digital and global world. A force like this must be maintained.

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Part VI. Appendix

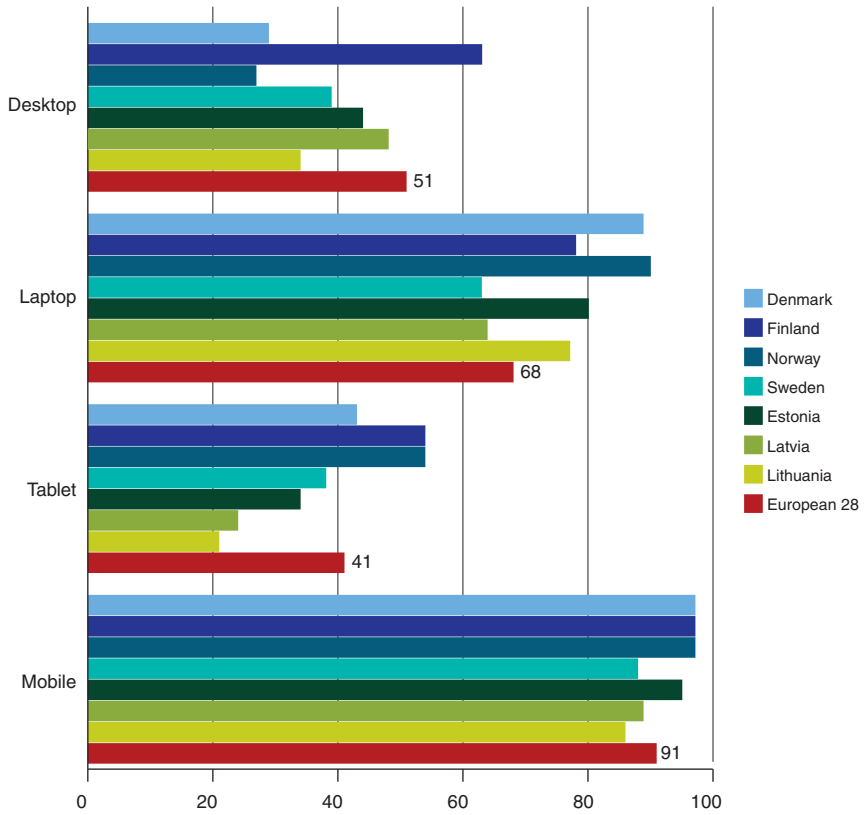


Figure 1. Devices used to access the Internet, among 16-19 years old in the Nordic/Baltic States, 2016 (per cent)

Source: Eurostat 2016.

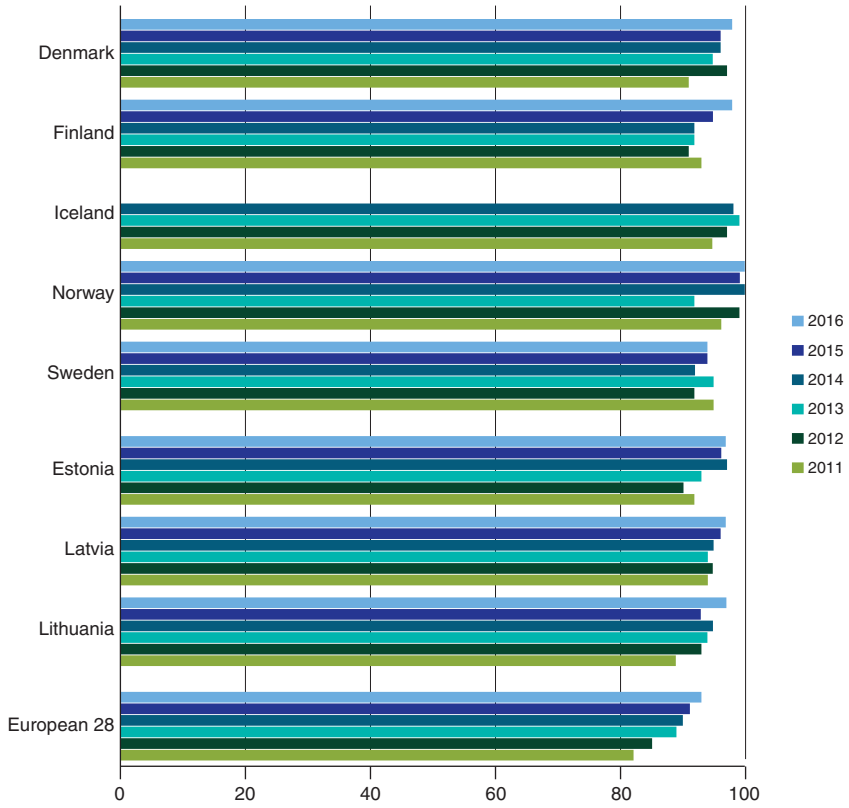


Figure 2. Daily Internet use among 16-19 years old in the Nordic/Baltic States, 2011-2016 (per cent)

Source: Eurostat 2016.

Programme of the Conference *Citizens in Mediated Worlds*

Monday the 2nd of March, 10.00-18.00
in Finlandia Hall, Helsinki, Finland

Moderator: Leo Pekkala, deputy director, KAVI, Finland

Morning (10.00-14.00) by invitation only

Opening words

Keynote speaker: Ingela Wadbring, director, NORDICOM, Sweden

Media development as threat and opportunity to democracy

Keynote speaker: Auksė Balčytienė, professor, Vytautas Magnus university, Lithuania

What is news literacy, why does it matter, and how can it bring change in the mediated society of the 21st century?

Round table discussions:

- Claus Noer Hjort, head of department, the Danish Film Institute, Denmark:
Creative learning or anti-radicalisation
- Kadri Ugur, lecturer, University of Tampere, Institute of Social Studies, Estonia:
Hot young Estonian – just not on screen
- Saara Salomaa, senior advisor, National Audiovisual Institute, Finland:
How about young adults?
- Hrefna Sigurjónsdóttir, manager, Home and School – National Parent Organization, Iceland: *MIL for children and parents: How can we get the message through?*
- Roberts Putnis, head media policy, Latvian Ministry of Culture, Latvia:
The impact of the propaganda by Russia on society: Ratings of media consumption and what's behind them
- Rasa Jančiauskaitė, specialist, Education Development Center, Lithuania:
Training teachers in MIL education
- Eva Liestøl, director, Norwegian Media Authority, Norway: *Digital Bullying*
- Ewa Thorslund, director, Swedish Media Council, & Helena Dal, operations manager for information and guidance, Swedish Media Council, Sweden:
Meeting and treating extremism

Afternoon (14.00-18.00) open for all participants of the UNESCO's World Press Freedom Day (registration required)

Opening words

Keynote speaker: Kristiina Kumpulainen, professor, University of Helsinki, Finland
From digital skills to digital citizenship: insights from research and educational practice

Address from the Minister of Education and Culture, Ms Sanni Grahn-Laasonen

Parallel sessions:

- Stien Lindbøl, Norway: Democracy
- Alton Grizzle, UNESCO: Peace
- Kadri Ugur, Estonia: Economy
- Anne-Mette Thorhauge, Denmark: Good life

Panel discussion drawing from the topics of the parallel sessions

Closing the conference

Social event

NORDICOM's activities are based on broad and extensive network of contacts and collaboration with members of the research community, media companies, politicians, regulators, teachers, librarians, and so forth, around the world. The activities at Nordicom are characterized by three main working areas.

- ***Media and Communication Research Findings in the Nordic Countries***

Nordicom publishes a Nordic journal, *Nordicom Information*, and an English language journal, *Nordicom Review* (refereed), as well as anthologies and other reports in both Nordic and English languages. Different research databases concerning, among other things, scientific literature and ongoing research are updated continuously and are available on the Internet. Nordicom has the character of a hub of Nordic cooperation in media research. Making Nordic research in the field of mass communication and media studies known to colleagues and others outside the region, and weaving and supporting networks of collaboration between the Nordic research communities and colleagues abroad are two prime facets of the Nordicom work.

The documentation services are based on work performed in national documentation centres attached to the universities in Aarhus, Denmark; Tampere, Finland; Reykjavik, Iceland; Bergen, Norway; and Göteborg, Sweden.

- ***Trends and Developments in the Media Sectors in the Nordic Countries***

Nordicom compiles and collates media statistics for the whole of the Nordic region. The statistics, together with qualified analyses, are published in the series, *Nordic Media Trends*, and on the homepage. Besides statistics on output and consumption, the statistics provide data on media ownership and the structure of the industries as well as national regulatory legislation. Today, the Nordic region constitutes a common market in the media sector, and there is a widespread need for impartial, comparable basic data. These services are based on a Nordic network of contributing institutions.

Nordicom gives the Nordic countries a common voice in European and international networks and institutions that inform media and cultural policy. At the same time, Nordicom keeps Nordic users abreast of developments in the sector outside the region, particularly developments in the European Union and the Council of Europe.

- ***Research on Children, Youth and the Media Worldwide***

At the request of UNESCO, Nordicom started the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media in 1997. The work of the Clearinghouse aims at increasing our knowledge of children, youth and media and, thereby, at providing the basis for relevant decision-making, at contributing to constructive public debate and at promoting children's and young people's media literacy. It is also hoped that the work of the Clearinghouse will stimulate additional research on children, youth and media. The Clearinghouse's activities have as their basis a global network of 1000 or so participants in more than 125 countries, representing not only the academia, but also, e.g., the media industries, politics and a broad spectrum of voluntary organizations.

In yearbooks, newsletters and survey articles the Clearinghouse has an ambition to broaden and contextualize knowledge about children, young people and media literacy. The Clearinghouse seeks to bring together and make available insights concerning children's and young people's relations with mass media from a variety of perspectives.

CITIZENS IN A MEDIATED WORLD

Digital technology has become a natural part of our daily lives and requires new skills, knowledge and attitudes. Everyone can create their own media content and share it with others, and the distinction between reception and perception is erased.

This development represents a marked departure from the traditional media use of people, and challenges the perceptions about what it means to use and produce media in appropriate and meaningful ways. Critical media literacy, communication skills and competencies for creative and responsible content production have become increasingly important means for empowering people with Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in present media culture.

This book presents the discussions and conclusions from a conference on Media and Information Literacy that was held in Helsinki in May 2016, financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The event was organized by the NORDICOM (Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research), together with KAVI (National Audiovisual Institute) in Finland, jointly with the Nordic media and media education authorities: Media Council for Children and Youth in Denmark, Fjölmiðlanefnd (The Media Commission) of Iceland, Norwegian Media Authority and the Swedish Media Council.

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