

MEDIA COACH

HOW TO BECOME A MEDIA LITERACY COACH



EDITED BY PAOLO CELOT



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

MEDIA COACH

How to become a media literacy coach

MEDIA COACH

How to become a media literacy coach

MEDIA COACH

How to become a media literacy coach

Edited by: Paolo Celot

© 2021 Eavi - European MediaCoach Initiative

www.mediacoacheurope.eu

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recordings or otherwise, without the prior permission of both the publisher and according to the provisions of Copyright, Designs & Patents.

Published by: EAVI - BRUSSELS - eavi@eavi.eu

Graphic composition: Diade Design sas

Cover illustration: Luigi Barbiero

CIP catalogue record of this book is available from Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

ISBN 978-2-9602904-0-0

Printed in Italy in September 2021

Edited by Paolo Celot

To all MediaCoaches

Contents

Introduction	10	Context	34
The strategic value of media literacy	10	Adopting and adapting the MediaCoach trainings in five different national contexts	37
The European MediaCoach Initiative	13	Challenges and opportunities: the European MediaCoach Initiative in the time of the pandemic	38
MEDIA LITERACY IN EUROPE	15	What we have learned from the adaptation of the European MediaCoach Initiative	39
Abstract	15	References	39
Media Literacy	16	THE ORIGINS: THE DUTCH NATIONAL MEDIA COACH TRAINING PROGRAMME BY THE DUTCH ACADEMY FOR MEDIA & SOCIETY	40
A brief historical evolution	16	Abstract	40
Definitions	18	The beginning	41
Key components of media literacy	19	Education and Policy	42
Other media literacy approaches	22	MediaCoaches as experts in their own demographic constituency	43
The Art of living in the digital environment		Impact of the growing reach of Internet, smartphones and social media	43
An EAVI concept, the process of becoming media literate	23	Conclusion	59
Critical Consciousness	24	IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN MEDIA COACH INITIATIVE IN BULGARIA	60
Awareness of Experience	25	Abstract	60
Digital Well-Being	25	Introduction	61
Full Global Citizenship	26	Media literacy in Bulgaria	61
The European Union Legislative Framework relevant to Media Literacy	27	The EMCI training programme in Bulgaria	66
Some recommendations for media literacy in Europe	30	Aims, rationale and expected outcomes	66
References	31		
THE EMCI PROJECT	32		
Why media literacy now?	32		
The purpose of the project	33		

Methodology	67
Evaluation	70
Lessons learned and next steps	71
Concluding remarks	72
References	72
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN MEDIACOACH INITIATIVE IN CYPRUS	73
Abstract	73
Introduction	74
Media Literacy in Cyprus	77
The EMCI training programme in Cyprus	79
Aims, rationale and expected outcomes	79
Methodology	80
Evaluation	86
Lessons learned and next steps	90
Concluding remarks	91
References	92
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN MEDIACOACH INITIATIVE IN GREECE	93
Abstract	93
Introduction	94
Media Literacy in Greece	94
The EMCI training programme in Greece	98
Aims, rationale and expected	98
Methodology	103
Evaluation	111

Lessons learned and next steps	115
References	117
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN MEDIACOACH INITIATIVE IN PORTUGAL	118
Abstract	118
Introduction	119
Media Literacy in Portugal	120
The EMCI training programme in Portugal	122
Aims, rationale and expected outcomes	122
Methodology	125
Evaluation, lessons learned and next steps	125
Concluding remarks	127
References	128
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN MEDIACOACH INITIATIVE IN ROMANIA	129
Abstract	129
Introduction	130
Media Literacy in Romania	130
The EMCI training programme in Romania	132
Aims, rationale and expected outcomes	132
Methodology	133
Evaluation	137
Lessons learned and next steps	138
Concluding remarks	139
CONCLUSION	141

The strategic value of media literacy

Nowadays, our exposure to media content is overwhelming. We spend vast swathes of time on our smartphones, tablets, consoles and in front of the television. A deluge of images, sounds and messages frenetically consumed all too often fail to be meaningful. On the contrary, individuals risk becoming more docile, controlled and vulnerable to external pressures unless they obtain the adequate competencies to navigate this media storm.

Our education systems are no longer based on books, but increasingly rely on screens. The same is true for our leisure time, commercial activities and social lives. Statistics^[1] show screen time is high and the 2019 pandemic has brought more people online for longer periods and more purposes.

Somehow, we think we are in control. But we are probably aren't. At times, to protect ourselves, we seem to activate an unthinking automatic mode (Potter, 2018). Sometimes we may feel stressed regarding "whether, when and where we connect and disconnect" (Vanden Abeele, 2020). We may think it simply depends on how well we use technology. However, Marshall McLuhan^[2], in 1964, was already stating that it is the medium itself that influences the way we think, not just the content we come across. The movie *Social Dilemma*^[3] on Netflix went a step further: In the film, Jaron Lanier, a computer scientist and early progenitor of VR technology, puts it best:

'It's the gradual, slight, imperceptible change in your behaviour and perception that is the product. Changing what you do, what you think, who you are is the only possible thing to make money from.'

In other words, we are not simply using these technologies – we are also, if not primarily, being used by them. Not only we are the product, technology makes us the product, changing us from what we were.

Can media make us think thoughts that are not ours? Are our own ideas genuinely our own? Should we question ourselves? How can we ascertain our thoughts? Do human-beings risk becoming irrelevant, as Yuval Noah Harari^[4] argues? More generally, how can we integrate our online life with our offline life? How can we maintain a balance between the two experiences? These reflections are valid not only so that we may take care of our own personal well-being, but also act in the interest of broader society. Which competencies and attitudes are necessary nowadays to manage this complex media world?

This is media literacy.

1 For instance according to a report from Datareportal, We Are Social and Hootsuite (2020), there was a high increase in the number of people that used a device (smartphone, laptop/computer, tablet device, TV, game console) during the COVID-19 confinement.

2 Marshall McLuhan *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* McGraw-Hill 1964

3 *Social Dilemma* Movie Jeff Orlowski, Tristan Harris

4 Yuval Noah Harari *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* London: Vintage Digital, 2016.

A more formal definition of media literacy is the access, use, analysis of and participation with the media in all its forms, including television, radio, the internet, mobile telephones and the press. The ubiquity of the media has made it increasingly central to our everyday lives. It is no longer simply an advantage to be media literate but an absolute disadvantage not to be. Citizens must become media literate to be able to participate in every aspect of public life, from social networking, internet research and democratic processes. They must be equipped with the skills to utilise and therefore benefit from media and to do this, people need to acquire new competences beyond that of traditional literacy and critical capacity.

In more general terms, whether people are considered in their different capacities as internet users, citizens, teachers, consumers, parents or voters, they need appropriate competences to manage their devices. Media literacy is the key for the empowerment of people to be critical thinkers and engaged citizens.

The European MediaCoach Initiative contributed to these endeavours by training media literacy educators across Europe. In the following chapters, you will find information on this three-year long experience in forming 100 media literacy coaches in each of the following countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, and Romania. We will report on the different experiences of the partners to replicate the excellent practice that was first established in the Netherlands by the Nationale Academie Voor Media.

Never has our society been so dependent on digital technology, media and screens. If it is true that the influence of methods of communication is not a new concept, it is nevertheless undeniable that it has taken an entirely new dimension in recent years. The evolution of information and communication technologies has increased the pervasiveness of communication methods, revealing great changes not only in the ways in which people relate to the media (the possibility of access at any given moment to desired contents through a plurality of platforms) but also in the dynamics of self-expression within their communities and relationships with each other, for instance on social networks.

Many opportunities arise from the use of media, such as creating and sharing information, connecting with others and participating meaningfully in society. Let's take again the example of the pandemic. What would have happened without the internet? To say the least; it would have been impossible for many people to connect with each other, to work and study.

However, not everything is good and beneficial. In the last decade, disinformation through social media has affected important elections' results, as propaganda techniques are insistent and difficult to notice, children (and parents) become addicted to their digital devices, our personal information is constantly being collected by the industry, thus impacting privacy and safety. The list of dangers could go on.

The many subjects touched on in this book should render the strategic importance of media literacy both at individual and at community levels self-evident. A vast bibliography of studies and international policy papers is easily accessible online. In fact, continuous technological advances together with social and political events reinforce an even more crucial role for media literacy when it comes to the democracy of our societies.

The media society is destined to establish itself even more firmly in the coming years. Media literacy, therefore, should also contribute to enriching progress and advances

in society by way of developing people's new knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Citizens should ultimately be able to use media opportunities to their benefit, to grow and understand our societies, dream alternative futures and learn to create new worlds.

We are part of a genuine revolution that poses both new challenges and opportunities to media users and media professionals. Users can find multiple stimuli in accessing information and the possibility to become content producers. Media professionals such as journalists and reporters can add more value to their work, but at the same time, they need to re-evaluate their role in ensuring reliable quality information.

This revolution is still in its initial stages and it is difficult to forecast long-term developments. However, it is evident that in the coming years, our societies will be based on the systematic and intensive use of media technology. As an example, the increasing use of artificial intelligence will considerably impact the fruition of services and products and the behaviours of consumers. Again, this requires new efforts and media literacy and media education as skills, values and approaches of fundamental importance, which concern our (human) intelligence and individual and collective awareness and social relationships.

For four decades now, politics at the international level claimed that media literacy constitutes a necessary condition for a healthy democracy^[5]. Research, authors, civil society and high-level international conferences have since long underpinned and requested more and better policies. The Europe of this century needs its citizens to acquire these skills. It is no longer enough that they know how to read, write and count. In the context in which we live today, it has become indispensable to learn how to read and write the media. The European Union seems aware of its strategic value^[6]. Even though the situation differs from country to country, acknowledging the importance of media literacy has generally increased.

5 « Media education is part of the fundamental right of each and every citizen of any country in the world to freedom of expression and the right to information and is a tool for building and maintaining democracy » UNESCO, Vienna Conference, 1999.

6 Amongst the many relevant documents: Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate COM (2005) 494 of the 13/10/2005; Council of Ministers Recommendation to Member States on the Remit of Public Service Media in the Information Society. CM/REC (2007) adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 31 January; Eurobarometer 66 (2006) Public Opinion in the European Union; Media Pluralism: The Need for Transparency, Freedom and Diversity in Europe's Media Landscape (2007). Communication of the European Commission on media literacy 'A European approach to media literacy in the digital environment' (December 2007), the 'Audiovisual Media Services Directive' and revisions (December 2018), the Communication 'i2010-Annual Information Society Report 2007' which illustrate the rapid transformation of the digital panorama in which the 'i2010' initiative works and which represents an invitation to act, recommending supporting the debate on pluralism of the media and of media literacy, the Recommendation of the European Parliament to the Council on the protection of minors in relation to the competitiveness of the European audiovisual and on-line information industry in 2006 which reaffirms the content of the previous Recommendation – 98/560/EC and extends its influence to cover media education, recommending to the member States to take the necessary measures to protect minors and safeguard human dignity in all audio-visual and online information services, the Decision of the European Parliament 2002/0303 which highlights progress in the understanding of the digital literacy concept, defining it as 'one of the new essential skills to actively participate in the knowledge society and in the culture of new media. It refers to media literacy and to social understanding; in as far as they have common objectives such as active citizenship and the responsible use of ICT'; Starting in 2007 different Studies (of which EAVI was a principal contributor) on media literacy were carried out on behalf of the European Commission. Subsequent relevant debates and documents such as the Digital Service Act, the European Democracy Action Plan initiated by the European Commission have followed and will be mentioned later.

Nevertheless, while some policies have been approved and some measures have been undertaken by education specialists, civil society groups and media professionals, unfortunately, contemporary societies seem to have so far failed to effectively address such a crucial issue. It still seems to be the case that many people often lack basic skills to understand the significance of a media message, identify the real meaning behind the message and, more generally, be aware of why and how the media works.

Lacking coherent policies, sporadic initiatives cannot have significant impact. To form a knowledgeable public opinion and ultimately to safeguard democracy, it would have been necessary to make a much more significant investment since the 1990s. It is regrettable that Europe has not invested more in the media literacy of its citizens.

As for the reasons this investment has not been made, we can only observe that certain governments seem convinced that they would work better if their own citizens were incapable of autonomous evaluation and that certain companies would sell more to uninformed consumers. The result is an increase in demagogical propaganda and the spread of commercial oppression. The results is that people are often manipulated citizens and voters, gullible consumers unable to use technology and communication to their own advantage.

To conclude, if policies continue to undervalue the role of the media, this will lead to an impoverishment of human intelligence in terms of perception, imagination and reasoning both at an individual and collective level, and thus in the deterioration of their roles as citizens in a democratic society.

The European MediaCoach Initiative

To address these challenges, the European MediaCoach Initiative (EMCI) was established. It had the objective of training media literacy coaches, therefore, to train the trainers, so that, in turn, they will be able to transfer their knowledge and skills to others using a well-proven pedagogical and didactic approach.

The EMCI aims to replicate the 10-years' experience of the Dutch MediaCoach programme in Cyprus, Romania, Portugal, Greece and Bulgaria. It was started in December 2017 as a collaboration of eight project partners^[7]. The evidence of the success of the National MediaCoach training programme justified the pursuit of its replication in new settings and new countries.

In this volume, as well as considering several reflections on the main subjects, the project's aims, activities and methodologies are illustrated, the challenges encountered, and the solutions found as well as the concrete results that have been achieved are described.

Before launching the activities, the methodology of the Dutch programme was analysed and, adapted according to the different national cultural and socio-economic contexts of the five participating countries. To evaluate the factors that could have obstructed or eased the deployment of the initiative, research assessment at a national level was conducted. It included evaluating socio-demographic, economic, policy influence factors as well as educational ones. Next, EMCI focused on identifying and contacting interested stakeholders, as well as on gathering and adapting relevant educational materials.

7 European University Cyprus (Cyprus), Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (Cyprus), Nationale Academie Voor Media & Maatschappij (Netherlands), ISCTE Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (Portugal), Active Watch (Romania), Sofia University (Bulgaria), EAVI Media literacy for Citizenship (Belgium), Athens Lifelong Learning Institute (Greece).

It followed a testing phase to determine how the training programme could have been implemented effectively in the specific national contexts. Following the conclusion of the pilot exercises, the organisation of the training sessions themselves was implemented on a larger scale. This included the establishment of the operation: how to manage administration, logistics, human and financial resources, technical and communication aspects. Trainers and participants had to be recruited and, of course, the initiative had to be proven to be sustainable.

The trainings were implemented in (for four of the five participating countries) ten-week courses with blended learning, a combination of online and face-to-face – before the COVID pandemic – sessions. The MediaCoach project decided early on to train its teachers in their respective countries using practical and easy to understand subjects (the Dossiers) that included several topics around media literacy including countering disinformation, online privacy, cyberbullying, hate speech on social media and many more, together with more theoretical models on critical thinking, media education and so on. Each country, therefore, developed its unique programmes according to their needs. A refresher programme to keep participants updated with new trends and teaching methods has followed the initial trainings.

Since 2018, dozens of training sessions have taken place every year. Participants have come from different backgrounds, including national educational organisations professionals.

Specific information about the project results can be found online and in the following chapters. Overall, the project was a success, despite some difficulties. Looking back at the experience, one of the main challenges for the future will be to render the deployment of the trainings relevant and sustainable. In this regard, some countries have already provided some sensible indications and practical recommendations have been formulated¹⁸¹. As a brief outline, the first chapter of this book introduces media literacy concepts. It is followed by a chapter by the EMCI coordinator offering some elements for an initial comparative analysis, lessons learned and recommendations. Before the five dedicated national chapters, which are reporting from their respective countries in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Portugal and Romania, the Dutch partner drafted a chapter reminding us about the origins of the initiative.

Paolo Celot

MEDIA LITERACY IN EUROPE

Paolo Celot

Sotiria Tsalamani

EAVI

Abstract

The scope of this chapter is to illustrate key notions and models of media literacy. It is based on well-established concepts and solid research validated by the scientific international community and incorporated in European Union and other international organisations policies. We will present a brief historical evolution, some definitions, new frameworks and future trends.

¹⁸¹ For more information, please consult mediacoacheurope.eu

Media Literacy

Nowadays, people are completely immersed in a new media eco-system and they need to learn how to live in this new digital environment to fully benefit from their media use.

Media literacy is still mainly recognised as skillset that should enable a better use of the media by individuals and society as a whole. More precisely, since the first study^[9], carried out on behalf of the European Commission, media literacy was defined as a set of Individual Competences (technical, cognitive and participative) and Environmental Factors (such as policy laws and media education in schools) as contextual factors that impact the development of media literacy skills. Similar conceptualisations have followed more recently, essentially recalling the same principles.

While the structure of that model remains valid, the advances of new digital technologies are rapidly affecting the way people interact and communicate through the media. It is sufficient to think about the business models of large social media platforms which allows them to make huge profits from a free service, or the acknowledgment of the attention economy, the role of media bubbles to target commercial and political messages to like-minded people and how participation and debates became polarised with people entrenched even further in their original positions rather than evaluating objective facts and recognising the role of disinformation.

This is the reason why, together with the traditional models, we will also briefly expose an enhanced perspective designed again by EAVI, which aims to provide insights and gain knowledge as to the role of certain additional attitudes (sometimes indicated as soft- or life-skills) that are necessary for a more comprehensive understanding of media literacy. Again, this is media literacy.

A brief historical evolution

Media education (the process of becoming media literate) has been defined internationally in successive steps. The first coincides with the declaration of Grünwald^[10] in 1982. This declaration, intended as an initial conceptualisation, already 40 years ago, was stating:

9 Celot P. Perez Tornero et al. (2009). Study on Assessment Criteria for Media Literacy Levels, A comprehensive view of the concept of media literacy and an understanding of how media literacy levels in Europe should be assessed. European Commission (https://eavi.eu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/eavi_study_on_assessment_criteria_for_media_literacy_levels_in_europe.pdf)

10 This is a Declaration approved by the representatives of 19 nations under the aegis of UNESCO reunited in 1982 at the International Symposium on Media Education which took place at Grünwald, Germany. The value of these declarations remains true today. Amongst others: "Media education will be more effective when parents, teachers, media professionals and decision-makers recognise they all have a role to play in the development of a larger critical awareness of listeners, viewers and readers. The major integration of educational and communication systems would undoubtedly represent an important step forward towards a more efficient education."

"We live in a world in which media are omnipresent; an ever-increasing number of people spend a considerable amount of time watching television, reading newspapers and magazines and listening to cds and the radio. For example, in some countries, children spend more time in front of the television than at school. The role of both communication and media in the development process should not be underestimated, as media is a key instrument for the active participation of citizens in society."

To clarify concepts after Grünwald, a number of international conferences took place where an explicit call was made, highlighting the need to undertake concrete actions through political activities in research, education, training and international cooperation. A number of initiatives, projects and research followed which, in essence, covered these shared principles.

In Europe, media education became an educational related topic when mass communication appeared together with the formation of the cultural industry during the 19th century. Research has recognised, although fairly late, that the rapid technological evolution, analysing the different media that became quickly established worldwide: press, radio and television, with their respective broadcasted contents^[11].

Each historical period has been characterised by a dominant technology, which in turn influenced the socio-cultural conditions and the respective skills necessary to be developed. Each moment corresponded with a need for a specific literacy: skills in traditional literacy, audiovisual, digital and media literacies. Thus, the skills had to be adapted to the new media environment. With the advent of mass communication, such as cinema and the spread of commercial television, it had to be injected into a far broader context. Later, with the arrival of digitalisation, internet and social media, further competences became essential, including the capacity to safeguard against increasingly exposed disinformation, propaganda and hate speech^[12]. Moreover, new challenges arose in terms of equality to access digital services by all media users.

The more recent technological transformations have shifted attention to the importance of developing new, updated, skills. Unfortunately, often emphasising mainly technical skills to the detriment of critical analysis. However, at least in Europe, we partly resisted the tendency of an excessive technocratic reduction to simple digital technical skills to embrace instead a broader context of media literacy, so to develop more comprehensive skills and greater understanding.

Under the influence of the international community, 25 years after the adoption of the Grünwald Declaration, an important movement to promote empirical and theoretical experiences has been established and is still flourishing. In recent years, these exchanges of experiences in research and projects promoting media literacy have multiplied in many European countries.

11 E. Menduni, (2006) I linguaggi della radio e della televisione. Teorie, tecniche e formati, Editore Laterza, Bari.

12 NESET. (2018). Teaching media literacy in Europe: evidence of effective school practices in primary and secondary education.

Within this context, policy initiatives, research and a certain coherence of media literacy principles have also been incorporated in EU legislation, that we will come back to later in this chapter.

Recently we have seen that it is often students, parents and teachers who demand media education courses and plans such as the European MediaCoach Initiative. This demand from the bottom-up needs to be acknowledged, as it demonstrates a very authentic wish and needs for people to learn to navigate this fast-changing media world by developing appropriate competences.

Definitions

For years scholars have been consumed by the debate about what exactly media literacy is. This debate was enriching, but also inhibited research to coalesce around a shared definition. Many different approaches, philosophies and objectives have been suggested over the years. A simple search on Google of the terms “media literacy” provided us with over five million results – which in itself is a good sign, considering where we started from 15 years ago with EAVI.

The exchanges identified many common features of what media literacy is about.

The briefest definition comes from Ofcom¹³, that media literacy consists of “the ability to access, understand and create communications within a variety of contexts.” At this simple level, it is equivalent to the capacity to use different media and to be able to fully understand the information received. At a more advanced level, it constitutes the capacity to think critically, to analyse and evaluate content and contexts.

The European Commission¹⁴ stipulates that media literacy constitutes a combination of skills and competences related to methods of communication, their images, languages and messages:

“Media literacy can be defined as the capacity to accept, analyse and evaluate the power of images, sounds and messages with which we are confronted on a daily basis and which play an important role in contemporary culture. It includes the ability to communicate through a competent use of media on an individual level. Media literacy concerns all media, including television, cinema, radio and recorded music, the press, internet and any other digital communication technology. The objective of media literacy is to increase the level of knowledge towards the various forms of messages transmitted by all means of communication, which we are subjected to on a daily basis. It should help citizens to recognise how the media filters their perceptions and convictions, shaping popular culture and influencing personal choices. It should provide them with the capacity for critical analysis alongside the creative ability to resolve problems, making them wise consumers and producers of information themselves. Media education is part of the fundamental rights of every citizen in every country in the world, in the same way as freedom of speech and the right to information. This phenom-

13 www.ofcom.org.uk: “Media literacy is the ability to access, understand and create communications in a variety of contexts”.

14 <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/media-literacy>

enon is also beneficial to the fulfillment and consolidation of democracy. Today, Media Literacy constitutes one of the key requirements for the exercise of active citizenship and is one of the fields within which intercultural dialogue should be promoted. In addition, media education is one of the fundamental tools required to increase knowledge of the themes related to copyright rights amongst media producers and consumers”.

Key components of media literacy

Within this framework, in 2010, the European Commission asked EAVI – the European Association for Viewers Interests – and its consortium to provide an understanding of what media literacy was exactly, as well as provide insights of trends and indicators in Europe. Seeking the advice of dozens of media literacy experts across Europe, EAVI concluded that, as media literacy is a complex construction, expressing intrinsically many different ideas and streams of thought, it was better to address the discipline at its broadest and through the plurality of its component parts.

The result was a conceptual map, a framework to present the properties constituting media literacy. On this basis the study¹⁵ (and those closely related which preceded¹⁶ and followed¹⁷) carried out in 27 countries and in 20 different languages, there were identified two dimensions within media literacy: one flowing from an individual's abilities to use the media, the other informed by contextual and environmental factors.

Individual capacities were defined as the ability to exercise certain skills (technical, cognitive and participative) and environmental factors as elements that impact the acquisition of those skills, such as the presence of media education in school curricula, media literacy policy and the roles that the media industry and civil society play, which affect individual skills.

Since then, we have counted at least 20 more different frameworks elaborated by various organisations, but in essence the main properties of media literacy remain the same ones that were identified fifteen years ago. They fall within the following categories:

- **Access and use, learning to write with the media**

Today's technology offers extraordinary opportunities, but the possibilities of accessing the media are not the same for everyone, and differ by geographical situation, sex, age, social, racial, educational and cultural backgrounds. The digital divide is inseparably linked with social exclusion in today's society, and impacts their development. Policies in this field must therefore facilitate equal opportunities for all citizens.

Therefore, once this access precondition has been fulfilled, the first capacity for using the media well also depends on our technical abilities. In simple terms, once

15 Study on Assessment criteria for media literacy levels in the 27 EU Countries. European Commission.

16 Study on the Current and approaches on media literacy in Europe, European Commission.

17 Study on testing and refining criteria to assess media literacy levels in Europe, European Commission.

we gained access with our devices to the internet, we must be able to handle them appropriately, including knowing how to operate them and turn them on and off. Technology, especially the advent of digital devices, has completely changed the way people spend their time, how they study, play and work, influencing the dynamics of their relationships and behaviours. It is sufficient to think about our smartphones: while they are almost prolonging our bodies and senses, they become increasingly difficult to control. Instead of using them for a purposeful task or, in any case, for something we intended to do, we are getting dragged deeper into insignificant routines. They seem to have become, rather, tracking devices and collectors of our personal information which no longer work to serve our own interests. In fact, surveillance and geo-localisation services will become even more invasive of our privacy with the next step of artificial intelligence. As media literacy concerns all forms of media and all citizens, regardless of gender or age, attention should also be given to empowering children and minors to use media safely and appropriately. To sum up, media literacy encompasses a much wider concept, but still technical skills represent an essential component to access and use content. Sometimes literature refers to digital skills and digital literacy indicating this more functional use.

- **Critical thinking, analysis and evaluation, learning how to read the media**

This ability concerns reading skills (the ability to decipher a message) and also understanding (the ability to link a meaning with a specific context implying comprehension and significance) and evaluating (categorisation in relation to a scale of existing values) of media content with regards to the conditions set by the media. Therefore, the ability to explore, search and select the information and attribute value to it. Combining these dimensions of analysis and evaluations leads to critical thinking and personal autonomy. Critical thinking skills are the broader umbrella for other cognitive processes necessary for people when it comes to media use. The central aspect of media literacy has traditionally intended to be the development of critical thinking skills. The capacity to evaluate and assess a media content and the context within which it is delivered to the users. A methodology used to respond to certain information, for example correspondence to reality, plausibility, accuracy and value in terms of significance. Having acquired the ability to think critically, the individual would then be more capable of appropriately using the information available and be free to think autonomously.

These skills improve individual development in terms of awareness, critical thinking¹⁸ and problem-solving ability. To define the field of education in relation to media literacy, we should note that the latter is the result of a learning (and teaching)

18 The concept of evaluation can be enriching – Some experts during the European Commission's public consultation on media literacy – with the idea of "critical literacy": "We would also stress the importance of critical literacy as part of the evaluation component of the definition, for accessing and analysing media messages are not effective if one cannot also critically evaluate those messages, distinguishing the honest from the deceptive, the public interest from commercial persuasion, the objective and trustworthy from the biased or partisan." (Sonia Livingstone, London School of Economics and Andrea Millwood Hargrave, UK Media Literacy Task force). Furthermore: "There exist many definitions of media literacy around the world. More and more often they include the ability 1) to access the media, 2) to understand/critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents and 3) to create media contents/participate in the production process. It is not unusual that the definitions also include aspects of learning to use the media in order to participate in the process for social change, for development, towards increased democracy." (Cecilia Von Feilitzen, The International Clearinghouse on Children Youth and Media, Nordicom, Göteborg University).

process of competences and attitudes. We repeat, the process of becoming media literate is called media education¹⁹.

Critical thinking is a key component of media literacy. The ability to learn to read a media message by analysing and evaluating its content.

- **Communicative and participative skills, learning to interact and participate in public life**

These skills are necessary for the creation and production of media messages with the aim of circulating them across different media platforms. Competence in communication has a long theoretical tradition, for instance Noam Chomsky²⁰ and Jürgen Habermas²¹, defining it as a universal skill to allow interaction between people based on common rules. It permits people to be active and to participate in the public sphere. Media literacy is linked closely to the capacity to create and distribute messages and it brings with it the development of communicative skills.

Here we recall the role played by the media in our society. The media occupies a large part of our daily lives and the flow of information and messages to which we are exposed and shape our ideas of the world and our capacity to participate meaningfully in public life. Our culture is becoming, not without contradictions, a culture of media participation²². In this sense, to be capable of using the media effectively helps in the exercise of a fundamental universal human rights and assists democratic participation by developing dialogue and civic relationships.

One of the crucial roles that media literacy should play in this context is contributing to reinforcing democracy, freedom of expression and the right to reliable information; as such it constitutes "one of the pre-requisites for the full and active exercise of citizenship"²³.

Therefore, the third component of media literacy is represented by the capacity to participate in social and political life, including citizens' communication and social engagement, participation in civic life which allows people to understand the processes and systems in which media operate and of the issues that society is facing. Citizens can play an active role in improving their own social and cultural conditions if they can contribute to public discourse. Therefore, the ability to write with the media and share information, interacting appropriately with others has opened up unimaginable possibilities for communication.

19 According to John Pungente, media education "is concerned with helping students develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the mass media, the techniques used by them and the impact of these techniques. More specifically, it is education that aims to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of how the media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organised and how they construct reality. Media literacy also aims to provide students with the ability to create media products." Cfr. J. Pungente Media Literacy: A Resource Guide, for the Government of Ontario of 1989, Ontario Association for Media Literacy, Harcourt Brace 1989.

20 Chomsky N. (1965) Aspects of the Theory of Syntax, The MIT Press, Cambridge.

21 Habermas J. (1981) The Theory of Communicative Action, Polity Press, Cambridge.

22 Jenkins H. (2006) Convergence Culture, New York University Press, New York.

23 D. Buckingham, Media education. Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture "In this world of rapid technological change and globalization of information, media literacy forms a building block for freedom of expression and the right to information and is instrumental in building and sustaining democracy. Today media literacy is indeed one of the key pre-requisites for active and full citizenship and is one of the contexts in which intercultural dialogue can be promoted successfully".

Other media literacy approaches

It is worth briefly looking at some other approaches that have emerged over the years, keeping in mind that they all contribute to reflect about the importance of media literacy.

As a first example, some models insist on the need to establish skills of *critical analysis*, of creative production and of *cultural knowledge* within a European context. These are the three C's of *media literacy: Culture, Critical and Creative*. In addition to these three, some other studies^[24] have added the following two: *Comprehension and Citizenship*. Once more, the three principal competences of media literacy emerge through the various definitions and frameworks:

- the skill to read the media (which includes the ability to assess, analyse, decipher, evaluate critically, contextualise, to really grasp the meaning of the messages and so on);
- the skill to write with the media (which includes creative production skills, technical and digital skills, communicative skills, considerations about self-generated content and so on); and
- the skill of using the media to participate in social and democratic life (which leads to active and digital citizenship, sharing content responsibly, safeguarding of individual rights and advancing of personal interests, the freedom of expression and so on).

These competences are sometimes interlinked to the so called three P's of the communication process (Protection, Promotion and Participation). When it comes to problems generated by the suffocating abundance of mediocre media content associated with a lack of personal resources, certain authors (such as Karl Popper, Giovanni Sartori, Theodor Adorno, Pierre Bourdieu) have strong arguments to support what Umberto Eco^[25] called an "apocalyptic" vision, which could lead to an involution of the human species. They underlined the negative effects of the media, responsible for inducing false needs and at the service of a massive social control. Others, perhaps the "Integrated" that he speaks of, added the belief that people could still develop autonomy and their potential to reflect a more optimistic attitude towards the development of technology and media communication and pervasiveness. According to them, technology would be capable of increasing the average level of information and culture.

These visions translate into two different approaches of media literacy: "protectionism" – the need to protect against the media, generally seen in educational initiatives such as to stay safe online and similar measures and one of "promotion" more centred on developing the potential of media and enriching the cultural knowledge of contemporary citizens.

They reflect different approaches on the market and thus different politics. On one side, institutions that are more sensitive to the need to defend citizens' and consumers' rights, hoping to protect especially the most vulnerable, such as children and minors in general, also using strict regulations when necessary. On the other side, those who promote market efforts, innovation and consumerism claiming that people would

24 D. Frau Meigs, (2007) Media Literacy and Human Rights: Education for Sustainable Societies, report on the workshop organised by the European Council at Graz, Austria.

25 U. Eco, (2008) Apocalittici e Integrati, Tascabili Bompiani, Milan.

develop positive feelings of well-being and happiness. In this context, each rule and regulation to the free market is perceived as a barrier.

Evidently there are no simple truths; both visions, protecting and promoting, are valid and do not necessarily contradict each other. In fact, media literacy has been enriched in objectives as well as in procedures through developing the value of autonomy and through the implementation of normative rules. It is helpful to bear in mind that media tools offer many positive aspects and opportunities in the economic, cultural, educational and political context and their role and responsibility should not be underestimated. This message already existed, since the "Declaration of Grunwald^[26]". According to this:

"Rather than condemn or exalt the definite power of media, we have to accept their significant impact and their penetration in the world as an indisputable fact. We should even appreciate their importance as a cultural element in our society. Political and educational systems have to be aware of their obligation to promote a critical understanding in citizens of the phenomenon of modern communication."

For the sake of completeness, the third 'P' of the model refers to the participative attitude which leans towards ideals of cooperation and claims public spaces for debate. Here, media literacy aims at a universal objective in line with the dialogical construction of knowledge.

The Art of living in the digital environment

An EAVI concept, the process of becoming media literate

The media landscape will continue to evolve rapidly and influence communication between individuals and within society. Future technological developments, including that of artificial intelligence, will have a profound effect on people's behaviour and will challenge the current understanding of media literacy. This is why media literacy should not be framed within a rigid definition. In order to retain its effectiveness, it should allow for a flexible interpretation, based on shared concepts, to adapt to the complexity of the evolving media environment

EAVI feels that these concepts should ultimately be brought back to a human based perspective. Today, is there any area of human life that is not influenced by the media and digital technologies? Co-existing in this digital space, our emotions, thoughts and behaviours are shaped. Observing recent socio, cultural and political developments,

26 The declaration of Grünwald, Cit, defined media education as a means of promoting democratic participation of citizens. As an example we can refer to some important points of the Declaration: a) the accepting of culture presence of the media in contemporary society, b) the necessity by the political and educational system to promote a critical understanding of the communication phenomenon, c) knowledge of the technological development (satellite communication, home-video, multi-media support) which will make this need even more urgent, d) the realization that in spite of this, formal and informal education are not that heavily involved, e) the extension of educative responsibility of teachers and parents, media professionals and decision-makers.

it is clear that there are dangers of individuals becoming distracted consumers and manipulated citizens by their use of digital technologies.

All these dimensions are significant and will only become more so, therefore media literacy must be multi-dimensional and continuously evolve in parallel to the fast-changing environment.

EAVI, with 20 years' experience and extensive knowledge on media literacy, has contributed decisively to its current understanding and we are now proposing an enhanced, more comprehensive perspective to reflect upon on how to relate to the media. It follows a vision of media literacy which is not just a set of skills to acquire. Cultivating deeper personal attitudes and approaches seem equally essential. The process of becoming media literate must start within ourselves.

Here is a brief outline of these new concepts and processes which aim to contribute to reflections about how to take care of the digital environment we are living in and the skills and attitudes people can develop to benefit more from technology and engage in society. It is structured in four different components that complement each other:

- Critical Consciousness;
- Awareness of Experience;
- Digital Well-being;
- Full Citizenship.

Critical Consciousness

It has finally been accepted that critical thinking and not just technical digital skills, is the core of media literacy. Media literacy as we have exposed it, has critical thinking as its central property. It remains the pivotal concept, a cognitive, logical process to make sense and use information. However, along with its essential development, it does not seem to be sufficient to address a multifaced media environment.

We are seeing that even if people apply critical skills, many of them remain unable to evaluate news, media sources and contexts, understand propaganda, spot advertising or react appropriately to harmful content.

In fact, to fully understand a media message, it is not sufficient to be able to read a piece of information critically, nor is it to build a rational capacity to analyse a media message.

In order to truly understand media content and the context from which it originated, rational thinking needs to rest on solid values such as integrity, ethics, empathy and fairness. In other words, cultivating personal attitudes would result in the capacity of developing clear thoughts and more appropriate behaviours.

In essence, what we call here critical consciousness, is composed of critical thinking skills and, as a preliminary condition, of sound personal attitudes and values. In turn a healthier media experience will feed and further enrich individual competences and enable people to gain real knowledge. The risk is otherwise to acquire, if anything, only shallow notions and empty information. Thus, to have access to everything without having learned anything at all. The use of the term consciousness is therefore meant to provide a much deeper dimension.

Awareness of Experience

Furthermore, media literacy is not only about rational, logical thinking. It is becoming clear that developing awareness of our digital experience, of thoughts and emotions that are activated when encountering media content, is equally important. Rather than reacting impulsively to thoughts and emotions we may find a wiser response. Noticing how we feel after an online interaction will lead to a more skillful use of technology.

The necessary first step to solve any problem is to be aware of it. As an example, using the media, we must be aware that we are subject to propaganda, a state of being emotionally manipulated or be aware about the fact that we are spending a certain number of hours online and be able to realise what we actually did during that time. Being aware that the content, including prices and search results we come across online, is instantly personalised for us by algorithms.

To exploit people's vulnerabilities, media platforms base their strategies also on behavioural sciences. Do we realise that online we are often distracted for a purpose, for someone else's commercial or political interest? Likewise, we should be aware that it is only an illusion to think that we are the ones who are truly choosing the next movie to watch.

The recent covid crisis has had an important impact on people's media routines with work, education, exercise and socialising moving more and more online. In order to live better with such an amplified exposure to the media, an increased awareness of what we are doing and the impact of how we are conducting ourselves online will serve us well.

In other words, to become media literate and cultivate healthier reflexes, it is also necessary to develop the capacity of recognising feelings and thoughts, to see how they are triggered and to understand how these influence our choices.

Developing awareness is an essential component in being media literate and learning to pay attention is the process towards this.

Digital Well-Being

Once people have evaluated the benefit and consequences of their media use, we need to be truly capable of using those technologies safely and confidently to our own benefit.

The prevalence and rise of mental health issues related to online activity is an alarm bell. Addiction, depression, anxiety, poor concentration, and low self-esteem are some of the conditions that can worsen by our experience in the digital environment. The necessity to protect our health and well-being will involve adapting certain behavioural attitudes when interacting with the media.

Our online activity is often a result of being prompted by our devices through notifications, suggestions, and incoming messages. We are being pushed and pulled around. We become influenced to do things that may be against our best interest and are not good for us.

It is our digital tools that sometimes seem to be in command and that can take over our online behaviour. The digital media system constantly digs and extracts from us

our personal data. It tracks our habits and wishes, localises our position and induces certain behaviours. The scope is to profile and sell us in exchange for money.

This third component extends much further the need of acquiring adequate technical abilities which, in the digital media environment, is obviously essential. Using the media as a real personal resource, relies on people being truly capable of mastering the respective products, services and technologies. With the advent of mobile equipment, the internet of things, machine learning and artificial intelligence, which promise to bring many new gadgets into our lives (in our cars, homes and clothes), we will need to possess the ability to be in control as much as possible of these technologies and therefore be able to decide what to do with them, when and how.

To benefit from the media and care about our well-being, practical skills such as simply being able to switch on and off the respective devices, adjusting the privacy settings of social media, choosing which cookies to accept and refusing consent to third parties to use our personal information and data are all important. Coupled with this we need to be the masters of our digital life.

Technology in this context should serve people's needs, not the other way around.

Full Global Citizenship

Once we have matured our respective individual skills as indicated in the previous pages, we can be encouraged to learn how to contribute to a better communication welfare. In this respect, we can become more capable of relating to one another and be actively part of a community. We can see the harm and division caused by disrespectful online behaviour such as hate speech, posting inappropriate images and shaming others. By refusing to take part and by actively creating an online environment of trust and respect, we support the common good.

In our capacity as citizens, we should be able to participate and engage in the societies we are part of. Nowadays, this participation is essentially through the media, it spans national borders and is therefore global. Citizens may decide, for instance, to participate in movements or communities of global concern such as climate change, global peace or racial and social equalities. This participation, to engage in public life using the media, contributes to democracy and to the development of healthier global societies. The concepts recall those of digital citizenship and digital democracy and are linked to recent widely debated issues such as internet interferences in election campaigns, information warfare and populism spreading through social media.

It is acknowledged that to facilitate meaningful participation, promoting human rights such as freedom and democracy and therefore media pluralism, media freedom or quality journalism play an important role in establishing balanced societies. Therefore, educational bodies, political institutions, the media and civil society organisations each have a role and responsibility to facilitate that process. In other words, people learning how to use media technology effectively may contribute to global peace and to collective intelligence, this too is part of being media literate.

The European Union Legislative Framework relevant to Media Literacy

With numerous other EU policies falling within the scope of a wide spectrum of media literacy, the regulatory framework has become more complete, albeit very fragmented. International Treaties sometimes refer to general notions that resemble media literacy concepts¹²⁷ and in an increasing number of documents and acts, media literacy has been explicitly addressed. Recently, the European Commission addressed issues of disinformation, hate speech and more generally, illegal and harmful online content. Within the activities envisaged, rendering media users more capable of recognising disinformation is in fact part of media literacy. We should also mention that the Council of Europe has taken important legislative measures over the years¹²⁸.

Without being exhaustive, we recall some important measures.

The Audiovisual Media Services Directive and its successive revisions (2018);

Following extensive work from the European Parliament¹²⁹, in December 2007, the Commission adopted a Communication¹³⁰ on 'A European approach to media literacy in the digital environment'. [...] *"The aim of media literacy is to increase awareness of the many forms of media messages encountered in everyday life. It should help citizens to recognise how the media filter their perceptions and beliefs, shape popular culture and influence personal choices. It should empower them with the critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills to make the judicious consumers and producers of content. [...]. On the basis of media's crucial role in today's society, the Communication insists on the importance of a high or higher degree of media literacy."* It followed a Recommendation¹³¹ on media Literacy in the Digital Environment for a more Competitive Audiovisual and Content Industry and an Inclusive Knowledge Society from the European Commission, reiterating the importance of media literacy for citizens to engage in active citizenship.

27 Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights, Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, et al.

28 In the context of international organisations involved in media literacy, it is worthwhile noting the activities of the Council of Europe and the way in which they deal with principal questions – the development and guarantee of democratic principles; human rights and freedom of expression – involving the theme of media literacy. The CoE has promoted numerous initiatives, studies and meetings, we recall the educational policies relating to the media (2007), the Recommendation of the Council on making children responsible in the new information and communication society (2006), the Recommendation of media education (2000) amongst many others.

29 European Parliament resolution of 16 December 2008 on media literacy in a digital world (2008/2129(INI)).

30 COM (2007) 833 final, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A European approach to media literacy in the digital environment

31 European Commission Recommendation on media literacy in a digital environment for a more competitive audiovisual and content industry and an inclusive knowledge society (Brussels 20-08-2009 C 2009/6464 final).

Further to this, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (“AVMS Directive”^[32]) strengthened the role of media literacy. It required Member States to promote and take measures for the development of media literacy skills. In view of the central role played by video-sharing platforms, it obliges them to provide effective media literacy measures and tools. Moreover, social media platforms were required to raise users’ awareness of these measures and tools.

Following those policies, some funds were approved in the EU budget to support media literacy initiatives, starting with the 2016 Work Programme and the financing decision for “Measures concerning the digital content and audiovisual and other media industries” and related preparatory actions and pilot programmes.

The Revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive^[33]

The European Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) strengthened the role of media literacy. Specifically, on coordinating national legislation on all audiovisual media, including traditional TV broadcasts and on-demand services. It includes rules to shape technological developments, create a level playing field for emerging audiovisual media, preserve cultural diversity, protect children and consumers, safeguard media pluralism, combat racial and religious hatred^[34].

Tackling online disinformation

The exposure of citizens to large scale disinformation, including misleading or outright false information, is a major challenge for Europe. The EC is working to implement a clear, comprehensive and broad set of actions to tackle the spread and impact of online disinformation in Europe and to ensure the protection of European values and democratic systems.

Adopted on 26th April 2018 by the European Commission, the Communication “Tackling online disinformation: a European approach” sets out the views and actions of the European Commission towards the challenges associated with disinformation online. It defines media literacy as a key objective, guiding actions to tackle disinformation:

“to promote diversity of information, in order to enable citizens to make informed decisions based on critical thinking, through support to high quality journalism, media literacy and the rebalancing of the relation between information creators and distributors.”

The Action Plan on Disinformation

The European Union has outlined an Action Plan to step up efforts to counter disinformation in Europe and beyond, focusing on four key areas. This plan serves to build the EU’s capabilities and strengthen cooperation between Member States by improving detection, analysis and exposure of disinformation, stronger cooperation and joint responses to threats, enhancing collaboration with online platforms and industry to tackle disinformation, raising awareness and improve societal resilience.

The Code of Practice on Disinformation

The Code of Practice on disinformation is the first international, self-regulatory set of standards to fight disinformation voluntarily signed by platforms, leading social networks, advertisers and the advertising industry, in October 2018.

Council Conclusions on Media Freedom and Pluralism (2018/C 457/02)

On 14th November 2018, the Council of the European Union adopted Conclusions on the strengthening of European content in the digital economy. Previously, on 26th November 2013, the Council had adopted Conclusions on media freedom and pluralism in the digital environment.

The Digital Service Act and Digital Markets Act

The rapid growth of digital services has been one of the changes that impact our lives and our broader communities. We use digital services to communicate, shop, and access information online. Therefore, the European Single Market requires a legal framework that ensures users’ safety online by protecting fundamental rights and creating an open online environment.

The Digital Services Act (DSA) and Digital Markets Act (DMA), as part of the European Digital Strategy, Shaping Europe’s Digital Future, include a set of new rules suitable for across the EU. This set of regulations aims to create a safer and more open digital space, having European values at its centre.

The DSA and DMA’s primary goals are the development of a safer digital space in which the fundamental rights of all users of digital services are protected, and the establishment of a level playing field to promote innovation, growth and competitiveness, not only in the European Single Market but also globally.

The European Democracy Action Plan

The European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP) establishes rules to promote free and fair elections, strengthen media freedom and combat disinformation. Specifically, these regulations address issues of paid content and distribution channels, including online platforms. Moreover, they tackle journalists’ safety and offer an initiative to protect them from Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs). Through the EDPA, these regulations aim to improve the existing Code of Practice on Disinformation by establishing online platforms’ requirements and introducing active monitoring.

32 Directive 2007/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2007

33 Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 amending Directive 2010/13/EU

34 <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/audiovisual-media-services-directive-avmsd>

Some recommendations for media literacy in Europe

Evidently, the main difficulties in developing media literacy in Europe include the lack of a shared vision, objectives, concepts, methods, resources, research, evaluation of results and so on. Cultural barriers, alongside institutional inertia and routine, can also cause problems, together with the scarce visibility of good national, regional and local initiatives, causing dispersion of knowledge and good practices.

In order to develop media literacy in our societies and to guarantee stable and favourable conditions for its future development, relevant studies have established a number of recommendations to policy-makers to endorse action. Some of them are general, whilst others are more specific, some are achievable in the short term, other require long-term action. Many of the proposed measures fall into more than one category and acquire meaning in coherence with each other. On the whole, however, the recommendations proposed provide a complete picture of the sectors in which the media literacy community contributed for policy actions to be taken.

Mainly within the following categories:

1 Education and training. Remembering the increasingly relevant and growing role of media in society and the consequent need for citizens to develop a capacity to critically analyse information, whatever the symbolic system used (images, sound or text), and to produce the contents themselves, the participants of the 2007 UNESCO Paris conference reaffirmed the need for genuine, international mobilisation in order to promote further media education. Essentially, with the development of comprehensive media education programmes at all educational levels and with teacher training and awareness-raising of the other stakeholders in the social sphere and also to develop suitable didactic material and resources;

2 Policies, Research and Promotion. To promote studies on different aspects and dimensions of media literacy, create international networks and cooperation, increase visibility of groups involved in media literacy and so on. It is also recommended that regular and impactful public awareness campaigns should be established to create favourable conditions for media literacy promotion. In this respect, the participation of the media industry is crucial to reach the general public. The involvement of all agents in their respective capacity is also a recurrent consideration: parents, children, youth, adults, seniors, teachers, students, policy-makers, civil society and so on.

References

- Buckingham, D. (2013). *Media education: Literacy, learning and contemporary culture*. John Wiley & Sons
- Bucy, E. P., Newhagen, J. E. (Eds.). (2004). *Media access: Social and psychological dimensions of new technology use*. Psychology Press.
- Burr, C. Floridi L. (2020) *Ethics of digital well-being*. Springer, Switzerland
- Celot P., Perez-Tornero, J. M. et al. (2008) Study on the current trends and approaches on media literacy in Europe. European Commission.
- Celot, P., Pérez-Tornero, J. M. et al. (2009). Study on assessment criteria for media literacy levels. A comprehensive view of the concept of media literacy and an Understanding of how media literacy level in Europe should be assessed. Brussels: European Commission.
- Celot, P. et al. (2011) Testing and Refining Criteria to Assess Media Literacy Levels in Europe, EAVI & Danish Technological Institute for the European Commission.
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax* Cambridge. Multilingual Matters: MIT Press.
- Eco, U. (1984). *Apocalittici e integrati* (Vol. 27). T. Bompiani.
- European Commission. (2007) 833 final, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A European approach to media literacy in the digital environment
- European Commission. (2009). Recommendation on media literacy in the digital environment for a more competitive audiovisual and content industry and an inclusive knowledge society, (2009/625/EC). Official Journal of the European Union. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009H0625&from=CS>
- European Parliament. (2008). Media literacy in a digital world European Parliament resolution of 16 December 2008 on media literacy in a digital world (2008/2129(INI)). Retrieved from: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A6-2008-0461&language=EN&mode=XML#top>
- Frau-Meigs, D. (2008). Media literacy and human rights: education for sustainable societies. *Croatian Journal of Communication and Psychology*, 5(3), 145-157. <http://hrcaj.srce.hr/file/41617>.
- Habermas, J. (2015). *The Theory of Communicative Action: Lifeworld and Systems, a Critique of Functional Reason*, Volume 2 (Vol. 2). John Wiley & sons.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). New York University Press. *Convergence Culture: where old and new media collide*. New York University.
- Livingstone, S. (2004). Media literacy and the challenge of new information and communication technologies. *The Communication Review*.
- NESET. (2018). Teaching media literacy in Europe: evidence of effective school practices in primary and secondary education. Retrieved from: https://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/AR2_Full_Report_With_identifiers_Teaching-Media-Literacy.pdf
- Popper, K. R. (2020). *The open society and its enemies* (Vol. 119). Princeton University Press.
- Potter, W. J. (2010). The state of media literacy. *Journal of broadcasting & electronic media*, 54(4), 675-696.
- Potter, W. J. (2018). *Media literacy*. Sage Publications.
- Vanden Abeele, M. M. (2020). Digital Wellbeing as a Dynamic Construct. *Communication Theory*. Retrieved from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341738903>
- Varis T, Perez-Tornero J.M. (2011) Media literacy and new humanism. UNESCO

THE EMCI PROJECT

Charis Xinari

European University of Cyprus

Why media literacy now?

In order to enable the scientific community to interact with policy-makers, the European Science Foundation conducted in 2011 a *Forward Look*^[35] in the area of media studies, “to take stock of what we know and to reflect on what we still do not know and what we will probably need to know in the near future”. The Forward Look, which culminated in the release of a study titled *Media in Europe: New Questions for Research and Policy*, began with the title ‘*New Media, New Literacies*’, based on the conviction that “critical competence in using and engaging with new media and new applications was indispensable for every citizen”.

The project, completed in 2013, resulted in an agenda for research in the field of media studies for the next five to ten years. The initial discussions that led to the commissioning of the Forward Look began as an initiative of the Standing Committees in the Humanities and the Social Sciences in order to close the divide between the Humanities and the Social Sciences. Media Studies was considered an ideal field of research as its interdisciplinary nature would allow for a collaboration between disciplines with different methodological underpinnings. The first few exchanges introduced media literacy into the debate, as an initial guiding concept to focus on. This led to the preparation of a background discussion paper on this topic by Ola Erstad and colleagues^[36], however, in the process of discussions, it was ascertained that the participants wanted to pursue issues beyond “how individuals engage with the media.” For this reason, the Forward Look eventually resulted in four key areas of focus: Political Participation in an Age of Mediatisation; the Digital Divide; Content Creation and Creative Industries; and Identity Formation: From Facebook Groups to Institutional Forms of Cultural Heritage.

This is a rather circuitous route to address the question of media literacy, but it may serve, together with other relevant studies, to provide indications of where our reflections began and culminated in the drafting and success of the European MediaCoach Initiative (EMCI) Proposal. Many issues that were identified as priorities for research and policy for “the next 5-10 years” in 2013, were also included in the curriculum of some of the training seminars. The research already considered the constraints of the term media literacy, nevertheless it became popular and eventually developed into different properties (see the dedicated chapter in this book) and themes (for

EMCI, the topics/Dossiers used in the training modules) and brought together in the implementation of an award-winning practice for promoting media literacy in Europe.

That in itself is an example of how the partnership decided to place emphasis on the empowerment of audiences in their media usage as opposed to protection from dangers in using the media.

Technological advances – mobile computing, augmented reality, blogs, social networks and other modes of connectivity – multiplying new media content well beyond conventional print and broadcast. Increased access to information and opportunities to express ideas within communities, has also uncovered new challenges in how individuals connect to technology and each other, how they participate in the new public sphere and the ways in which the internet of Everything is advancing. The new media are expanding and challenging traditional notions of learning and literacy in classrooms and informal learning environments. Who can afford to be digitally illiterate in today’s technologically charged environment? Digital literacy, defined as “the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills^[37]” is undoubtedly an important skill but in the milieu of the explosion of information (and information asymmetries), it is inadequate for informed and active citizenship.

Media literacy, which arose in reaction to fight propaganda and the rise of excessive advertising, now encourages people to build the skills required to respond to the challenges posed by manipulative media messages and to be able to engage with different types of media (both “old” and “new”). More to the point, now that the media no longer simply influence our culture but are our culture, it is imperative that “the people formerly known as the audience” acquire “the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms.” Full participation in the digital world requires access to the means of developing technical skills and computer proficiency as well as the ability to critically assess and evaluate media messages in all their multimodal forms. This creates the need for critical media literacy, the ability not only to evaluate, assess, produce and create, but also “the potential of literacy education to critically analyse relationships between media and audiences, information and power”, (Kellner, 2007) and thus the ability to recognise prejudices in media coverage through power explorations, including ownership, production and distribution of mainstream media.

Within this context and in view of both the changing way we use media and the enormous volume of information we receive, the issue of young peoples’ ability to “access, analyse, evaluate and critically access images, sounds and texts” is of great significance as it represents an important component for active citizenship in today’s information society.

The purpose of the project

The key goal of the European MediaCoach project was to increase media literacy among young people by developing a wide pool of media literate professionals who work with youth in schools, youth centres and non-formal settings such as libraries and museums. Rather than attempting to create a new pilot experimentation project, the European MediaCoach project suggested scaling up a recognised and tested breakthrough in the field of media literacy. More specifically, it aimed to replicate the Dutch National MediaCoach Programme, a practice that has had demonstrable

35 European Science Foundation Forward Look Report Media in Europe: New Questions for Research and Policy, 2013, p. 3

36 For more information see <http://archives.esf.org/coordinating-research/forward-looks/humanities-hum/current-forwards-looks/media-studies-new-media-and-new-literacies.html#c104612> and ‘Meta-analysis of reviews on media literacy and media studies’ at archives.esf.org/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecure&u=0&g=0&t=1614787432&hash=a0870b7f364b31b59925d2aee2b1b44ba19c78d0&file=/fileadmin/be_user/CEO_Unit/Forward_Look/MEDIA/Metareview_Media_Literacy_2012.pdf.

37 What is Media Literacy and More. (2021, 03 02). Retrieved from Center for Media Literacy: <https://www.medialit.org/reading-room/what-media-literacy-definitionand-more>

results with qualitative and quantitative evidence of impact. For several years, the initiative has successfully achieved the goal of improving media literacy among children, young people and parents by training youth professionals; teachers, librarians, youth workers, government officials and other societal professionals, providing them with the opportunity to study new media and new literacies.

Research conducted for the European Commission (Celot, 2009) showed that media literacy levels across Europe are not homogenous. On the one hand, Nordic countries, especially Scandinavia, have high levels of media competence and central European countries, including the bulk of the EU population, fall within a median level of competence. Countries in Southern and Eastern Europe, on the other hand, exhibit a limited or very basic level of media literacy. This is also due to a lack of appropriate policies and to the absence of media education in schools. The research found that, whereas the Netherlands ranks third in media literacy levels, Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Greece rank at the bottom, with Romania scoring lowest and Portugal scoring low-average levels of media literacy. The study determined where in Europe media literacy initiatives were most urgently needed. The project's main aim was therefore to transfer good practice knowledge from a high media literate member states to those in need of intervention in media education. The Dutch MediaCoach training Initiative was replicated in five European Union countries; Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, Romania and Bulgaria, thus acting as a catalyst to scale-up across regions and countries using one of the most successful European practices in the field of media literacy.

Context

The selection of the countries for the transfer of the Dutch MediaCoach Initiative was therefore made by focusing on those who need media literacy the most. As was expected, the five countries chosen were considerably different from each other in terms of knowledge and policy disparities. Therefore, transfer of successful practices to other European countries had to take into account the respective socio-economic, political, cultural and structural differences. Performing an environmental assessment by each partner prior to implementing the training was essential. Based on the work documents to illustrate the methodology to follow, including the so-called Protocol and Prototype developed in the context of the project, the adopting countries proceeded with assessing the respective national contexts.

The Environmental Assessment was meant to identify the social context and pre-existing interventions relevant to the subject, as well as the programme's needs and beneficiaries. In light of this, a paper was prepared that explored the situation in each of the five countries, with differing outcomes focusing on the following areas of interest.

- **The policy context and the political systems**

This addressed the issue of existing policies in the participating national contexts. It revealed that the countries with the lowest scores of media literacy lacked the most in terms of related existing policy. The lower these countries scored, the less policy existed in their countries. So for example, although media literacy forms no part of the curriculum in these countries, in some, such as in Cyprus, there exists a local authority dealing with media literacy issues, whereas in Romania, there is none and the emphasis is on digital education. Furthermore, there is little or no institutional support or acknowledgment of efforts to encourage media literacy in Romania; in

Cyprus there is some support and initiatives by the Ministry of Education and Culture via the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute; in Bulgaria and Portugal, initiatives are mainly supported at Universities. Differences in political systems (flexibility over bureaucracy, levels of democracy and freedom of expression) were also significant and the countries recorded varying outcomes, some positive, others less encouraging.

- **Accessibility restrictions to the internet**

Currently, an extensive debate rages, particularly in the field of education, concerning specific types of digital gaps and divides. Lifting accessibility restrictions to the internet (both technically and financially) is obviously key for an effective implementation of a project attempting to increase levels of media literacy, considering that restricted internet access inevitably leads to less usage or may impact the development of technical skills which are linked to the subsequent development of critical skills when it comes, for instance, to accessing and creating content. Countries reported satisfactory levels for accessing the internet, which was also considered a factor affecting the need to develop media literacy skills among youth who were the primary users of technology.

- **Existence of related initiatives that could serve to expand the good practice.**

Countries showed varying degrees of initiatives, with Romania reporting the fewest and least supported, while other countries tended to have more favorable circumstances and more support, either from related Ministries and associated organisations (as in Cyprus) or from Higher Education (such as in the case of Bulgaria and Portugal).

- **The socioeconomic and cultural context**

This was undoubtedly an important consideration in the environmental assessment since it took into account a variety of measures such as the economy, general state of education, governance, quality of living, accommodation, and so on. The state of the economy (levels of unemployment, especially among the youth, access to education at all levels, standard of living, economic standards in the general population and among the target community in particular) had to be taken into account when assessing the background and planning for the project's adaptation process. It is easily understood that media literacy skills cannot be promoted if other factors already constrain access to literacy overall in a specific national context.

- **Youth's needs and rights**

An assessment of the overall situation of youth needs and youth culture was important to understand the ultimate beneficiaries' needs and how to reach them. It is in investigating how youth are supported in a specific national context, what opportunities exist (for education, employment, personal and professional development) and how their needs and objectives can be pursued, that the MediaCoach initiative can be successfully implemented.

This is especially true for youth rights and interests, as one of the main objectives of media literacy policies is to ensure safeguards and citizens' democratic engagement in all processes, including access to information and the opportunity for citizens to engage in public discussions.

Beneficiaries (target group)

Finally, the potential beneficiaries of such a project had to be clearly identified. Who would these be, for which reasons, what would their motivation be, what other opportunities for training might they have? These are just a few of the questions that needed to be answered. The target group, as set out in the proposal and based on the Dutch model, was primarily educators, librarians and youth workers. However, we discovered that in some countries, librarians' involvement was marginal because libraries are not a central part of culture (Cyprus), while in others, librarians' interest and support from librarians' associations were significant (Greece). The employment status of the target group (if they are currently employed) had also to be taken into consideration as the programme stipulates a 40-hour training in a period that may vary from three weeks intensive work to a more paced ten-week schedule. Such choices, as well as the mode of delivery (face-to-face, blended learning, or distance learning) depended on the work schedule of the target group.

Adopting countries should consider this if they are to attract a satisfactory number of participants successfully. Furthermore, other factors such as gender, age, family situation and responsibilities, as well as motivation and interest in the subject, all play a role. While participants were approached and committed to the curriculum as part of their professional growth, we discovered that their intrinsic motivation in becoming more media literate was a parallel role as parents or individuals who had a personal interest in related issues such as gaming, cyberbullying, misinformation and so on.

To summarise, countries considering such an initiative must weigh a variety of factors before making decisions regarding the model's adaptation in their respective national contexts. The EMCI trainer team had the opportunity to visit the Netherlands as part of the train-the-trainer workshops and work on-site with their trainers, as well as seeing firsthand the significant differences between the Dutch national education systems with the adopting partner countries. Educators, in general, are often recommended by the various comparative studies to assess education systems across Europe to achieve better results and raise the indicators in their own countries. However, certain measures are inadequate in systems that structurally do not allow for those scores to increase.

A successful adaptation necessitates much more than merely replicating good practice. This is no less true in how different countries have attempted to introduce innovative teaching methods in schools, from the use of whiteboards to the use of personal computers or tablets in the classroom, as it is for subjects such as media literacy, which is not part of the formal school curricula in any of the five national contexts in which the Dutch MediaCoach project was adapted. As a result, the Environmental Assessment represents a critical component of the adaptation process and it is a crucial recommendation for any country interested in following in the footsteps of the EMCI consortium.

Adopting and adapting the MediaCoach trainings in five different national contexts

The debate around the analysis and significance of the Environmental Assessment concluded that the project's implementation in various national contexts was heavily reliant on the outcome of that assessment. Each of the adapting countries had to make decisions as to how to approach the implementation.

All partners participated with three representatives in a Train-the-Trainer seminar in Almere, Netherlands. As part of this four-day training experience, potential trainers were given assignments prior to their arrival in Almere and had the opportunity to be trained in a similar manner as the Dutch MediaCoaches to understand the way the model works and to receive feedback and advice. Partners started developing their ten dossier topics (the subjects that would be addressed in the context of the national trainings). The knowledge collected with the Environmental Assessment informed the selection of topics and the creation of a curriculum. In addition, it became clear that national partners prioritised certain topics over others. Issues of democracy, for example, were high in the Romanian agenda, whereas gaming, cyberbullying and sexualisation online were of great interest in the Cyprus context. This is primarily determined by a country's sociocultural background, but it may also be affected by existing programmes that seek to encourage project activities and are based on existing content, expertise and partnerships.

Decisions regarding the curriculum topics, target audience, selection of trainers, delivery of training and promotion of activities, among others, were also uniquely dealt with by the partner countries based on their particular situation. Countries such as Cyprus and Romania operated in close cooperation with strategic partners, liaising with their national Ministries of Education, in the case of Portugal, with journalist training centres; while others, such as Greece, relied on their long experience in adult education to help support and introduce the project in their national context.

These collaborations were essential because the policies, regulations and legislation of the different countries required to meet certain criteria in order to obtain recognition of the qualifications awarded. In the Netherlands' education system, MediaCoach is a recognised certification allowing graduates of the programme to work in schools and to set up their own business model based on what they have learned during the course, some of them becoming very successful self-employed MediaCoaches. Since the education structures of the adopting countries do not currently allow for such an opportunity, partners had to look for different ways to promote both the seminars and the idea of the MediaCoach in their respective national contexts. Using different approaches, the partners achieved this goal in diverse contexts exemplifying, again, what has already been pointed out: successful adoption relies on knowing the national context and adapting it to specific circumstances.

Partners arranged the model's adaptation based on the Protocol and the Prototype. This meant that, while the concept and methodological approach were similar to the Dutch MediaCoach, variations were necessary to account for differences in population, culture and priorities per adopting country. All partners followed the model of the ten Dossiers subjects and the flipped-classroom methodology but chose to allocate the forty-hour training in different ways. While some partners thought that the Dutch model approach was a good match for their own national background,

others chose an adaptation model that included less conventional methodologies than the face-to-face approach.

For some partners, for instance, blended learning offered a more appealing and attractive mode of conducting these seminars and reaching the desired target audience. In other cases, the final exam the Dutch model foresaw was replaced by a practical assignment in which potential MediaCoaches had to prepare their own lesson plan similar to the lesson plans provided by the trainers on a topic of their own choosing; these lesson plans also involved details on activities for the age group selected as well as learning objectives and outcomes. In all cases, partners followed the main guidelines including all stages of the implementation outlined in the original proposal. However, effective adaptation necessitated that the practice be modified to meet the needs and requirements of the new context, otherwise, the chances of successful adaptation would be reduced.

Challenges and opportunities: the European MediaCoach Initiative in the time of the pandemic

In its third year and while the national teams were fervently conducting the national trainings, the world changed unexpectedly; certainties were no longer certain and imbalances in the distribution of information as well as in communication and consequently in education and training, were a new reality. The Covid-19 pandemic certainly affected the work of the project, as it made the need for media literacy more urgent. Practically, it made it impossible for most of the teams to continue with their planned course of action regarding the delivery of the trainings. Face-to-face training seminars were no longer an option, and attracting participants who were able and willing to contribute to the trainings despite the strenuous personal and professional circumstances generated by the new “normal” added an additional challenge.

The partnerships were quick to switch meetings to online, developing LMS platforms and learning a whole new way of handling relevant material. Since the consortium includes both universities and other types of organisations, it became important for the participants to share ideas and best practices in order that everyone to meet the goal of one hundred MediaCoaches to be trained per national context. The partners’ ability to adapt certainly highlighted that adaptability and flexibility are an asset when it comes to transfer a practice under unprecedented circumstances.

The pandemic has provided a new opportunity for the project; as all communication in civil and social life went online, citizens were relying on the internet for accessing content. The unprecedented degree of internet usage as people were confined at home highlighted the issues that the consortium had identified from the beginning as essential topics for exploration and discussion through the trainings. While the pandemic caused some of the project’s activities to be delayed, it also made the project more relevant to everyday life in many ways. As a result, most partners reported an increase in interest in the project and a rise in participant numbers, especially as trainings were transferred fully online, thus reaching a part of the population who, due to geographical restrictions, may otherwise not have been able to participate. Ironically, what stalled the project also pushed it forward.

What we have learned from the adaptation of the European MediaCoach Initiative

The project was supposed to last three years, but the pandemic extended it by six months. The consortium began to enthusiastically recognise the differences among partners, both in terms of cultural context but also the type of organisations it involved (universities, NGO’s, research and education institutes). It enabled partners to explore ways to adapt and incorporate a successful practice in their own national contexts. The consortium came together on a shared interest in media literacy and contributed to the discussion in the respective national education systems which did not necessarily share an interest in critical media literacy but instead focused on merely digital technical literacy.

Taking stock of the project’s accomplishments, the consortium can confidently state that its mission was accomplished. All adopting countries, regardless of massive discrepancies in the population (Cyprus has a population of less than a million, Romania almost twenty million), diverging economic and cultural contexts, differing working conditions of target groups in each country as well as differences in the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation of participants, as well as different experiences in training individuals, were able to follow the methodology and implementation of the project. The development of the European MediaCoach Protocol and Prototype, as well as the experience gained by Greece, Portugal, Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus as outlined in the national chapters of this volume, should serve as a tool for other countries interested in following in the footsteps of this partnership.

In the future, we see fostering collaborations essential to support the development of a media-literate society. We hope that through the offer of the refresher courses for Media Coaches on an annual basis we will be able to keep the chain going. It is also hoped that the Media Coaches will make use of both formal and informal education opportunities, thus facilitating the development of critical thinking in relation to media usage. It is now more urgent than ever to enable individuals to be made aware of the ways in which “old” and “new” media inform society and culture and form both the notion of citizenship as well as the citizens of the information age.

References

- Celot, P. (2009). Study on Assessment Criteria for Media Literacy Level: A Comprehensive View of the Concept of Media Literacy and an Understanding of how Media Literacy Levels in Europe should be Assessed. Brussels: European Commission
- Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2007). Critical media literacy is not an option. *Learning Inquiry*, 1 (1), 59-69.
- Look, A. E. F., & An, E. S. F. (2013). Media in Europe: New questions for research and policy. *Science*.

THE ORIGINS: THE DUTCH NATIONAL MEDIACOACH TRAINING PROGRAMME BY THE DUTCH ACADEMY FOR MEDIA & SOCIETY

Liesbeth P.M. Hop
CEO Stichting Reklame Rakkers

Nationale Academie voor Media en Maatschappij

Abstract

In order to increase media literacy levels among youth, their parents and youth professionals, the Dutch Academie for Media and Society started the National MediaCoach Training Programme for teachers, librarians and youth workers in 2007. In the current fast-changing, complex and medialised society, the need for such a training programme was huge.

Since then, the National MediaCoach Training Programme provides comprehensive and practical training for youth professionals who wish to empower young people, children and their parents through their media usage. More than 4.000 professionals have been trained as MediaCoaches in the Netherlands and the training is considered a 'best practice' in Europe for media literacy.

In 2018 the European Commission granted a subsidy for the European MediaCoach Project^[38], which aims at spreading the knowledge and experience of the Dutch Academie with five other European countries by assisting them in reproducing the MediaCoach Training Programme in their own countries.

This chapter provides knowledge, experiences and insights from the project so to help other countries to initiate a MediaCoach training programme in their own countries and regions.

The beginning

On a political, economic, social demographic, organisational and accreditation level, this chapter describes the starting situation.

In 2007, the National Academy for Media & Society^[39] (The Academy) (a brand of Stichting Reklame Rakkers) in the Netherlands initiated the National MediaCoach Training programme^[40]. The initiative was prompted by the report of the Dutch Council of Culture 'Media literacy and the development of new citizenship', which was published in July 2005. The definition of media literacy at the time was based on the Council of Culture's concept; "A combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that will help citizens to be aware, critical and active media users in this complex, fast-changing and fundamentally medialized world", informed the basis of the MediaCoach training programme.

Since then, the National MediaCoach training programme of the National Academy for Media and Society in the Netherlands has been recognised as one of the best practices for enhancing media literacy in Europe among citizens in general and especially in young people. In 2008, the Academy was granted a subsidy by the Leonardo da Vinci fund of the European Commission to support teams in Sweden, Germany and Belgium to develop similar training programmes in their countries. The project resulted in professional MediaCoach training in Belgium, coordinated by Media Animation. In 2010, the Academy was invited to enrol in the National MediaCoach training programme in the former Dutch Antilles in the Caribbean, Curacao and Saint Martin. In a period of four years, more than 120 local teachers, librarians, youth workers, police agents and government officials were trained as MediaCoaches.

In 2013, the National MediaCoach training was selected as one of 12 inspiring media literacy projects in Europe by the Evens Foundation, an organisation which promotes media literacy. Since the start of the training programme, more than 1.200 professionals were trained as MediaCoaches in the Netherlands, where "MediaCoach" was seen as a new, innovative and relevant profession and more than 300 independent MediaCoaches established their own MediaCoach practices. In 2017, the independent National MediaCoach Association^[41] was founded, aiming to serve the interests of all certified MediaCoaches in the Netherlands and the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, Flanders.

In July 2005, when the Dutch Council of Culture published their first media literacy report, the Dutch MediaCoach training programme initiators, Liesbeth Hop and Bamber Delver, were already working in the field of media literacy since 2003 and were real pioneers in this field in the Netherlands. They both managed their own NGOs, respectively Stichting Reklame Rakkers^[42] and Stichting de Kinderconsument^[43], which were mentioned in the report by the Council of Culture as good practice. Liesbeth and Bamber were convinced that media literacy was going to be a crucial skill for future generations and organised public awareness campaigns and congresses,

39 www.mediaenmaatschappij.nl

40 www.nomc.nl

41 www.beroepsverenigingmediacoaches.nl

42 www.mediarakkers.nl

43 www.kinderconsument.nl

38 The European MediaCoach Initiative Project, www.mediacoacheurope.eu

wrote articles and books on the topic, participated in think tanks of the Ministries of Education, Culture and Media and the Ministry of Health, developed school materials and conducted research studies. By the end of 2006, they had agreed to start working together with the intention of developing media literacy training programmes for professionals. In January 2007, they launched the National Academy for Media and Society as a brand of Stichting Reklame Rakkers.

Education and Policy

Since 2003, the Dutch government has advocated for greater budgetary autonomy for schools and other educational institutions. It meant that schools were given a lump sum from the government with few restrictions on how to spend their funds. The Ministers of Education, Marie van der Hoeven (2003 – 2006, Christian Democratic Party, CDA) initiated this policy and Ronald Plasterk (2007 – 2010, Socialist Party, PvdA) continued it during his years in the government. It meant that schools were also responsible for the education of their own staff and were free to allocate parts of their budget to suitable training programmes that were offered.

School curricula

- Between 2003–2007, neither primary nor secondary school curricula included any mention of media literacy. The only possible connections were two clauses in primary school curricula:
- Children need to learn how to develop themselves as full-fledged consumers; and
- Children need to learn basic computer skills.

Currently the Ministry of Education, together with civic organisations, NGOs and schools, is working on a new curriculum. The Academy expects 'Digital literacy' to be included as an essential subject.

Council of Culture

The Council of Culture is an independent body funded by the Dutch government which publishes unsolicited reports on culturally related topics. Both Liesbeth Hop and Bamber Delver were interviewed for their report of July 2005 "Media literacy and the development of new citizenship".

Economic

The economic situation in Europe and the Netherlands in 2007 was far from excellent. The Netherlands experienced a severe economic downturn which had a direct impact on society. Fortunately, the governmental policy in this area was unchanged and the Academy was fortunate that the budgets in education for teachers and librarians were not affected

Socio-demographic

In the Netherlands in 2017, 12.7 % of the population were of non-western extraction (CBS, 2017), which meant they had at least one parent who originally came from Africa, Latin America, Asia (excluding Japan, Indonesia) or Turkey. The largest groups of non-western immigrants were from:

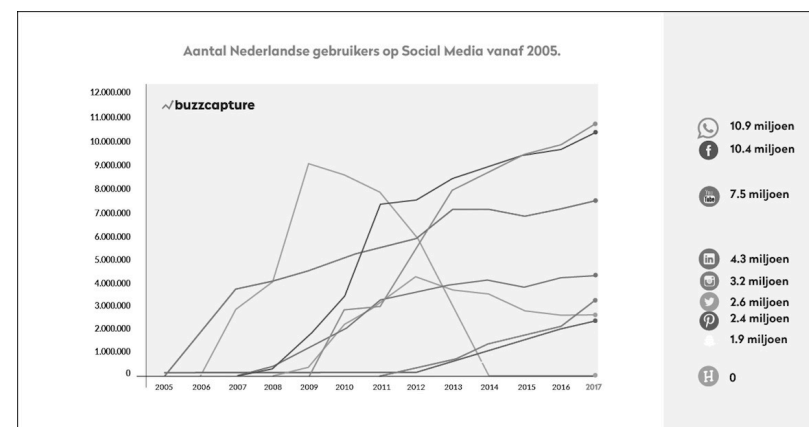
• Turkey	2,34 %	} Of total population of 17 million
• Morocco	2,29 %	
• Surinam	2,05 %	
• Former Dutch Antilles	0,90 %	

MediaCoaches as experts in their own demographic constituency

The Academie collaborated with Mira Media, an NGO specializing in media literacy programmes for minorities, to understand how they could make the National MediaCoach Training programme appropriate for these target groups as well. The Academy found that they needed to address the same topics as for Dutch citizens for these groups, but that they had to make sure that the application of knowledge and skills into their own working environment would be the responsibility of each individual MediaCoach. This way, the Academy considered them experts in their own social demographic constituency. Since 2015, the Academy annually offers four scholarships to minorities students (including hearing- and visually impaired groups). It considers them to be ambassadors able to improve media literacy among their own constituencies.

Impact of the growing reach of Internet, smartphones and social media

In 2000, 85% of Dutch households had access to the internet. When the Academy launched the National MediaCoach training programme in 2007, more than 95% of Dutch households already had one or more internet-connected computers. This meant that MediaCoaches were desperately needed in colleges, libraries and youth-serving organisations to teach youth how to take advantage of media in general and digital media in particular. They also needed to address topics such as media-, game- and chat- addictions, online bullying, information literacy, technical literacy, online privacy issues, etc. As of 2011, mobile internet usage started to increase rapidly, with the introduction of smartphones, tablets, e-readers and laptops. This 'mobile revolution' had a significant impact on how the target groups of MediaCoaches used the digital media, with significant consequences for the curriculum and contents of the National MediaCoach training programme.



Development of Social Media reach in the Netherlands – 2005-2017, Buzzcapture Research based on Newcom Social Media Monitor - February 2017

The Academy had to change their training curriculum as increasing numbers of people of various ages began to use various social media platforms over time. For example, as Facebook became a popular platform, they set up secured Facebook pages for students for each run of the training programme for interactive discussion and assignments. In 2010, they also included a dedicated Dossier (subject file) on “Social Networking” in the training curriculum, addressing the benefits and drawbacks of social media use, as well as how to instruct potential MediaCoaches in how to use social media responsibly. Because the number of incidents involving social media, such as bullying, sexualisation and addiction, also started to increase, the Academy kept updating the programme on a rolling basis.

Age changes of MediaCoach target groups

In the last decade, the average age of children owning their first smartphones went from 12 to seven years old. Therefore, the Academy needed to prepare MediaCoaches to offer their services to eventually benefit children as young as four years old, because at that age, some of them were already using tablets on their own at home. Furthermore, in the Netherlands, a fast increase in social media usage among people older than 65 years became evident. This meant that the Academy needed to make MediaCoaches aware also of this new target group.

Organisation

Stichting Reklame Rakkers was founded by Liesbeth Hop in 2004 and is a small independent private foundation funded by Dutch and European funds, together with 15 corporate companies and their own revenues generated by events and training programmes. The foundation aims to improve advertising and media literacy levels among youth up to 25 years of age by offering free materials to schools, organising national awareness campaigns, publishing online and offline articles and books, and conducting research. In 2006, it started to work with Stichting De Kinderconsument, a small private foundation founded in 2001 by Bamber Delver. The goal of this foundation was to create a safe internet environment for young children and to combat online bullying. The foundation was funded entirely by offering services such as workshops and parent evening programmes to schools. The two foundations joined forces in 2007 to provide media literacy training programmes to professionals in schools, libraries, youth work, the media production sector, as well as police and justice organisations under the brand “National Academy for Media and Society”.

Unique organisational starting points

The success of the National MediaCoach programme in the Netherlands is undoubtedly linked to the peculiar Academy’s specific organisational features in the current socio-economic context.

A dedicated management

Both founders are passionate about their work. They feel a personal, idealistic mission to contribute to improve this digital world by teaching people about media and its effect on their lives. It meant that there was a strong motivation to make the National MediaCoach training successful. Their personal motivation and energy are still widely recognised and appreciated in the Netherlands.

Management’s know-how and experience

Their diverse expertise of the managers complemented the other. Liesbeth Hop had a good communicative, entrepreneurial and media business background, while Bamber Delver had essential knowledge and experience in youth work and family issues.

Independence of organisation

Another distinctive attribute was the Academy’s status as a fully autonomous organisation. There were no administrative or bureaucratic bottlenecks, allowing for a pragmatic, scalable, pioneering plan of action to be fast implemented.

Extensive existing network of stakeholders

Both foundations cooperated in the development of the MediaCoach training programme, which built on an extensive network of organisations operating in different fields of expertise, such as curriculum development, business models, communications, accreditation and so on. It was, therefore, relatively easy to obtain assistance.

Credibility

While new teacher and library training programmes could be developed in the Netherlands without any need for accreditation, the Academy recognised that accreditation would have been necessary for the success of the MediaCoach training programme. In 2007, any organisation was certifying and accredit such an advanced and novel training programme.

Inviting other organisations

The Academy started off by officially inviting a large group of potential knowledge, business- and network stakeholders to participate in several expert group meetings and invited them to take place in the Academy Advisory Board. The University of Amsterdam, NGOs from the publishing- TV- and film industry, the National Library organisation and others came along. It first discussed a framework and definitions of a potential media literacy training programme for professionals. They also looked at each organisation’s ability to collaborate and their possible role. Some organisations expressed a wish to contribute to the development of the curriculum and others were willing to engage in promotional activities.

The Academy did not want to work with just one single partner, for instance, the libraries, because of their internal procedures, this would have slowed the development and the training programme which should have become available to different target groups instead. The training programme earned appropriate accreditation because of its collaboration with some of the aforementioned organisations. The Academy was given permission to use their names and logos to promote the curriculum.

Accreditation organisation by CRKBO^[44]

In 2010, the government created the Central Register for Short Vocational Training Programmes. The Academy immediately applied for registration, for which they needed to be audited by the CPION, an official audit organisation funded by the Dutch government.

Any organisation must establish and implement specific protocols in order to obtain certification, ensuring four qualities: carefulness, legal certainty, efficiency and communication. The Academy was soon accepted into the quality register CRKBO. Following the Academy's CRKBO accreditation, all of the National MediaCoach training programme's instructors applied for individual teacher registration. By 2011, all trainers were registered.

Register of teachers ^[45] In 2014, the government initiated the official Register of Teachers in which all teachers in the Netherlands are required to register and indicate their individual training schedule. Each completed training course will grant them Register Points. In 2015 the National MediaCoach training programme was also officially included in this Register and provided participants 121 Register Points.

Preparation

The Dutch MediaCoach Training Programme preparations started at the beginning of 2007, which resulted in the first run of the training programme in September 2007. It was essential to set aside enough time to prepare for the development of the training programme and a sustainable business model, and also to plan its promotion and communication strategy.

Individual interviews with possible stakeholders

To start with, the Academy approached a small but crucial group of stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Education, the National Library Organisation, the University of Amsterdam, the Dutch Broadcasting Company (NPO), Kennisnet (the educational portal for schools, funded by the Ministry of Education) and the SLO (National Foundation for Curriculum Development) for individual interviews. The Academy assessed their vision on a possible National MediaCoach training programme and the conditions they would accept. Finally, The Academy verified their willingness to be involved in the initiative and in what disciplines; such as organisational, management, trainers, office, help desk and secretarial services, advisory board, financial support or sponsoring, curriculum development, acquisition of possible participants, networking, accreditation, marketing, PR and communication or training venues.

Development of a first framework

The Academy developed a structure for the training programme based on the results of the individual stakeholder interviews, which established a list of criteria as follows that were later double checked in expert group meetings:

- a. The MediaCoach should be available to youth professionals working in education, libraries, youth institutions, police and government so that the knowledge will be widely distributed in society.
- b. The MediaCoach training follows the "Train the Trainer" concept, which means that MediaCoaches should be trained to develop and execute media literacy projects independently for youth, colleagues, parents and other professional educators.
- c. Youth and children should not be seen as defenceless victims of media. The Academy should empower them to be stronger, more aware, and critical in their media use.

- d. The contents of the training should focus on both positive as well as negative effects of media on children.
- e. The MediaCoach Training should be established as a national network of MediaCoaches with a yearly refresher programme.
- f. The position of National MediaCoaches should be promoted by an official certificate and a national network.
- g. The training should mainly focus on understanding the psychology of the media and less on developing specific digital technical skills.

Four competence levels

The Academy agreed that the concept of media literacy given by the Council of Culture in their July 2005 report should be used: "The combination of knowledge, skills and attitude that will help citizens to be aware, critical and active media users in this complex, fast changing and fundamentally medialized world". This was an all-encompassing description of the goal of the training programme. However, the Academy did find that this definition was not easily translated into a pragmatic curriculum for the training programme. The Academy needed to discuss possible levels of competencies first. Together with the University of Amsterdam, which already conducted some research on media literacy competencies, the Academy developed the following scheme of media literacy competence levels:

a. Media awareness

The first step to develop media literacy is to improve the media awareness of the prospective MediaCoaches. Awareness of the existence of different media, their role in the social, political, economic and cultural sphere and societies and individuals' dependence is a critical component of this unit. Topics such as media addiction and the history of media are addressed in this phase.

b. Media understanding

Media understanding refers to the recognition by participants of how media content is being created and the economic, social, cultural and political factors that play an essential role in the process.

c. Media attitude

Media attitude refers to the competence level of media literacy as it relates to the reflection on media content, the development of participants' opinion of the topics under consideration and the comparison of one's vision to others.

d. Media behaviour

Media behaviour refers to the application of the knowledge, skills and mentality into the participants' own media behaviour. Media behaviour consists of actions from sending a text message to blogging and producing a website, film, or photos.

Drafting a list of relevant media literacy subjects for Dutch citizens

The Academy drafted a list of subjects or concerns that seemed to be important for the stakeholders and could be included in the MediaCoach training programme's curriculum. The final combined list consisted of the following topics:

- Digital bullying;
- Online privacy;
- New media developments and trends;
- The role of media in the lives of youth;
- Media education by parents;
- Values and ethics in media;
- Information and technical literacy;
- The influence of digital advertising;
- The effects of media violence on youth;
- Sexualisation in the media;
- Media addiction;
- Media usage in schools;
- Where to find assistance in case of incidents;
- Media skills of the MediaCoach;
- Didactic skills of the MediaCoach; and
- Making contacts in virtual communities.

Developing a first draft of the curriculum

The Academy explored potential learning objectives for each competency level for each of the different subject such as:

Topic	Media Awareness	Media Understanding	Media Attitude	Media Behaviour
Digital Bullying	Through what media could people be bullied? What does that look like?	Why do people bully others in the media? Why is it different from bullying in real life?	What do you think of online bullying and why?	What can you do as a MediaCoach against online bullying?
Online Privacy	Are you aware that you are sharing personal information through online media?	How could your privacy be threatened through online media? How do they collect your information?	How important is your online privacy to you? What information is private to you?	What can you do to protect your privacy online and that of your target groups?

This exercise helped to narrow the various facets of media literacy issues and the possible learning objectives for each subject within the curriculum.

Organising experts' groups meetings

In April 2007, the Academy organised two expert group meetings with the following stakeholders or possible partners: National library organisation; Digital Media producers; Parent organisations; SLO; Dutch didactical organisation; Kennisnet, school portal by the Ministry of Education; ICT Educational Magazine VIVES; Educational centre Dutch television; University of Amsterdam; NGO School and Safety; NGO PestThe Academy (Anti bully organisation); NGO Newspapers in the classroom; Sanoma Publishing; youth department; Disney Channel; and MTV Networks.

Agenda experts' meeting

The Academy discussed the development of a possible National MediaCoach training programme. The agenda for these meetings consisted of the following topics:

- a. Mission statement and sharing visions;
- b. Developing definition of media literacy and translating this definition into practical competence levels;
- c. Possible target groups, such as teachers, librarians, youth workers, police officers, media producers, etc.
- d. Starting points of the MediaCoach training programme;
- e. Possible accreditation;
- f. Contents and curriculum;
- g. Shortlist of topics that the training programme should cover;
- h. Didactical methods and issues;

- i. Development of training materials (syllabus, literature, etc.);
- j. Organisation;
- k. Management;
 - Advisory Board;
 - Trainers;
 - Secretarial services;
 - Financial and administration services; and
 - Locations
- l. Marketing;
 - Development promotion materials;
 - Designing logo;
 - Developing website;
 - Distribution through multiple networks;
 - Email databases; and
 - Newsletters.
- m. Finances and possible business models;
 - Investments; and
 - Strengths and weaknesses analysis.
- n. Possible support by stakeholders.

Probiblio is a regional library organisation which offered a free meeting room for expert meetings. They also offered training rooms for the first runs of the training programme at a reduced price. The National Library Organisation offered to distribute the brochure of the training programme among their network as well as blogging about the initiative. As part of the training programme, the Educational Centre of Dutch Television offered to arrange a visit and tour of their museum. VIVES, an ICT and instructional publication, sold the training programme's brochure by enclosing it in their magazine at a discounted rate. VIVES also offered space for free in their stand at the NOT Fair, the most important educational fair that takes place every two years in Utrecht. The Ministry of Education offered to have the first certificates handed out by Joop Atsma, Member of Parliament and member of the Education Group.

Development of the training programme

Following the expert meetings, The Academy began incorporating all stakeholders' input into a final working plan, resulting in the following decisions:

Target groups

The Council of Culture advised training teachers as MediaCoaches. However, The Academy and other stakeholders agreed that the training curriculum should be made available to other practitioners. Therefore, the Academy agreed to develop a training curriculum that would be appropriate for teachers, librarians, youth employees, media creators and people who wanted to start their own MediaCoach businesses.

Learning goals National MediaCoach training

It became clear that, in addition to the four levels of competence, the preparation should include the following three learning objectives: Knowledge; Skills (media, communication, coaching, project management, pedagogical and didactical skills); and Activation (translating knowledge and skills into projects in the working environment).

Knowledge

The National MediaCoach, develops the necessary media literacy knowledge, and also promotes awareness of projects in a national and international context. The MediaCoach has a thorough understanding of major media-related issues that come up in societal debates, as well as the various perspectives and viewpoints on these issues. The MediaCoach is up-to-date on the latest trends in media and information technology, as well as related science outlets, blogs and studies, and young people's perceptions of media and media use.

Skills

The MediaCoach develops the skills needed in practice, such as coaching skills, communication skills, presentation skills, skills for the preparation of educational activities and the development of educational materials, and project management skills. Most importantly, at the end of the training, MediaCoaches can independently design and execute media literacy projects since they have acquired professional project management skills during the training.

Activation

MediaCoaches can anticipate the rapid development of new media technologies and the way media can play a role in their working environments. MediaCoaches developed their own vision and their own mentality concerning the prospective role of media in society. At this stage, the Academy also received important input from the SLO (Stichting Leerplan Ontwikkeling), specialising in developing didactical methods and training. This assisted in the development of different working methods (assignments, suitable methods) which the Academy could use to reach our goals.

Curriculum and study materials development

The Academy then developed possible assignments and working methods. It drafted the materials, such as a syllabus and a compulsory list of books and articles for the students to read. Finally, the Academy developed PowerPoint presentations for each session. The Academy also created a first study guide in which it explained the whole layout of the training programme.

Training development, planning and location

Based on the developed curriculum, the Academy decided to offer a training programme of 10 sessions of four hours each (14.00 – 18.00 hours) on Wednesday afternoons, as schools in the Netherlands are closed from 12.30 hours every Wednesday. This meant that teachers did not need to skip classes in order to attend the training programme. Another reason for a limited ten sessions was that the costs of the training programme would be reasonable for a large group of people. Simultaneously, the study workload of five hours (three hours a week of studying the syllabus and two hours reading books and articles) a week would have been viable for many professionals. In the last session, the students would take an official exam. The Academy decided to offer three National MediaCoach training sessions annually, starting in September, January and April.

The sessions needed to offer a good balance between teaching, group assignments and presentation. It is for this reason that the format of the sessions was as follows:

30 minutes	Tutoring, questions and answers and short discussion of new actual topics
60 minutes	Topic A
30 minutes	Assignment topic A in small groups
15 minutes	Break
60 minutes	Topic B
30 minutes	Assignment topic B in small groups
15 minutes	Completion and anticipation on next session

The chosen training locations should offer enough room for 25 students in a cabaret setting. The venue should be easily accessible by public transport, have ample parking and be in a central location. A projector and screen were also required. The meeting room should allow for small group activities and some separate break-out space to work on assignments outside of the meeting room. Preferably, the room should be wide and not elongated so that there is a minimum space between the trainer and the students.

Exam and National MediaCoach Certificate

The Academy decided to conclude the National MediaCoach training programme with a rigorous exam to test students' level of knowledge, skills and attitudes. When the students pass the exam, they are awarded the official National MediaCoach certificate.

Each year, the students need to participate in the refresher programme twice in order to renew this certificate annually. The exam consists of three components:

1. Media literacy Policy Plan

During the training programme, students develop their own individual policy plan, in which they indicate their goals and approach on media literacy improvement among their target groups in the short and long term.

2. Theoretical part 90 minutes (Knowledge and attitude)

3. Practical part 45 minutes (Skills and project management)

Development of quality marks

One of the tips the Academy received from stakeholders is that the Academy needed to develop quality marks for MediaCoaches who passed the exam. The Academy decided to develop two different quality marks:

Individual 'National MediaCoach' quality mark

MediaCoaches who completed the exam successfully are invited to use the quality mark in all their communication off- and online and the Academy provides them with a physical pin with the logo that they can wear on their clothes. Only certified National MediaCoaches are allowed to wear this quality mark. It also encourages these MediaCoaches to participate in the refresher programme every year. As soon as they do not participate twice a year, they lose the right to use the quality mark



National media literacy quality mark for organisations who hire a certified MediaCoach

The Academy developed a second quality mark that the Academy sends out to the employer organisations of participating MediaCoaches. They are allowed to use the special logo and additional stickers so long as they have a certified MediaCoach on the payroll. The statement communicated by the quality mark is that the organisation recognises the importance of media literacy for their organisation and that they included media literacy in their policy plans.

Development of a refresher programme

Since the media landscape is evolving rapidly, the Academy decided that certified MediaCoaches should update their knowledge frequently and be invited twice a year to refresher sessions. Another goal of the refresher programme is to activate



MediaCoaches to start new projects and meet, communicate and cooperate with their colleagues. To emphasise the importance of the refresher programme to the MediaCoaches, the Academy made attendance a compulsory requirement to be able to renew their certificates for the following year. To ensure that the refresher programme would serve each MediaCoach sufficiently, the Academy decided to offer two different formats:

An annual National media literacy Congress

The annual congress, held from 13.00 – 18.00 hours in the last week of March, starts with a plenary programme on a specific subject with expert speakers. After the plenary, the participants can choose three workshops from 20, offered by different organisations. The Academy now welcomes more than 450 participants each year.

Regional refresher days are held in October – December.

The programme foresees three hours of presentation of the latest media trends and supports the MediaCoaches in understanding their impact and how they affect their responsibilities as MediaCoaches. It welcomes between 20 – 45 people for each refresher day.

Testing and evaluation

After developing the curriculum, the study materials and the presentations, the Academy performed a test of the ten sessions with teachers, librarians and youth workers. The test was conducted over four days. Following those evaluations, the training programme, the assignments and the study materials were adopted.

Final decision

At this point, the Academy was convinced of the National MediaCoach programme's feasibility and potential success. The Academy claimed it would have been the quickest and most successful way to develop media literacy skills among young people in the Netherlands. All the necessary operational conditions to run a National MediaCoach training programme in the Netherlands were met.

Implementation Operations

Since it was clear that relying on any other organisation, including the government, would have slowed down the process significantly, the Academy decided to take full responsibility for developing the National MediaCoach training programme on its own. It meant that all costs had to be covered by the Academy.

Secretary office

Potential participants for the training were contacted by an office manager who would later serve as a portal for information and support in maintaining the student log and keeping track of their involvement in training and refresher programmes.

Management

Liesbeth Hop and Bamber Delver managed the operational development together. Liesbeth focused more on the business aspects, such as financials, administration, accreditation and marketing. Bamber was more specialised in creating a network of stakeholders and the contents of the training programme. It took another five months to launch the National MediaCoach programme, which took place in April 2007.

Finances

The Academy initially decided that the cost of the training would be 1.495 euros per participant, including all materials and certification. The demand for the training programme in the Netherlands was clear. In September 2017, there was a waiting list of 85 people. The price per participant was raised to 1.695 euros, and then increased to 1.795 euros. In the beginning, the Academy thought about alternative income streams, such as subsidies from the government or sponsors by corporate companies or even by other funds like lottery programmes or NGOs. The Academy chose to operate on its own budget, based solely on training fees to be able to proceed at its own pace.

In June 2008, the Academy received an amount of 60.000 euros from the Leonardo da Vinci fund of the European Commission in order to assist three other countries in developing similar MediaCoach training programmes. The participating countries were Sweden, Germany and Belgium. The Swedish and German partners worked on a local level in Stockholm and Köln respectively, and in the end were unable to establish national training programmes. In Belgium, it was more successful and there is a national training programme that launched with Media Animation in Brussels as the primary coordinator.

Although initially, to gain experience, the Academy would have been prepared to run the training programme with fewer participants, it was decided that it would run with a minimum of 20 participants. The Academy made the initial investment, which included planning expert meetings, designing the overall training curriculum, conducting the test training and establishing the organisation. Liesbeth Hop and Bamber Delver decided to bear these costs personally which amounted to around 25.000 euro. In addition to the time they invested, there were some operating expenses, such as management, the secretary's office and the marketing, as well as the costs of organising the training, payment of trainers, study materials, location and catering.

Administration

Part of the administration is handled by the management and part by the secretary's office. A website was also launched. Invoices are created automatically through the website (Virtue Mart) and a database of certified MediaCoaches in which their participation in the training programme and refresher programme has also been established.

Accreditation

From the beginning, the Academy invited the stakeholders who participated in the expert groups to be on their Advisory Board. They were asked to meet regularly and advise. Over time, the Advisory Board members changed but the Academy still met with them two or three times a year. They do not charge fees, rather the Academy invites them out for dinner every year. In order to be registered in the quality register of short-term vocational training institutes (www.crkbo.nl), the Academy had to, as an educational organisation, create the following procedures, according to specific guidelines: Evaluation Procedure; Examination Procedure; Independent examination commission of three people; Complaints Procedure; Independent complaints commission of two people; and Cancellation Procedure. Besides the organisation's accreditation, the Academy also required that their teachers be enrolled on the same registry as a trainer. All of their trainers are now accredited by the CRKBO.

Marketing, PR, acquisition and communications

The Academy aimed to develop a clear brand identity to convey potential target audiences. Starting with a colourful logo featuring symbols of the main human senses that are activated by the media. The National MediaCoach training programme's name was purposefully kept simple.

In order to reach out to the potential participants, the following means of communication were created: Study guide; Website; Training brochure; Email newsletters; and press releases.

The study guide consists of the following sections:

Study guide

1. Introduction and motivation;
2. Background information on media literacy and the Council of Culture;
3. The importance of media literacy for society as a whole and youth in particular;
4. Goal of national MediaCoach training;
5. Information on CRKBO accreditation of the Academy and validation by the Register of Teachers;
6. Who may participate in the training;
7. Training programme and costs;
8. The exam;
9. The certificate;
10. The quality marks (individual quality mark and for organisations who hire a certified MediaCoach);
11. Information on the refresher programme and the renewal of certificates;
12. Study load, study guidance and the Flipping the Classroom methodology;
13. Learning goals for and competences of a National Media Coach:
 - a. Knowledge

b. Skills

c. Attitude

14. Framework of the training programme;
15. Didactical working methods used during the training;
16. Layout of the sessions;
17. Introducing the trainers;
18. List of topics of the training;
19. Contact information; and
20. How to enrol in the training.

Evaluation and changing circumstances

Since the start of the National MediaCoach training programme, the Academy evaluated every single session of the MediaCoach training programme among the participants with a digital evaluation form. They were asked their opinion on different aspects of the training, such as the trainer's professionalism, the materials, the locations, etc. In addition, the Academy asked students to assess how they would incorporate their learning into their everyday working environment, as well as how they would assess whether they have been successful in their personal and professional objectives. Based on these evaluations, the Academy continuously improves the contents, working formats and programme setup.

The Academy also evaluates the evolving market conditions. It is important to analyse these changes and understand the possible consequences for the training programme. There was sometime the need for fast and efficient adaptation in the establishment of the programme.

Development of (social) media skills of target groups

In 2010, social media were launched in the Netherlands and so the subject was immediately added to the training programme. Given their familiarity with social media, new students were more media-wise than before. A shift was necessary from imparting teaching and lessons toward developing skills.

Competing training programme by National Library Organisation

In addition to the National MediaCoach training programme, the Dutch Library Organisation launched their own In 2012, "MediaCoach training for librarians" was launched in collaboration with Go Training, a commercial training company. It meant a change in the experiences of participants in the Academy's training programme. While the Academy had a balance of 40% of teachers, against 30% of librarians and 30% independent MediaCoaches and youth workers, it changed to 60% teachers against only 10% librarians and 30% independent MediaCoaches and youth workers. Because of this, the Academy adapted the contents of the training programme drastically. The refresher programme remained the same because many librarians in the Netherlands had already been trained by the Academy and remained loyal to the programme.

MediaCoach as a well-respected new profession

As from 2013, the Academy noticed that MediaCoach was considered a new profession. Completion of their training programme was regularly requested in job applications. Furthermore, a growing number of participants wished to start independent MediaCoach practices after completing the training successfully. They concluded that being a MediaCoach was a respected new profession which was well accepted in schools, libraries and youth work.

Further development of the training programme

The Academy further changed the training curriculum at various points in time in response to changing circumstances. In 2014, it was time to change the whole setup of the training because the participants were savvier and more mature, and therefore needed more challenges and activation. It took the following steps:

Flipping the classroom

The Academy decided to change the programme's setup by providing students more home assignments before the classrooms' sessions. They were invited to read material beforehand, watch documentaries online, study research reports or articles online, participate in an interactive assignment on the student Facebook page and prepare several individual assignments aiming at the topic of the following subject dossier. As a result, they could focus on in-depth analysis during the in-person sessions and reflect on their real-life experiences. Moreover, they could work on joint assignments.

By flipping the training programme, the focus shifted to the responsibility of students. It stimulated their participation, as well as collaboration and interaction. It created more individual responsibility; independent learning and it provided students more personal guidance by the trainers. This adaptation had a massive impact. The students expressed their gratitude to the Academy for providing a more in-depth look at a specific subject/dossier. An important improvement in the quality of students' work and exam performance was also noticed.

Expert trainers instead of generalists

Because of the increased initial knowledge of the participants, more specific expert trainers were needed. It was decided to hire specific expert trainers for the subjects' Dossiers; "Journalism and fake news", "Augmented and mixed reality", "Digital bullying", "Commerce and advertising", "Social media" and "Coaching skills".

Researching trends worldwide and staying up-to-date

In 2015, Liesbeth Hop and Bamber Delver traveled to Austin, Texas to participate in the biggest digital media event globally, the South-by-South West Conference, with more than 150.000 participants. Since then, the Academy participates in this event every two years with the goal to understand which future trends will influence the Netherlands and its citizens. The knowledge collected during these events is being processed into the National MediaCoach training programme in the form of new Dossiers or other adaptations to the contents of the training programme. Next to attending these events, they meet with well-respected futurists in the Netherlands on a regular basis in order to learn from their assessments of the present and future developments in technology and media. As well as their view on the consequences of these developments for education, libraries, youth work and other industries.

Conclusion

The Dutch MediaCoach Training Programme is an important success in the Netherlands and offers interesting knowledge and experiences in how to initiate and execute similar training programmes in other countries. However, adopting countries need a dedicated team to make the necessary adaptations to be successful in their own country. Besides assessing the local situation of socio-demographics, economics and politics, adopting countries need to analyse the need for media literacy among youth, parents and maybe even then elderly. They then need to create an organisation to take responsibility for the framework, the business model and the actual set-up of the training. Trainers need to be either generalists or specialists in one of the media literacy subjects covered by the programme. To promote the training programme and attract potential participants, communication skills and public relations are necessary. Cooperation with existing organisations, such as libraries, governments, and educational boards will help to increase the chance of success. Although the challenges are not to be taken lightly, the positive effects of the MediaCoach Training Programme are widespread and long-term. MediaCoaches are now considered essential in Dutch schools, libraries and youth care in a fast-changing and complex medialised world.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN MEDIACOACH INITIATIVE IN BULGARIA

Danail Danov

**Faculty of Educational Studies
and the Arts, Sofia University**

Abstract

The chapter sets out the implementation of the training activities of the European MediaCoach Initiative in Bulgaria by the project's national partner, the University of Sofia. The chapter begins with an introduction to media literacy in the Bulgarian framework before highlighting the European MediaCoach Initiative goals in Bulgaria. Moreover, it discusses the methods used to introduce the MediaCoach training in Bulgaria, including the planning, execution and key reasons for its success. The development of a flexible system for qualification and re-training of in-service teachers in media literacy, the incorporation of various aspects of media literacy, the facilitation of participants to use digital tools and platforms at all levels of education and improved awareness regarding the nature and role of media literacy had a significant role in the successful implementation of the programme. The training programme itself has received high praise from participants who have completed it, with nearly 60% rating it as "strongly positive and appropriate".

Introduction

Media literacy in Bulgaria is most often associated with the development of competences in new technologies. It involves the ability to properly understand the media regarding their environment, tools and content. This defined complex certainly includes media management – information and communication technology skills, media usage skills for different purposes and a wide variety of contexts, information seeking, verification and dissemination skills. In addition to information and communication technology, media literacy emphasises critical thinking skills and engagement in public life through the media. People who use the media need not only different technological skills, but also the ability to interpret and analyse various sources of information at the same time. An increasing number of international and national policy documents demand its inclusion at all levels of education and it has become an important part of the job descriptions, characterizing a considerable number of professions. Moreover, while it is undisputed that the use of information and communication technologies on a global scale is constantly expanding in both direction and depth, in many parts of the world, including Bulgaria, awareness is still lacking about the fact that new technologies should facilitate a better and more humane communication and technology should be regarded as a process rather than the end goal.

The abundance of information made accessible by the media and technology does not guarantee by itself an increased public knowledge. This paradox, at first glance, could pose a severe threat to democracy – not from violent attacks, but from apathy, passivity, unawareness and the habit of constantly spreading and exposing false and/or unethical information. In other words, technological advances, including the arrival of the media into a variety of aspects of personal life, make their users even more vulnerable. Therefore, citizens should have the capacity to use and benefit from the media and not be trapped in fake news, manipulation and deception. In a nutshell, media literacy could be defined as a methodology for understanding, absorbing and managing better media information, a roadmap for learning and teaching and an effective tool for upward personal and professional development.

Media literacy in Bulgaria

Despite its full membership in the European Union since 2007, Bulgaria remains far from the average standards for media literacy development in the Union, ranking 26th out of 27 countries. A fact which enables claims that EU recommendations and directives are not effectively implemented in the country. During the 2018/2019 school year, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education provided for first-time media literacy classes at school, but this became possible in a relatively small number of schools. No comprehensive strategy for the development of media literacy has been published yet, despite the fact that some specific directions in this area can be found in the Strategy for the effective implementation of information and communication technologies in education and science of the Republic of Bulgaria (2014-2020), adopted in 2014.

In general, the education system in Bulgaria is still unable to propose targeted and interconnected policies as part of a cohesive strategy for developing media literacy in the country and initiatives in this area are insufficient and primarily the result of academic and NGO representatives' efforts. This state of affairs was the main reason for participation in the European MediaCoach Initiative, which aimed at developing a sustainable model for implementing a media literacy training programme in five countries, including Bulgaria.

The absence of official and reliable information has been a serious obstacle to the attempts for a qualitative study of Bulgaria's media industry, which is characterized by a powerful and intensely opaque functioning. Print distribution and sales are also unclear. The radio sector also operates with a lack of clarity. Public data on media market shares of players and media groups is not supported. The situation with the online media is similar, where market shares of individual companies are not published. The lack of clarity on the actual origin of capital ownership in the Bulgarian media indicates a serious problem. Accurate data can hardly be commented due to transparency deficits – not all print publishers comply with the legal requirement to declare their true owners. The electronic media continues to take advantage of offshore business registration opportunities, rendering true, accurate identification impossible. The assessment of the state of media freedom in Bulgaria made by several reputable agencies, such as Freedom House, IREX and Reporters Without Borders, carried out over the last ten years, shows a steady decline, from 70th to 111th ranking among 190 countries surveyed. A White Paper on Freedom of Speech in Bulgaria was drafted and it claims that “the independent media and journalists in Bulgaria are under unprecedented pressure” and that “if the different groups of media problems are not addressed in a timely manner, the free media in Bulgaria will disappear completely”.

To conclude, it is important to mention that during the last 30 years, the Bulgarian media market has completely changed. However, its key technological, economic and social developments have hardly contributed to better media production and content quality.

The examination of the media environment has brought to the fore the growing need for increasing the level of media literacy in the Bulgarian society, both as a way of successfully counteracting some negative tendencies and as an opportunity to take advantage of the benefits that the modern digital media environment can offer, not only as means of personal and professional development but also for the establishment of a balanced and democratic society. In order to design a good media literacy training model, this led to the need for a thorough analysis of some of the basic social and demographic characteristics in Bulgaria. Our analysis for instance focused on the following:

- the profile and number of representatives of a specific target group aimed at by the project;
- the nature and number of digital media tools used (smartphones; tablets; laptops; personal computers);
- the number of teachers in primary schools;
- the availability of the stakeholders involved to support the implementation of this type of training, i.e. clarity about the attitudes of students, parents, teachers, school principals vis-à-vis media literacy development;
- the opportunities and challenges posed by the overall educational environment; and
- the possible sources of financial support for such a large-scale initiative.

Statistics for Bulgaria show that more than 51% of seven year old children get access to the internet and even before starting school and learning to read and write. The same study shows a significant increase over the six-year period in digital media use

by children – smartphones, tablets and so on. According to a joint study conducted in 2016 by UNICEF – Bulgaria and the State Agency for the Protection of the Child, 93% of Bulgarian children use the internet daily, 20% of children contact other people mainly through the internet. National statistics institute (NSI) data show that there are 1969 schools in the country as of 2017. The total number of students in the country is 587,800, of which a rate of 19% (nearly 112,000) study in the capital city of Sofia.

These data illustrate the widespread adoption of digital technologies and tools in Bulgarian society, including by children. And thus, there is a need to develop critical thinking skills, to understand, analyse and evaluate media content. Furthermore, it seemed that the majority of educators, parents and teachers also lack media literacy competences.

This was confirmed by surveys carried out among more than 300 teachers and over 100 students, conducted independently by members of the project team and leading non-profit organisations – including the Parents Association and the ARC Foundation – working in the field of digital media literacy. All of the above reinforces the conviction that it is precisely among in-service teachers and future ones that developing media literacy competencies should be the primary focus. A thorough and critical study of media literacy education as practiced at all levels of Bulgarian education was also needed in order to develop an effective learning programme capable of bridging current deficits. The research has shown that some media literacy-related subjects are taught in Bulgarian schools immediately after the first year in class and remain in the curricula until the last two years at school, i.e., 12th class. During their primary education (2-4 years at school), children take 32 classes (one class per week) in information technology. The curriculum aims at acquiring basic knowledge, skills and positive attitudes toward digital technology. The topics include “Computing Systems,” “Information Science and Information Activities,” “Electronic Communications,” and “Information Culture”. The learning goals focus on:

1. The acquisition of basic skills in the usage and application of digital tools such as personal computers, tablets, laptops, smart phones, etc.;
2. The acquisition of fundamental knowledge related to various information activities and clarity on the functionalities of the digital instruments;
3. The acquisition of basic skills in the usage of computer applications;
4. The introduction of essential ethical principles related to digital media usage; and
5. The development of positive attitudes toward digital technologies and willingness to use them in daily life.

However, an in-depth analysis of this approach shows that the achievement of the set goals remains quite problematic. Regarding Goal 1, children in the majority of households already seemed to possess the very basic skills needed to use digital media tools (Kanchev, 2016). Furthermore, teachers classify the technological tools currently available at Bulgarian schools as “out-of-date”, “sluggish”, and functionally “quite inappropriate” for everyday application, especially when compared to those that children use in their homes (interviews with 100 teachers conducted by the project team in 2019). The same is true for Goal 2 and Goal 5, at least when it comes to the way the Ministry of Education and Science implements them. The outdated school technologies offered to children create a perception among children, parents

and teachers that, “schools are not capable of meeting the needs of modern life” (interviews with 100 teachers conducted by the author in 2019). This mentality seems to be impeding full achievement of Goal 4, as it seems that obsolete technology in schools brings another negative attitude, i.e., “the strong irrelevance of school with respect to today’s realities”. Furthermore, since it is very common for many Bulgarian schools to lack modern digital applications that most children consistently use at home, this impedes the achievement of Goal 3, thus contributing to the creation of the aforementioned negative attitudes.

Middle school in Bulgaria starts in 5th grade and lasts till grade 8th. Concerning media literacy development, during that stage, students are obliged to study “Information Technology” over 34 classes per year (once a week). The main idea behind this is the improvement of already acquired digital skills. Hence, school curricula pay attention to areas such as computer systems, information technology, information activities, electronic communication and information culture. Students are expected to be able to create, process and disseminate text, graphics, photos, video, as well as to operate different digital applications freely. They also need to interpret different formats, translate text into graphics and vice versa and explain pictures, audio and video.

Furthermore, they should also be able to search for and verify information on the internet. In other words, in addition to technical skills, children should be able to interpret and assess media content. To engage at a greater degree with the various elements of media literacy, namely access, analysis, evaluation and design of media content, as this goes hand in hand with their critical thinking growth. The key goals currently set in school curricula include 1. Computer skills; 2. Skills to freely navigate the internet by using search engines; 3. Extended knowledge of computer system functionality and the skills to process and present information; 4. Skills to design and process text, graphics, pictures and video; 5. Skills to analyse the formats mentioned above; and 6. Skills to design, archive and retrieve computer files.

However, research based on interviews with 100 teachers shows that achieving these goals is again problematic. According to the interviewed teachers, over 95% of middle school students can already use computers and know their functionalities, over 80% can successfully navigate the internet using smartphones, tablets, laptops, etc. However, fewer than 50% are able to use digital tools for learning purposes, a fact that makes Goals 4, 5 and 6 pointless. Given the relatively high percentage of teachers who are not computer literate themselves, the current media literacy curricula becomes quite irrelevant. Moreover, the targeted skills remain unused in their application in the rest of the classes, i.e., Bulgarian language, mathematics, the sciences, humanities and foreign languages. The key reason for this is the lack of proper understanding of media literacy as a key cultural feature of 21st-century realities. Even high school education level (8th -12th grades) seems incapable of addressing it sufficiently well. During that period, students have to study a subject called “Information Technology”, offered once a week. Here, students have to focus on 1. Information technology and computer systems; 2. Text processing; 3. Graphic design; and 4. Design of integrated files, while the vital learning goals related to media literacy development include: a) Understanding the roles and functions of digital media instruments; b) Developing skills for using technology for problem-solving; and c) Observing safety and ethical rules.

The majority of students are already well aware of digital tools’ functions, although they use them for primarily for entertainment, interpersonal communication and search for information. On the same wavelength, they seem to lack skills to analyse

and verify information. The key explanation for this deficit is that students do not focus consistently on problem-solving during their schooling, real case studies are not used as a tool of education and media literacy formation is not adequately emphasised in the various subjects taught in school. Hence, even when it is part of students’ life experience, media literacy is hardly associated with school education. It is instead regarded as something students have learned away from school. In contrast, school education burdens them with the knowledge they claim is not relevant to real-life (Interviews with 100 students from Sofia University, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology and Faculty of Education Studies and the Arts). As for the last two years in school (grades 11 and 12), media literacy-related classes are not included in the school curricula, most probably because authors of high school curricula consider media literacy skills as already developed and hence unnecessary.

School curricula related to media literacy are more on paper than in practice, as many schools still lack adequate technology, personnel and digital media resources.

It is clear in the formation of proper attitudes toward netiquette (ethical usage of the internet) as well as toward the general awareness that nowadays, digital technology must be an indispensable part of the school learning environment because they are vital to both personal and professional development.

This impression is reinforced by efforts on the part of higher education to aid in the development of media literacy. Its overall understanding, however, seems to remain almost locked along the path of training students on technical skills (computing, programming, etc.) when it comes to engineering, informatics and graphic design, rather than to the idea that media literacy should also be understood as an innovative approach to education, as well as a form of civic engagement.

Some positive examples still are visible at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Sofia University; since 2019, a programme on media and information literacy has been offered to BA students in Communication Management. Similarly, students of the Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts at the same University got introduced to a BA Programme entitled “Pedagogy of Media and Artistic Communication”, strongly focused on training future teachers to use and apply digital media literacy at the kindergarten and primary school levels. Some of the other (over 50) universities in the country offer journalism, communications and media (American University, Veliko Tarnovo University, University for National and World Economy, New Bulgarian University, University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, etc.) but there, the focus is on computer technology, computer networks, information systems, software development, intellectual property, application of technology in business and administration, rather than on media literacy development and application. Both of these realities demonstrate that, while media literacy has started to be prioritised, there is still a long way to go before its benefits outweigh its challenges.

The EMCI training programme in Bulgaria

Aims, rationale and expected outcomes

Considering the characteristics of the Bulgarian environment and the findings of the analysis, it has been concluded that the successful implementation of the EMCI Project will be contingent on the achievement of the four goals mentioned below:

1. Creating a flexible system for qualification and re-training of in-service teachers in media literacy to enable them to integrate the approach in the disciplines they are currently teaching and thus to directly assist learners of different ages in the development of media literacy;
2. Incorporating various aspects of media literacy – pedagogical, psychological, journalistic, legal and ethical – into the education of future teachers by acquainting them with the essence of the approach as an alternative to traditional learning and teaching still widely practiced;
3. Facilitating participants to use digital tools and platforms at all levels of education; and
4. Improving awareness of the nature and role of media literacy as a core competence of the digital age in the Bulgarian society.

Achieving these goals has required the following specific tasks:

- theoretical analysis of sources, concepts and practices related to the development of media literacy;
- conducting a survey among teachers and students to reveal the trends in their media behavior regarding the:
 - types of media used
 - types of digital media used
 - goals in media usage
 - attitudes towards media and digital media
 - attitudes towards using digital tools in training and education
 - understanding the essence of media literacy;
- analysis of the environment for identifying strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges regarding the development of media literacy in Bulgaria;
- design of a training programme for the development of media literacy in Bulgaria;
- analysis of the implementation of the requirements of the European Union in the field of media;
- identification of the main factors that have enabled the successful implementation of media literacy in different national contexts and the presence of different specifics;
- analysis of media literacy development in Bulgaria;
- review of the Dutch MediaCoach experience in the development of media literacy in terms of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of policies implemented;
- adaptation of MediaCoach experience according to the Bulgarian context;

- identification of significant positive and negative factors that help or impede the formation of media literacy in Bulgaria;
- selection of a model for developing media literacy in Bulgaria; and
- preparation of media literacy training programme and inclusion of its elements at different stages of education.

This approach's implementation followed the Dutch model of media literacy formation at four key levels, i.e., Media awareness; Media understanding; Media attitude and Media Behavior.

The key outcomes envisaged the design of a sustainable model for media literacy development in Bulgaria far beyond the end of the project initiative. It meant not only to prepare a comprehensive training programme corresponding to the Bulgarian context's needs but also to organise a system and respective structures that can maintain media literacy formation in the future years and make it an inseparable element of education. Part of that plan has been the training of at least 100 people able to use, apply and coach media literacy in various professional contexts, as well as providing a system for their re-training and further qualification. Dealing with financial concerns in relation to future implementation of media literacy training has been the last but not the least problem to address.

Methodology

The conducted environmental analysis undoubtedly showed that the main target group of the programme should include: a) current and future primary school teachers as over 51% of the children in the country start accessing the internet before they go to school; b) current and future language teachers as foreign language teaching is given a high priority in the country and hence, learners at all level of education are obliged to study foreign languages; c) current and future journalists prepared to be engaged in educational programmes' production. In favor of such a decision, the three faculties of Sofia University (by and large the best higher education institution in the country) have all been involved in the project. Their Deans demonstrated a willingness to offer active support for the project implementation. It has also become clear that the intervention had to start from the capital city of Sofia, where due to the concentration of resources (administrative, socio-economic, cultural, educational, including more than half of the overall number of students in the country) and thanks to the prevailing positive attitudes towards media literacy formation, chances for the overall success of the project initiative seemed to have been the highest. This decision eventually impacted the training programme's content, as key areas such as media, education studies and technology application had to be included as learning topics.

Those topics have included:

1. Communication, knowledge, training; media and education, information literacy, media-literacy, digital-media literacy;
2. Creating a perceptive communication learning environment;
3. Critical thinking as a way to form media literacy; communication and learning styles;
4. Media and Journalism; news as topics, content and form.
5. Ethical, pedagogical, sociological, psychological and legal aspects of media literacy.
- 6 Working with digital media platforms for teaching and learning purposes
7. Teaching media literacy: key issues and questions
8. Media effects and their consequences; information disorders: nature, types and forms.
9. Online bullying and online manipulation; essence and ways to prevent and manage.
10. Managing information disorders through media literacy competence.

The material has been integrated into the curriculum for implementation in Bulgaria for students in Education Studies, Communication Management and Foreign Language Teaching, as well as current teachers who are enrolled as post-graduates at Sofia University. The programme, conducted by Sofia University professors, all attendees to the MediaCoach workshop held in Almere, the Netherlands (January 2019), comprises the above-listed topics (included and arranged in separate Dossiers) and totals 40 hours, half of which conducted in face-to-face mode and the other half, run independently.

Each topic is handled in a work package, called Dossiers, and is prepared in advance. Participants work with the Dossiers by reading, writing, completing hands-on activities, online, offline and in class during the face-to-face sessions. They also use the so-called method “flipped classroom” focused on individual work at home, allowing the smooth transfer of theoretical knowledge acquired online prior to face-to-face sessions. Then, during the face-to-face sessions, they can more effectively carry out the practical tasks and concentrate mainly on issues they find more difficult to do by themselves. The method encourages motivation and allows for a better acquisition of knowledge, skills and responsible attitudes related to the programme curriculum's respective topics.

During the programme, participants work actively to prepare their plan for using digital media literacy tools in their own working practices and/or conduct research on the chosen topic, approved by the course leaders. Along with the acquisition of the learning materials, this strategy enables students to begin the direct application of the acquired media competencies and MediaCoaching skills. The course is scheduled over a period of twelve weeks (including the exam). After successfully completing the training programme, subsequent to successfully passing the final exam, all participants receive a Certificate for Media Literacy Competence and MediaCoaching, issued by Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski”. Holders of this certificate also receive three credits following the Bulgarian educational framework requirements.

The overall dynamics of media and media technology development bring about constant changes in the very contexts where media literacy is used. The current circumstances require constant updating of the programme and therefore its design offers opportunities to refresh knowledge, skills and competencies already acquired. This is made possible by enrolling in an Up-Grade Course at Sofia University at the beginning of each winter and summer term. The course is face-to-face and lasts eight academic hours, with a brief course assignment that can take up to eight hours to prepare. Participants receive one credit and a renewed certificate for MediaCoaching that is valid for another two years after completing the course. Upon successfully completing the programme, each participant (MediaCoach) is equipped with a large spectrum of competencies based on knowledge, skills, better vision and positive attitudes vis-à-vis the application of digital media. During the course, the focus is on transferring the competencies acquired into measurable pedagogic and didactic skills, which allows each participant to see the benefits of the training in his/her own working environment.

1. Knowledge:

At the end of the programme, participants are familiar with the very essence and aims of media literacy, i.e., they:

- 1.1 Understand the dynamics of the relations between media, media technology, communication and education;
- 1.2 Understand the essence and goals of planning in education;
- 1.3 Comprehend the essence and structure of the news and the technology of their production;
- 1.4 Understand the characteristics of the leading social networks and digital platforms;
- 1.5 See the advantages and disadvantages of working in a digital environment;
- 1.6 Understand the technology of media content production; and
- 1.7 Assess the media critically from the viewpoint of quality and content.

2. Skills:

At the end of the course, participants will be able to:

- 2.1. Be work-focused and analytical;
- 2.2. Formulate learning goals and achieve objectives;
- 2.3. Communicate effectively with different target groups;
- 2.4. Prepare focused and catchy didactic presentations;
- 2.5. Apply digital media tools and platforms for personal and professional use;
- 2.6. Work safely with digital media tools and technologies; and
- 2.7. Work as trainers in media literacy themselves.

3. Attitudes:

At the end of the programme course, participants possess clear and positive attitudes about:

- 3.1. The essence and dynamics of development and application of digital media content, tools and environment;
- 3.2. Using digital media content, tools and environment for training, educational and personal needs;
- 3.3. The inter-relations between media, technology and education;
- 3.4. The need of constant self-development which requires updating and refreshing of knowledge, skills and competences related to digital media; and
- 3.5. The necessity to understand digital media content, tools and environment.

Regarding its content, the programme on media literacy requires the observation of the following principles:

1. The course content must be presented positively and constructively. Content should not focus mainly on the risks and dangers of digital media technologies but rather stress their advantages and usage opportunities.
2. The leading point is to reduce focus on preventing digital media users from possible dangerous effects but looking at raising their awareness about digital media's essence and the opportunities and challenges related to digital media application.

The implementation of the training programme took place in four runs; September-December 2019 (face-to-face), October 2019-January 2020 (face-to-face), November 2019-February 2020 (face-to-face) and March-June 2020 (partially face-to-face, partially online). Thus, by end of June 2020, 103 trainees were certified as having successfully completed the MediaCoach training.

Evaluation

The curriculum has been generally well-received by learners and media literacy practitioners alike. It has brought about the institutionalisation of media literacy curricula in higher education. As previously mentioned, media literacy courses are now being taught in some of Sofia University's under-graduate and post-graduate programmes: Media Pedagogy and Artistic Communication, BA and MA, Preschool and Primary School Education, MA; Intercultural Education and Intercultural Communication, MA (Faculty of Educational Studies and the Arts); Methodology of Foreign Language Teaching, MA and Language, Communication and Media, MA (Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology); Media Management, BA (Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication). Moreover, various aspects of this programme have formed the core of the dissertations works of eight Ph.D. students of Sofia University. On February 28th, Sofia University Publishing House launched a book, entitled Media Literacy: Experience Reconsidered" („Медийната грамотност – преосмисляне на опита“, Данов, Д. Издателство на Софийски университет „Св. Климент Охридски“, София,

2020), produced by some of the MediaCoach Project participants. In September, the same year, it has been followed by another book, named "Theoretical Aspects and Applied Research in Media Literacy" (Теоретични аспекти и приложни изследвания от областта на медийната педагогика“, София, Издателство на Софийски университет „Св. Климент Охридски“, 2020), a collective monograph gathering research results and analysis, conducted by Sofia University Ph.D. students and professors working on the issue. Both publications have offered a broad platform for academic discussion on media literacy and its significance. During the project's implementation, from 2017 to 2020, Sofia University hosted two large conferences (each with over 300 participants) focusing on creativity and innovation in education, with a particular emphasis on media literacy. In late 2017 an umbrella organisation called Bulgarian Media Literacy Coalition has been established and some of the project participants take an active part in its activity. Through this coalition, a huge number of practicing teachers in various subjects all over the country receive guidance and advice on how to incorporate media literacy skills in their everyday classwork. The above mentioned speaks in favor of the fact that more and more the field is getting a high priority.

The training programme itself has received high appreciation by the participants who have completed it, as almost 60% assessed it as "strongly positive and appropriate", 35% considered it "positive", and of the remaining, fewer than 5% felt neutral, with no respondents being unhappy about its implementation.

Lessons learned and next steps

The project objectives envisaged have included the following: a) Setting-up of a flexible system for qualification and re-training of practicing teachers in media literacy to allow them to integrate the approach in their everyday practices; b) Inclusion of the pedagogical, psychological, journalistic, legal and ethical aspects of media literacy formation into the education of future teachers; c) Enhancing the application of digital tools and platforms at all levels of education and life; and d) Improving the awareness of Bulgarian society about the nature and role of media literacy as a core competence of the digital age. The outcomes of the project in Bulgaria speak in favor of the fact that those objectives are being much more systematically aspired for. This goes along with the endeavors made by the Ministry of Education and Science to give a higher priority to the role of media literacy. Furthermore, although its National Strategy in this field has not yet been completed, the numerous activities run within the Bulgarian Media Literacy Coalition framework, the growing number of its members and the re-design of the academic curricula emphasising media literacy development, provide evidence for optimism.

The COVID 19 pandemic, which struck the country in mid-March, caused an unprecedented restructuring of education on all levels and led to a transfer of teaching and learning activities in online mode. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that now all education stakeholders started to better understand and value media and digital media literacy's role and significance. The pandemic and the overall project experience have reinforced the understanding that at least for the Bulgarian context, media literacy is not a subject that should be just another discipline taught at different stages of education. Instead, it must be viewed as a holistic educational approach that needs to be applied in all subjects, using media and digital technology as a tool for critical thinking.

Concluding remarks

Throughout the project's implementation, the Bulgarian team attempted to expose the nature of media literacy as a holistic educational solution that meets the digital 21st century's requirements and to provide a long-term model for the growth of media literacy in Bulgaria based on a comprehensive training programme and a working process that ensures its upkeep, maintenance and management over the next decade. Different modules of the programme have been incorporated into the academic curricula of Sofia University students and the 'flipped-class room' and 'coaching' approaches are now being practiced by a large number of professors and academic staff. The numerous research and practical tasks included in the Dossiers developed have presented adequate training tools that can be used in the future. The environmental analysis conducted during the project can serve as a benchmark, both at the managerial level to formulate educational strategies and policies and at the level of applied research and as reference ideas in preparing training courses. The model for implementing the programme as a postgraduate qualification and the planned – every three years – modules for updating media literacy competencies allow for its sustainable development and continuous upgrading of content related to the ongoing opportunities and challenges that technological development implies. Last but not least, the numerous academic research and publications related to the project activities have enriched considerably Bulgarian experience in media literacy development.

References

- Bulgarian Institute of Statistics Databook, (Данни на НСИ), <http://www.evestnik.com/>
Bulgarian Institute of Statistics Databook (Данни на НСИ от 22.05.2018), вж. <http://www.nsi.bg/>
Danov, D. (2020), Theoretical Aspects and Applied Research in Media Literacy, Sofia University Publishers, Sofia, 2020 (Данов, Д. (ред.) Теоретични аспекти и приложни изследвания от областта на медийната педагогика, Издателство на СУ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София, 2020)
Danov, D. (2019). A Model for Application of Media Literacy Education, in CEECOM Conference Reports, Sofia University Publishers, 2020 (Данов, Д., Модел за прилагане на обучение по медийна грамотност в България, Сборник с материали от Конференцията на CEECOM, 2020, ИСУ).
Danov, D. (2017). Digitization and Social Change, in D. Veselinov ed. is. 17, 1017 (Foreign Language Education, Данов, Д., Дигитализация и социални трансформации, в «Чуждоезиково обучение», (ред. Д. Веселинов), София, ИСУ, бр. 1. 2017)
Danov, D. (2020). Media Literacy: Experience reconsidered, Sofia University Publishers (Данов, Д., „Медийната грамотност – преосмисляне на опита“, Издателство на СУ „Св. Климент Охридски“, София, 2020)
Danov, D. (2018). Socialization and Media Culture in Danov & Tsanev ed. Blended Learning-Modernization of Education through Technology, Junior Achievemnets Publishers, Sofia, 2018 (Данов, Д., Социализация и медийна култура, в Смесеното обучение-модернизиране на образованието чрез технологиите, ред. Д. Данов, Н. Цанев, издателство Junior Achievements, С. 2018)
Danov, D. (2019). Planning Modern Education in D. Veselinov ed. Pedagogy of Good Opportunities, Sofia University Publishers, 2019 (Данов, Д., «Планиране на съвременното обучение», в „Педагогика на добрите възможности: Смесеното обучение-модернизиране на образованието чрез технологиите“ (ред. Д. Веселинов), София, ИСУ, 2019)
European Commission. (2018). EU Resolution (Резолюция на ЕП, достъпна на български език на адрес), <https://nellyo.wordpress.com/2018/05/03/freedom-3>
Freedom House. (2018). Freedom House Report on Bulgaria (Доклад на Freedom House): <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2018/bulgaria>
IREX. (2018). Annual Report (Доклад на IREX за 2018) (<https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2018-bulgaria.pdf>)

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN MEDIACOACH INITIATIVE IN CYPRUS

Marios Vryonides ^a

Christina Stavrou ^b

Charis Xinaris ^a

Thomas Photiades ^a

^a **European University Cyprus**

^b **Cyprus Pedagogical Institute**

Abstract

This chapter presents the European Research Programme (ERASMUS +) implementation, The European MediaCoach Initiative in Cyprus. It is not unusual for small European countries, such as Cyprus, to benefit from initiatives that are the result of knowledge transferred from more technologically and socially advanced European societies. This may take the form of developing and adapting practices and processes from existing standards established in other European countries. Within this context, the successful Dutch MediaCoach Initiative has been implemented in Cyprus. This chapter begins with an overview of the meaning and history of media literacy in Cyprus, as well as how it has changed in recent years. It then goes on to look at the goals, reasoning and anticipated outcomes of the EMCI Training Programme in Cyprus, before concluding with a review of the implementation's performance. As an aftereffect of the way this initiative was implemented, the chapter will examine the implications of the way the COVID 19 pandemic has affected the deployment of the project from mid-March 2020 onwards and the importance of new media in the lives of people and especially young ones during the general lockdown, house confinement and social distancing.

Introduction

Cyprus is a modern and thriving democracy with a stable socioeconomic infrastructure and a highly developed telecommunications network. Information Technology has penetrated all levels of economic and social life and especially the education system at all levels. Some of the world's leading IT-based companies have chosen Cyprus as their base for expansion in the region, while an efficient island-wide IT network has also been established. The Cyprus population has one of the highest percentages of graduates in the world and young people seem to be more competent media users than older age groups and people with lower-level formal education.

Media and information technology play an increasingly dominant role in everyday life in Cyprus. In 2012, an increase was recorded in the use of information technologies in enterprises and households in Cyprus as well as by individuals. According to the surveys of Information and Communication Technologies Usage and e-Commerce in Enterprises" and Information and Communication Usage in Households and by Individuals" by the Cyprus Statistical Service, the percentage of the enterprises with internet access increased to 98.3% in 2012 compared to 82.3% in 2004, while DSL was the most widely used type of internet connection. Regarding households, 69.7% had a personal computer in 2012 compared to 63.9% in 2011. During the first quarter of 2012, 61.8% of the households had internet access compared to 57.4% in the same period of 2011. The findings showed that 62.7% of the population between 16-74 years of age used a computer during the first quarter of 2012 and 57.8% of the population were regular internet users, meaning they accessed the internet at least once a week.

The most popular online activities were finding information about goods or services and sending or receiving emails. Regarding the use of internet technologies in the education sector, the statistical data show that in the academic year 2012-2013, the ratio of computers per 100 pupils was 15.9% in primary education, 28.5% in secondary education and 12.7% in tertiary education. Cyprus was prompted to participate in a study conducted by a group of European media literacy expert organisations about a decade ago due to the widespread acceptance of internet-based information technology in Cypriot society and the late arrival of the idea of media literacy in the educational system.

Besides the information presented above, it is very interesting to examine the internet use among the Cypriot population. In the most recent European Social Survey that was conducted in Cyprus in 2018/19 (ESS Round 9: European Social Survey Round 9 Data, 2018), among the various questions that people aged 15 and above were asked, the following question was included: "People can use the internet on different devices such as computers, tablets and smartphones. How often do you use the internet on these or any other devices, whether for work or personal use?" In this survey, a representative sample of nearly 800 people participated. The tables below present a very clear picture of internet usage in the country.

	Response	Percentage
1	Never	33.5 %
2	Only occasionally	4.0 %
3	A few times a week	5.9 %
4	Most days	4.0 %
5	Every day	52.5 %

Table 1: Percentage of internet use (total sample)

Using a scale 1=Never to 5=Every day, the mean scores were examined with gender, age and educational level as independent variables. Table 2 shows that while there is a slight difference in the means scores, men and women equally use the internet at work and for personal use.

Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	3.49	1.82
Female	3.29	1.87

Table 2: Internet use by gender

Differences occur when one examines the use of the internet by age group and educational level. As one might expect, younger people and the more highly educated use internet in their daily lives, reaching almost daily use. For those over the age of 50 and those who did not attend higher education, the use is less frequent and, in many cases, none whatsoever. This is reflective of a situation found in most parts of the world whereby younger generations are often characterised as Digital Natives (see Thomas, 2011) born and raised in the period after the 1990s when there was an explosion of IT use. This has been more evident, especially with the penetration of internet technologies and services in all aspects of people's lives in the professional sphere as well as for personal use for communication, entertainment and many other daily activities.

Age group	Mean	Std. Deviation
15-20	4.65	.75
21-30	4.86	.53
31-40	4.63	.94
41-50	4.31	1.28
51-60	3.79	1.71
Over 61	1.98	1.60

Table 3: Internet use by age group

Highest level of education	Mean	Std. Deviation
No formal schooling	1.06	.31
Up to primary school	1.62	1.32
Up to lower secondary school	3.26	1.85
Up to upper secondary school	3.69	1.71
University degree	4.27	1.36
Post graduate degree	4.70	.93
PhD	5.00	.00

Table 4: Internet use by educational level

Media Literacy in Cyprus

In such a small country that has seen rapid transformations in the area of digital technology since the early 1990s, media literacy education is relatively new. During the past decade, various initiatives and innovations, especially in education, have changed the media landscape of the available technical know-how and expertise in the way these new technologies transformed people's everyday experiences. How people use the media and the quality of the interactions that people (especially youth) have with the respective content that is available online is not well developed. In other words, the modalities of use are an open question to which scholars, educationalists, youth coaches need to probe.

As a result of the media's pervasiveness in all facets of life, education has been impacted at various levels. Firstly, it activated the engagement of educational institutions in several funded projects whose purpose was to facilitate the cultivation of a media literacy culture, especially among youths. Secondly, both primary and secondary school curricula were enhanced with subjects that explicitly or implicitly addressed concerns related to media literacy.

a. Initiatives and Projects

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI), on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC), is responsible for Media Information Literacy (MIL) in Cyprus. According to the vision of the CPI, MIL starts from the issue of access to media and expands towards critical use, aiming to work towards preparing critical and responsible users of digital technologies and developing a culture of safe use of digital technologies for all children, both as consumers and as producers of media information. As the coordinator of the Working Group, the CPI has a leading role responsible for the implementation of Action 14 – Awareness under the Cyprus Cyber Security Strategy. The Working Group brings together 24 stakeholders from both the public and the private sector in Cyprus^[46].

The Action 14 Strategy includes a number of actions and activities aimed at informing and training a variety of population demographics, including parents, teachers, researchers, youth, students and the general public. The main output of the Working Group was the National Strategy for a Better Internet for Children in Cyprus, while the emphasis is on actions that aim to promote critical thinking and acting, such as misinformation, bullying, critical assessment of information found, advertising, etc. CPI also participates and supports the effort of the European network on Internet Safety across Europe, Insafe and the international network Inhope for combatting online child exploitation, xenophobia and racism.

Based on the needs identified by MOEC, all relative actions on MIL are organised by the CPI, along with the development of educational material and trainings. CPI actions include preparing teaching and learning packages/modules (e.g., text, video, games, interactive games, authentic news, publications), training of trainers, school projects, data gathering for research purposes, etc. Teaching and learning packages/modules are updated every three years, but some primary lines remain unchanged. For example, having children participating as coaches (e.g., safe internet coaches) is an essential element of the CPI Media Information Literacy actions.

Train-the-trainer activities in 2005; training includes a training session on methodology and basic principles for all trainees and, subsequently, trainees focus on specific age groups (e.g., preschool-grade 4, 10-14-year-olds, 14+). An advanced training level is currently about to be implemented on a blended learning basis (face-to-face meetings, online meetings), which will focus on ten packages/modules, including media information literacy.

Finally, a special curriculum for Primary Education, named “Digital Literacy Curriculum for Grades 5 and 6”, was requested and was developed by the CPI and it was validated by January 2019. According to this unique curriculum, around 16 teaching periods would be available for digital media literacy skills, including misinformation, sexual exploitation of children, bullying and critical choice of information. Other skills will also be provided for, such as coding, e-portfolio, etc.

b. *In school curricula*

In *Primary Education Curricula* media literacy is an integrated subject covered mainly by Greek Language Education, Health Education and Design & Technology Education. The amount of time devoted to teaching media literacy varies, depending on the subject area and/or the teaching unit prepared by teachers. In Primary education curriculum, the approach to media literacy is largely in line with the concepts of protecting and supporting youth, understanding media language and reflecting critically on it. However, there is no evidence that the curriculum’s objectives and standards are being met and educators and inspectors who have been questioned about the problem are concerned that teaching media literacy is being neglected.

In *Secondary Education*, a programme fostered by the Pancyprian Organisation for the promotion of Literacy in collaboration with the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture is the programme “Supporting the Libraries”. The main objective of the programme was to assist the public library in developing reading strategies for community groups to provide for the development of information literacy, to facilitate access to the internet, help adults to become familiar with new technologies, support educational processes, provide social cohesion opportunities through various cultural activities organised, to cater for the inclusion of socially excluded persons (economic migrants, foreigners, repatriates, etc.) as culture is the means of approach in intercultural basis.

c. *Other media literacy policies and initiatives*

By law, media literacy policy in Cyprus comes under the responsibility of the Broadcasting Authority⁴⁷ which aims to safeguard the right to freedom of expression and help the public to have resistance/self-defense mechanisms against the messages received from viewers and listeners. The Office of the Commissioner for Electronic Communications and Postal Services⁴⁸ responsible for digital strategy and security, including Action 14 for Cybersafety, as one of its missions is the regulation of the provision of networks and services in the markets of Electronic Communications and Postal Services. Several bodies/organisations are involved in the Action 14 initiative.

d. *The COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on social and educational processes*

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unpredictable and unprecedented effect on the smooth functioning of daily social activities and the healthy, smooth operation of educational institutions at all levels of education, in addition to its immediate impact on public health and global health systems. Moreover, during the lockdown, many social activities and social processes had to continue in online mode, making media literacy issues more timely than ever. Concerning education, the restrictions imposed on teachers and students as a measure to limit the spread of the virus highlighted the need to resort to digital methodologies that had developed rapidly over the last decade.

It is expected that the world after the crisis will be different from the world before. Not only in school, but in many aspects of our lives, digital technology will be an important part of students’, teachers’ and parents’ daily lives. That makes the need to be educated on safety issues when dealing with these media become paramount and extremely timely.

The EMCI training programme in Cyprus

Aims, rationale and expected outcomes

The preceding chapters vividly illustrated how digital technologies have penetrated all aspects of society in all spheres of social life namely education, work, entertainment, information and carrying out everyday chores. All these indicated the need to introduce a successful model of coaching young people to adopt best practices for media use and media consumption during their daily lives.

Other European countries acknowledged the need for a programme that would provide encouragement and help through media literacy as well. To translate the popular Dutch National MediaCoach Programme to its national background, the Cypriot team partnered with national teams from four other European countries: Romania, Portugal, Greece and Bulgaria. To a great extent, the MediaCoach Training Programme for Cyprus was based on the fundamental ideas of the Dutch MediaCoach Prototype. As happens in knowledge transfers, the adaptation to the national context preceded an environmental assessment, which pointed to the particularities found in Cypriot society. These needed to be considered in order to make the localisation of the Programme a success. The Cyprus MediaCoach Programme aimed to train teachers and other professionals to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills related to new Media and enhance their competencies to promote Media Education to children and young people. More specifically, participants were expected to:

- become competent in using digital technology, digital communication tools and networks in order to locate, assess, use and produce information;
- be able to read, comprehend and analyse information in various forms critically; and
- become competent in preparing coaching activities for promoting students’ and young people’s media literacy and critical thinking regarding media.

47 <http://www.cрта.org.cy/default.asp?id=24>

48 <http://www.ocepr.org.cy/>

The Programme in Cyprus was designed based on a number of assumptions regarding media literacy and critical thinking regarding media. The content knowledge was promoted innovatively and knowledge was offered at an academic level regarding media, which included social media as an integral element of the Programme. Critical thinking was the primary focus, as the Programme was designed based on the necessity to train adults in order to be able to empower younger people to learn to doubt about things, decide what to believe or do and learn what kinds of questions they should ask (McPeck, 1981; Ennis, 2011). The underlying rationale was that of combining knowledge of media content and critical thinking based on the assumption that “critical thinking is not a content-free general ability, nor is it a set of specific skills” (McPeck, 1990, p.27).

Therefore, the Programme focused on contemporary phenomena and social issues regarding media, particularly social networks and was organised around ten central thematic units:

- Media literacy;
- Shaping the identity of young people on social networks;
- Algorithms and techniques for extracting information from social networks;
- The advantages and disadvantages of advertising in the digital world;
- Misinformation, disinformation and fake news;
- Online games in children’s lives;
- Bullying through the use of social networks;
- The influence of social networks on the mental and physical health of young people and their role in the family environment;
- The phenomenon of sexualisation on social networks; and
- Participation, participatory culture and hate speech.

Methodology

The Training Programme in Cyprus was initially designed and implemented using a hybrid learning model, which combined face-to-face classroom approaches with online sessions and activities. The Programme was offered using a blended learning mode from October 2019 until April 2020. Following health and safety guidelines and protocols due to the COVID-19 pandemic, from April 2020 onwards, the Programme was offered entirely online, combining online meetings (webinars/ workshops) with online asynchronous activities. The Moodle Learning Management System owned and run by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute was used to deliver the implementation of the Training Programme both in its blended learning mode and later in its fully online modality. To follow their EMCI modules and all related activities, each group of participants was enrolled in a separate section.

a. The blended learning approach – Rationale and Implementation

Having a blended learning approach in mind, part of the content and instruction of the EMCI Training Programme was provided through digital and online media allowing trainees to monitor certain features such as time, location, direction or pace of the learning. This approach was considered to be ideal for the Training Programme, as it facilitates a simultaneous independent and collaborative learning experience” (Vryonides, 2020), which better fits the needs and the realities of professionals who have to accommodate multiple and conflicting roles when invited to participate in training programmes. The blended learning approach would allow the pace of learning to become more personalised and the material to continue to be available and accessible to trainees. After considering the particularities of the Cypriot national context, a blended learning approach was adopted. These particularities referred to significant aspects regarding the implementation of the EMCI project in Cyprus, such as:

Profile of participants

The vast majority of trainees were expected to be teachers. Indeed, they were the leading target group of the project. As expected, given the demographic of teachers in Cyprus, most of them were women with a heavy workload and familial and social obligations. Also, participants were expected to have adequate competency in using ICTs and particular interest in the topic (intrinsic motives), as in-service teachers in Cyprus have no immediate (external) gains from MediaCoach or any other benefits i.e., certification. Considering the participants’ profile, blended learning was deemed appropriate, as it offers a degree of flexibility in the way trainees structure their busy schedules.

Digitally Enhanced Learning – A new culture in Higher Education and in-service training in Cyprus

Digitally enhanced learning is a growing culture pursued in Higher Education in Cyprus. At the European University Cyprus (EUC) hybrid courses, blended learning and digitally enhanced learning are emphasised as a response to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth initiatives for the “Digital Age”. There is also a new emphasis on using such an approach for the in-service training programme for teachers in Cyprus. As the official body of teachers’ in-service training in Cyprus, the Pedagogical Institute is currently working on offering a blended learning training programme for teachers (e.g., series of seminars voluntarily during after-school time). Blended learning approaches and digitally enhanced learning substantially improve learning experiences in face-to-face courses and provide better, more meaningful, more practical and valuable experiences with cutting-edge knowledge of the field (Louca, 2020, Vryonides, 2020). This blended learning approach was considered suitable for the EMCI Training Programme. It allowed community building beyond in-class meetings, offering collaboration and peer feedback opportunities. Also, participants could meaningfully keep in touch throughout the week and the trainer could trace each participant’s work on an ongoing, formative assessment process. Therefore, it was decided that the Programme should make good use of blended learning approaches, restructuring the course in ways that have added value.

Content of the European MediaCoach Initiative

The project's aim was to prepare professionals to become MediaCoaches of students and youth in general. The nature of the project, which evolved in the era of social networking, focused to a great extent on new technologies and was connected to digital media content. Consequently, it was decided that it was important not only to focus on new media but also to use digital tools to implement the Training Programme.

The Training Programme in Cyprus was implemented in three cycles; each cycle being offered to different groups of participants (see Table 4). A number of meetings were delivered face-to-face, while the rest of the meetings were online.

Cycle	N° of groups	N° of F2F meetings	N° of online meetings	Meeting day(s)	Start period	End period	N° of trainees
1 st Cycle	2	5	5	Monday/ Tuesday	October 2019	January 2020	17
2 nd Cycle	1	4	6	Tuesday	January/ February 2020	April 2020	17
	1	2	8	Friday/ Saturday	January/ February 2020	April 2020	8
	1	3	7	Monday/	January/ February 2020	April 2020	20
3 rd Cycle	1	0	10	Monday/	January 2021	February 2021	33
TOTAL							95

Table 4: Cycles of the EMCI Training Programme in Cyprus

As shown in Table 4, each cycle was implemented over a 3-month period and it included ten meetings, either face-to-face or online. For the last cycle, there were no face-to-face meetings.

b. Participants – Trainees

In Cyprus, the EMCI Training Programme was offered mainly to all-level teachers working in public and private schools. Teachers constituted the main target group as they have access to students and young persons (from six to 18). Participants were mainly teachers working at public and private schools of primary, pre-primary and lower-secondary and upper-secondary education, but some trainees had access to youth outside schooling, such as students attending a School of Theology and other professionals such as Youth Unions officers. Tables 5, 6 and 7 present their profile in terms of age group, gender and professional status.

Gender	N°	%
Men	24	27.0
Women	65	73.0

Table 5: Gender of participants

Age group	N°	%
22-34	30	37.7
35-44	38	42.7
45-54	20	22.5
50+	1	1.1

Table 6: Age-group of participants

Professional status	N°	%
Primary School teacher	28	31.5
Secondary School teacher	25	28.1
Private School teacher	13	14.6
Instructor Tertiary Education	4	4.5
Parent	3	3.4
Other (students, etc.)	16	18.0

Table 7: Professional status of participants

c. Mode, Process and Content

The EMCI Training Programme included ten synchronous training sessions (at least half online) and asynchronous work on Moodle in between meetings (pre-reading, brief exercises and discussions during each meeting), which kept trainees engaged during the course. Each meeting was dedicated to a different topic, focusing on academic content regarding the topic and practical activities regarding aspects of designing and implementing coaching activities for students and youth. The ten different topics were prepared as digital Dossiers and their content (articles, videos, activities, discussions) were uploaded on Moodle. Pre-readings were accessible to participants before the scheduled synchronous meeting in the context of the flipped classroom methodology adopted from the Dutch MediaCoach Initiative. The first meeting was both a crash training for Moodle and a session focusing on one of the topics.

The first cycle of training (October 2019 – January 2020) included the following ten topics, each of them corresponding to one session/meeting:

- Bullying through the use of social networks;
- The influence of social networks on the mental and physical health of young people;
- Algorithms and techniques for extracting information from social networks;
- Shaping the identity of young people on social networks;
- Online games in children's lives;
- The Advantages and Disadvantages of Advertising in the Digital World;
- The role of social media in the family environment;
- Misinformation, disinformation and fake news;
- Linguistic diversity and communication in the digital world; and
- The phenomenon of sexualisation on social networks.

Following a formative assessment of the first cycle of training (in which trainees commented on the relevance of each topic), several changes to the topics were agreed. According to an evaluation, having a separate session/dossier on media literacy and critical thinking, as well as one session/dossier on the subject of online engagement and hate speech were critical. Therefore, two topics were merged into one (the role of social media in the family environment and the influence of social networks on the mental and physical health of young people) and a new dossier on participatory culture replaced the session/dossier regarding linguistic diversity and communication, hate speech and online participation. The list of the ten sessions/Dossiers was therefore finalized as follows:

- Moodle (crash training) – Media Literacy;
- Shaping the identity of young people on social networks;

- Algorithms and techniques for extracting information from social networks;
- The Advantages and Disadvantages of Advertising in the Digital World;
- Misinformation, disinformation and fake news;
- Online games in children's lives;
- Bullying through the use of social networks;
- The influence of social networks on the mental and physical health of young people and their role in the family environment;
- The phenomenon of sexualisation on social networks; and
- Participation, participatory culture, hate speech.

The Dossiers were rich in content on each topic: scientific articles, academic studies, websites, dissertations, PowerPoint presentations, videos and photos, critical questions to be discussed and practical activities to be completed during the session/meeting, chat comments, forum discussions and other activities to be completed afterwards. The variety of activities before, during and after each session allowed continuous involvement and active participation of trainees.

The material has been available and accessible to trainees since the sessions/meetings and they still remain so. A total of 40 hours were required for the completion of the Programme.

d. Trainees' assessment – Assignment

Trainees were expected to submit a teaching unit, which could be used to promote media literacy to students and/or young people in general and could be implemented as a learning experience that would last for two to three teaching periods (about 90 to 120 minutes). The teaching unit could focus on any aspect of the topics presented during the sessions/meetings and it was expected to meet the following criteria for a pass or fail mark:

- A short description of the aspect/issue/phenomenon (about 200 words, importance, what we already know about it, what are goals of society or education regarding it);
- Learning goals or expected learning outcomes (maximum three) to be stated in a clear and assessable way;
- A series of activities that would be suitable for the age group selected (e.g., lower-secondary education students) and could be applied to promote critical thinking of the selected age group. Activities should be in line with the expected learning outcomes and be described in detail (e.g., how to be organised, what is expected from students to do, what questions should

be discussed). The series of activities should be well structured (simple to complex);

- All teaching/learning material to be used for the implementation of activities should be included. Teaching/learning material should be suitable for the age group chosen but should also correspond to the learning outcome pursued; and
- A Maximum length of ten pages, including all material (readings, worksheets etc.).

Trainers prepared feedback based on the above-mentioned criteria.

The feedback for each teaching unit, including suggestions for improvement, was uploaded in Moodle and has been accessible by the trainee/participant who prepared it since then.

e. Refresher course

A refresher course was organised in April 2021. The refresher course focused on discussing contemporary issues and how they might be included in schools and young people's lives. Also, many MediaCoaches who have implemented MediaCoaching activities with students or young people were invited to share their experience with the other MediaCoaches.

Evaluation

At the end of each Cycle of the Training Programme, trainees were asked to complete an online evaluation questionnaire aiming to capture the participants' overall experience in several issues such as the following:

- How important they thought the topics presented were
- How ready they felt to organise sessions for the topics presented
- Level of satisfaction with the content and methodology
- Level of satisfaction with the quality of assignment

a. Importance of topics/sessions

On a 5-point scale, participants reported how important they thought each topic/session was. As shown in Table 8, a high percentage of participants (> 60.0%) reported six topics as very important, while three topics were considered to be less important as a low percentage of participants considered them as very important (< 48.2%).

How important do you think the following topics are	Very important %
Shaping the identity of young people on social networks	69.6
The role of social media in the family environment	69.6
Bullying through the use of social networks	67.4
Misinformation, disinformation and fake news	67.4
The phenomenon of sexualisation on social networks	66.3
The influence of social networks on the mental and physical health of young people	65.2
Online games in children's lives	56.2
The advantages and disadvantages of advertising in the digital world	48.2
Linguistic diversity and communication in the digital world	43.8
Algorithms and techniques for "extracting" information from social networks	36.0
Secondary School teacher	25

Table 8: How important were the topics presented

b. Readiness to organise sessions for the topics presented

Upon completion of the training, each group of trainees was also asked to report how ready they felt to organise training sessions for children or young people on a 6-point scale. As shown in Table 9, participants reported a high or very high readiness to organise sessions for five topics (>82%). For three of the topics, participants reported a high or very high readiness (>71%). For the topic related to algorithms, fewer trainees reported being a lot or quite a lot ready to organise sessions (>42.9%).

How ready do you feel to organise sessions for	A lot / quite %
Misinformation, disinformation and fake news	89.3
The influence of social networks on the mental and physical health of young people	89.3
Bullying through the use of social networks	85.7
The role of social media in the family environment	83.0
The Advantages and Disadvantages of Advertising in the Digital World	82.1
The phenomenon of sexualisation on social networks	78.5
Online games in children's lives	75.0
Shaping the identity of young people on social networks	71.3
Linguistic diversity and communication in the digital world	66.1
Algorithms and techniques for "extracting" information from social networks	42.9

Table 9: Readiness to organise sessions

c. Level of satisfaction with the content and methodology

Table 10 shows the level of satisfaction with the Training Programme's content and methods among participants. A large number of participants expressed high or very high satisfaction with the content and methods used, as well as several other factors such as the material, discussion time, active participation, examples given and the relation between theory and practice.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements	Agree a lot/ agree %
The methodology used was satisfactory	89.3
The time devoted to the discussion was satisfactory, based on the total time available	89.3
The examples presented helped the participants to better understand the content of the seminars	85.7
The content of the seminars met my expectations	83.0
The seminars gave the opportunity for active participation of the participants	82.1
The material used / given was appropriate	78.5
The seminars presented examples that supported the theoretical background of the workshops	75.0
There was a good connection between theory and practice	71.3
The seminars presented techniques, practices and strategies applicable in the classroom	66.1

Table 10: Level of satisfaction with the content and methodology

d. Level of satisfaction with the quality of assessment

In partial fulfillment of the Training Programme, trainees participated in online activities after each topic/meeting. Moreover, as a final assignment, they submitted a teaching unit, which included training activities suitable for students or young people, planned to promote media literacy. Trainees reported a high level of satisfaction (>91%) with assignment time management and assignment content correspondence with the topics presented. However, fewer participants (58.9%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the opportunities to improve the assignment after feedback.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your assignments	Agree a lot/ agree %
The topics were given on time	89.3
The knowledge required to do the assignment was covered by the topics taught	89.3
The deadline for submission / presentation of the assignment was reasonable	85.7
The assignments helped me understand the topics	83.0
There was guidance from the instructors regarding the elaboration of the assignments	82.1
It was possible to improve the assignment	78.5
The seminars presented examples that supported the theoretical background of the workshops	75.0

Table 11: Level of satisfaction with the quality of assessment

Lessons learned and next steps

Media literacy and critical thinking of young people are becoming increasingly imperative as essential aspects of social and economic life which are experienced via digital and social media. Moreover, the COVID-19 health crisis has dramatically highlighted the importance of empowering citizens, younger and older, on several issues related to critical media literacy. The implementation of the European MediaCoach Initiative in Cyprus has facilitated a significant development in the promotion of media literacy among professionals who work with students and youth. In Cyprus, a small country with a population of less than a million, nearly 100 professionals, mainly teachers of all levels of education, were trained as MediaCoaches, in order to become competent to organise sessions and coaching activities to empower students and young people in media literacy. Data collected from the participants of the EMCI Training Programme in Cyprus also documented the importance of critical media literacy, as a number of topics related to media literacy have been considered very important.

A number of experiences have been distilled from the implementation of the European MediaCoach Initiative in Cyprus. These should be actively considered in future plans and actions. Developing and implementing training programmes regarding media literacy should align with the national context and the current conditions in various fields (social, educational etc.). In Cyprus, the assessment of the national context and peculiarities and the implementation of the MediaCoach Training Programme highlighted a number of interrelated issues that should be taken into consideration when designing and developing a media literacy training programme.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on dynamic opportunities regarding the training of teachers and other professionals. The main considerations are discussed below:

- The profile of the potential trainees should be taken into consideration when developing and offering training programmes, as it allows identification of participants' needs and steers the development of a feasible training schedule (e.g., professionals' busy schedule).
- Motivation of professionals is a significant factor that should be investigated if media literacy training is to fulfill the benefits and expectations of educators, and of teachers in particular. In Cyprus, teachers, who are the main category of professionals being trained as MediaCoaches, have no extrinsic benefits from participating in a MediaCoach Training Programme. Therefore, both the content and methodology of the training programme should cater to other intrinsic motives such as their personal interest in media literacy and focus on elements of the perceived development of own knowledge and skills and the appraised personal and professional development.
- The blended learning approach, combining face-to-face with online meetings and activities, is a powerful mode of implementing training programmes for professionals with familial and social obligations, allowing a degree of flexibility over time, place, and pace. Surprisingly, when the EMCI Training Programme was offered entirely online due to the COVID-19 pandemic (third Cycle), a significantly larger number of participants attended the Programme, despite the limitations of fully online training. This is probably related to the flexibility that online courses offer. Also, the increased number of participants in the fully online Training Programme might indicate stronger interconnection between the online implementation and the nature of the EMCI Training Programme itself: it is a programme that focuses on digital media content and media literacy and, to a great extent, utilises new technologies.
- The content and methodology of media literacy training programmes should be in line with professionals' expectations. In Cyprus, as professionals, teachers expressed the importance of attending training programmes which combine theoretical/academic content and practical ideas, examples and techniques and offer rich opportunities for discussions, argumentations and active participation.

Concluding remarks

The European MediaCoach Initiative's implementation shows that investing in the long-term sustainability of media literacy necessitates a systemic approach. This is particularly valid in in countries like Cyprus, where teachers and other professionals with access to youth have no external incentives to attend media literacy training programmes. Therefore, a systemic connection between education policies, schools, curricula and contemporary societal issues needs to be established. If media literacy issues were directly included in the national curricula of the various levels of education, the training of teachers on MediaCoach would be much more attractive. Trained MediaCoaches could act as multipliers to train others (e.g., in school-based professional learning projects). Promotion of relevant topics by media and collaboration with other bodies, such as youth councils, students' and parents' associations, could create more opportunities for sustainable promotion of media literacy actions that reach students and youth.

In Cyprus, the collaboration between the European University Cyprus and the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute proved very productive and will most likely continue in the future for similar projects. The Training Programmes to prepare MediaCoaches will most likely continue to be offered on a voluntary basis and be evaluated to identify further the sustainable effectiveness of the programme. Moreover, establishing an annual refresher course for MediaCoaches is a promising prospect for them to meet regularly as a community of practice and exchange experiences and practices.

References

- Ennis, R. H. (2011). Critical Thinking: Reflection and Perspective, Part I. INQUIRY: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines, 26(1).
- ESS Round 9: European Social Survey Round 9 Data (2018). Data file edition 3.0. NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data, Norway – Data Archive and distributor of ESS data for ESS ERIC. doi:10.21338/NSD-ESS9-2018.
- Louca, L. (2020). European University Cyprus: University instruction is changing radically. Available online at: <https://www.sigmalive.com/news/market-news/620420/europaiko-panepistimio-kyprou-i-panepistimiaki-didaskalia-allazei-rizika?fbclid=IwAR1gEzFboHyQFbQgUYpJEKkA4zJYt5qMoCUwTQPvznIH6uevgORTaypSEw> (Accessed May 1, 2020).
- McPeck, J. E. (1981). Critical Thinking and Education. Oxford: Martin Robertson.
- McPeck, J. E. (1990). Teaching critical thinking. New York: Routledge.
- Thomas, M. (2011) Deconstructing Digital Natives: Young People, Technology and the New Literacies, New York: Routledge.
- Vryonides, M. (2020). Adaptability and Innovation: Transforming students' learning experiences with e-learning methods at European University Cyprus, Available online at: <https://cyprus-mail.com/2020/09/10/adaptability-and-innovation-transforming-students-learning-experiences-with-e-learning-methods-at-european-university-cyprus/> (Accessed, September 10, 2020).
- Vryonides, M. (2020). Innovative learning experiences for basic skills in prison education, R-SocEdu: Research in Sociology of Education, No. 1, pp5-21

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN MEDIACOACH INITIATIVE IN GREECE

Ourania Xylouri

Athens Lifelong Learning Institute

Abstract

The chapter illustrates the implementation of the training activities of the European MediaCoach Initiative in Greece by the project's national partner, the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute. The steps taken for the planning, organisation and delivery of the training seminars are addressed, as well as the main reasons for their success. Key factors included the quality of the information and awareness-raising campaign to attract potential trainees, the expertise of the trainers, the quality of the educational materials and the training methodologies and the connection between theory and practice, in the deployment of all training sessions. One hundred professionals, primarily from formal education, were trained as MediaCoaches for children and youth in Greece, through well-planned activities that were highly rated by all parties concerned and will be maintained after the project's completion.

Introduction

This chapter describes the measures taken by the project's national partner, the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute, to introduce the European MediaCoach Initiative in Greece. Its main goal is to illustrate the training activities in the country and their outcomes. Following the project's Upscaling and Replication Strategic Plan, the Institute carried out a thorough environmental assessment regarding the more relevant aspects to be considered before any media literacy educational intervention took place. The assessment results are presented in Section 2, focusing on the national context and background related to media literacy policies and education provisions. Media literacy was not high on the educational agenda when the MediaCoach project commenced. However, this was not considered an obstacle since the target groups who were approached to participate were well aware of the necessity of teaching media literacy skills and critical thinking among children, youth and adults, including educators.

Section 3 describes the preparation of the training, its objectives and chosen subjects. In Section 4, the implementation is described.

A Preparatory Phase was essential for selecting trainers, developing educational materials and a multi-channel information campaign. In Greece, the actual Implementation Phase was two-fold: The First Implementation Phase with two training programmes taking place online and the Second Implementation Phase with three training programmes taking place online using the Moodle platform. Following that, minor changes and inconsistencies between the two phases were clarified, accompanied by statistical data at both phases. 101 people participated in the MediaCoach training programmes. In section 5, the evaluation process and the results of the evaluation are also presented. The overall evaluation of the different aspects of the training programmes was very high, with participants describing the training as "inspirational", "very interesting" and "essential". The skill and instructional styles of the trainers, the content of the educational materials (the "Dossiers"), the educational methods and methodologies and the relation between theoretical understanding and its daily practical application earned the highest assessment scores. Finally, in Section 6, the potential possibilities of the project's sustainability for the future are discussed.

The MediaCoach training programmes have proven to be one of the most popular educational provisions offered by the Institute, with potential participants requesting to participate in future seminars. The Institute intends to continue providing the training programmes after the EU funding expires, since there is a strong need in the country for media-literate adults who are in a position to multiply the knowledge provided and reach as many teenagers, teens and youth as possible. This section concludes with a brief identification of the "lessons learned" from this experience and some recommendations.

Media Literacy in Greece

From a public perspective, Media literacy policy^[49] is long-overdue and a complicated issue in Greece. For many years, it mainly remained under the academic umbrella as a theoretical school of thought about media and a thematic field scarcely addressed within formal education. However, it gradually became clear that other stakeholders

should also be involved, public and private, focusing on the emerging behavioral patterns of users-consumers-producers that are multiplexed and interconnected with the media industry.

Nowadays, with media convergence and especially with social media in the spotlight, media literacy is spread over various thematic areas: from critical thinking to online media addictions, popular culture to news literacy, and content creation and digital media to new platforms of expression and aesthetic norms (film literacy, digital storytelling, active citizenship). Media gradually acquired a strong civic identity by offering an "open and equal voice" to all citizens.

The public body responsible for media literacy in Greece was the Hellenic Audiovisual Media Institute (IOM)^[50]. The Institute, founded in 1994, was the public service authority on media literacy under the Public Service Broadcaster ERT SA (ERT) and supervised by the then Secretariat General of Communication-Information-Mass Media (former Ministry of Press) until 2011. In partnership with the Ministry of Education, IOM conducted the first national study on media literacy in the formal educational setting that year. After its abolition in 2011 amidst the Financial Crisis and its merge with ERT, the Greek government had set up no other media stakeholder in the form of a public service body, casting a tremendous setback for media literacy education policy in Greece.

However, this changed in 2016 when two public policy entities, namely, the Ministry of Digital Policy and the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs (from now on Ministry of Education), mainly through the Educational Radiotelevision Department have taken on the role of monitoring digital and media literacy in Greece, as follows:

a. Since its establishment in 2016, the Ministry of Digital Policy has approved more than 220 sectoral ICT projects, including digital literacy projects with a budget of almost 800 million euros and has also invested another 700 million for the development of fiber optic networks across Greece (including to primary and secondary schools). This is expected to contribute to better implementation of digital and media literacy actions in Greece since the Ministry considers it a central pillar of its Digital Strategy. It has also approved actions related to the improvement, completion and supply of ICT equipment in Greek schools, especially in rural areas in terms of new computers, creating ICT labs and upgrading existing ICT infrastructure and equipment.

b. The Secretariat General for Media & Communication has as a primary duty for the promotion of audiovisual and media policies in Greece and the EU and therefore approaches media literacy as a lifelong learning skill within digital inclusion for all citizens. It monitors the regulatory framework and advocates for self-regulatory actions, making it a public necessity for broadcasters and media service providers. In this context, the Secretariat has been acting as a national "intermediary" to the EU community (EC, CoE) through various working groups on media (EU Presidencies, EC Media Literacy Expert Group, CDMSI) as well as interacting with key media stakeholders, such as UNESCO, OECD and regulatory bodies, contributing to the formation of a sustainable EU policy and legislative agenda. Additionally, it is also a member of media and information literacy networks, such as UNESCO GAPMIL

49 Public Policy Status of Media Literacy in Greece: <https://cameraziano.net/2017/01/17/public-policy-status-of-media-literacy-in-greece/>

50 Greek National Report: http://meldeproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/MeLDE_IO1_GREEK_NATIONAL_REPORT.pdf

(Global Alliance of Partnerships on Media & Information Literacy) and GAMAG (Global Alliance on Media & Gender).

Since 2016, when the Secretariat General for Media & Communication (the public authority in charge of overseeing all media in Greece) took over the media literacy agenda, it is clear that the government in Greece increasingly recognises the importance of media literacy, emphasising the social notion of critical media literacy, which is connected with active citizenship and strong democratic societies. However, until today, there were no legal mechanisms for measuring media education policies in Greece. In principle, Greece adopts the EC media literacy policy through the EC Recommendation, the AV Media Services Directive and the relevant Council Conclusions.

c. The **Ministry of Education** approaches media literacy within the context of formal education and school skills. Media literacy has not been identified as an autonomous object of study but mainly as a cross-curricular, interdisciplinary subject and within ad hoc school projects. In 2016, when the EMCI was launched across Europe, there has been an invigorated public discourse for integrating media literacy into the curriculum within the total school reform public consultation. Among other cognitive fields, media and digital literacy were put forward for inclusion into the new curriculum, recognising the powerful, shaping note that media plays in students' lives. However, no further plans have been unveiled thus far for an autonomous integration into Greek schools.

d. The **Educational Radiotelevision – Edu.TV**, the official department of the Ministry of Education, is quite active in practicing media literacy for both educators and students. Through projects and synergies, such as MEDEANET, the European School Radio, student's film competitions, prizes and awards, training workshops on new media and online material, Edu.TV has elaborated a dynamic presence encompassing media with digital literacy and ICT. Furthermore, in 2016, Edu.TV launched an agreement with the public service broadcaster, ERT SA, on the production of joint educational broadcasting programmes for children, a project connected with different aspects of media literacy, mainly the content production and media use for communicative, civic engagement and social skills and competencies. Judging from the measures and projects implemented in Greece, it is apparent that media education has been mainly presented as a tool for enhancing the educational agenda with a more active, experiential learning approach using new technologies, based on the student's own experiences and knowledge base.

Despite repeated recommendations in that direction, the Ministry of Education has been dismissive of a comprehensive and long-term media education approach in the curriculum. According to the 2016-2021 National Digital Strategy, Greece plans to improve the digital skills of human resources by supporting research and innovation (R&D) in ICT. Still, the country remains low compared to other EU members, mainly because of lower R&D spending and fewer specialized ICT staff. The actions planned are to strengthen the research infrastructure and implement new technologies, products and services and eliminate the brain drain phenomenon that took place during the crisis years and provide incentives for young researchers to stay and work in Greece.

Greece ranked 27th out of 28 EU member states in the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) in 2018^[51]. The DESI is a composite index measuring progress in the digital sphere through five components, including internet connectivity and use and digital skills. The use of digital technologies and the use of the internet have risen dramatically in the last 20 years, in Greece it has become an integral part of everyday life. Still, the percentage of internet users in Greece is low compared to other European countries (67% in Greece, over 81% in the EU). Digital skills remain low, especially for seniors and lower-educated citizens, which form a large proportion of the population. In particular, only 21.1% of people aged 55 or over regularly use the internet, while the corresponding EU average is 43%. Simultaneously, the use of the internet by the lower-educated population in Greece reaches 22.7%, while the corresponding EU average is 46.2%.

Based on the above data on media literacy levels and media literacy education, incorporating digital and media literacy into education is an absolute necessity. Such action would facilitate prepare students for the future and equip them with the necessary digital skills to enter the job market. In order to achieve this, it is critical that teachers become more familiar with the terms and the importance of digital and media literacy.

However, although teacher training seems to be an effective effort towards achieving higher media literacy levels, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is only optional for teachers in Greece. Although many training programmes have taken place to train the trainers, the fact that CPD is not compulsory for teachers render the task more difficult. Additionally, there is no formal accredited school training framework for in-service teachers on media education as a core subject. Media literacy courses do not exist as a separate subject in Greece formal education. It is cross-curricular incorporated into the national curriculum in both primary and secondary education.

Still, there is an increasing emphasis on media literacy in Greece, highlighting the social notion of critical media literacy and education, linked with active citizenship and strong democratic societies. When the European MediaCoach Initiative was launched in Greece, the national affiliate, the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute, conducted research on the importance of media literacy education and coaching for young people, which could be summarised in the following results as the fundamental elements of the national context.:

- Media literacy was not a core course in formal education;
- Media literacy levels were lower than the average European ones;
- Teachers were not adequately trained to introduce media literacy issues to their students;
- Parents were preoccupied with certain phenomena on the internet (for example, privacy issues, social media and cyberbullying) but did not have the skills and the knowledge to address them; and
- Media literacy was considered among the key fields that young people needed to be educated in the face of current developments and advancements on the Web.

51 https://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/image/document/2018-20/el-desi_2018-country-profile_eng_B43FFD54-01E0-8E08-F2E10DCA6B668AAE_52218.pdf

The Institute concluded that the EMCI would indeed fill in a specific gap in the provision and development of media literacy initiatives and that adults dealing with children and adolescents in everyday life (mainly as parents and teachers/educators) would be willing to participate. This was indeed the case. No difficulties were encountered during any phase of the implementation of the project and as soon as it was launched and publicised, different groups of adults expressed their willingness and commitment to participate in it and become MediaCoaches for younger populations.

The EMCI training programme in Greece.

Aims, rationale and expected

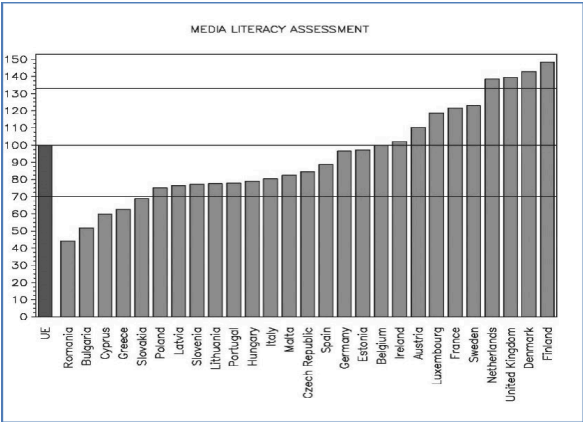
Media literacy is a critical component of an inclusive and participatory media environment, as well as a fundamental component of media pluralism, active democracy and democratic societies. To fully enjoy fundamental rights such as freedom of speech and access to information, people must master media literacy competencies. At the EU level, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) demands the promotion of media literacy in all segments of society as well as the evaluation of its advancement. However, despite some advancements during in recent years, many challenges remain in measuring media literacy levels. Media literacy is a multifaceted and interdisciplinary topic. As a result, the method for calculating it has proven to be very complex. The majority of research at the European level has focused on what is easier to measure and what lies in the interest of the media industry, including technical skills, online access skills and media consumption (Celot 2015)^[52]. The question about how to measure the more complex and critical issues, such as the capacity of people to evaluate and produce media messages across EU countries remains open^[53].

With this in mind, the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute conducted a study to identify the needs related to the development of media literacy skills in the Greek community, as well as experts who could assist in the development of media literacy skills in among young children and youth. The research focused on the available, limited, data from national and/or European articles, reports and papers, statistical data from services supporting children and their families on media literacy issues and interviews carried out with parents and children on the same issues. Taking into account that the available data on media literacy levels among the Greek population remains scarce and partial, the most basic and relevant findings, upon which the national EMCI training was built, were the following:

52 Celot, Paolo (2015). Assessing Media Literacy Levels in Europe and the EC Pilot Initiative

53 https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/45004/RSCAS_2017_01.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

a. The figure presenting the media literacy levels among the EU-27 Member States in 2009, according to the most comprehensive survey in the field of media literacy, led by EAVI and commissioned by the Directorate General Information Society, Media and Media Literacy Unit of the European Commission^[54]:



Value Guide	Level
above 130	Advanced
70 – 130	Medium
below 70	Basic

Table 1: Media Literacy Assessment Value Guide

According to this assessment, Greece scored below 70, demonstrating that media literacy skills among the population are basic.

b. Later research, such as the “Mapping of Media Literacy Practices and Actions in EU-28” (2016)^[55], has shown that among the five projects that were selected as case study examples, only one targeted children and one targeted professionals, while no project targeted parents.

c. The Greek Safer Internet Centre (SIC) aims to promote safer, responsible and better use of the internet and mobile technologies among children and young people, interacting with all stakeholders to bridge the digital divide between home and school, and

54 Celot, Paolo et al. (2009). Study on Assessment Criteria for Media Literacy Level: A Comprehensive View of the Concept of Media Literacy and an Understanding of how Media Literacy Levels in Europe should be Assessed. Brussels, European Commission.

55 <https://rm.coe.int/1680783500>

between generations. It offers information, assistance and encouragement to young and adult internet users through its Helpline (which provides assistance in cases of harmful content and behavior) and the SafeLine (which is the Hotline for reporting illegal content and conduct on the internet). The data retrieved from Annual Reports from the Center and its two Helplines and supported the needs analysis carried out by the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute can be summarised as follows:

- In 2018, the Helpline received over 1.600 calls, 32% of which were related to issues of gaming overuse and 18% to issues of cyberbullying. 13% were related to problems regarding privacy violations on the internet and 12% were phone calls where the caller was looking for advice on excessive internet use. The majority of calls (61%) came from adults, mainly parents seeking advice and help on a problem their child was struggling with regarding the internet, while professionals and minors contacted the line at a rate of 19% and 20%, respectively.
- SafeLine, the Hotline for illegal internet content, has received 34,590 complaints in its 15-year course (2003- 2018), with the last 5 years ranging on average to 4,000 annually. Of these, 13,000 were forwarded by the line lawyers either to the competent Greek authorities (Prosecution Cybercrime) or to European agencies (INTERPOL through the database ICCAM of INHOPE⁵⁶).

Those findings were considered when deciding on the national EMCI project training content.

d. The 2018 research carried out by the Greek Safer Internet Center looked at the internet habits of 14.000 students aged between ten and 17 years old. The main goal of the research was the recording of children's online behaviours and drawing conclusions to be used as guidelines for the Center's information and awareness raising campaigns for children, their parents and teachers. The primary conclusions can be summarised as follows:

- A significant proportion of parents in Greece view their children's internet usage as careless, with no restrictions or guidelines in place, including for primary school children or younger;
- Children use social media at a younger age (often before the age of ten), opening accounts several times and claiming a false age, apparently without their parents' knowledge. A large percentage adopt unsafe practices such as accepting friends requests from strangers, meeting in person with people encountered online and sharing very personal images on the internet; and
- Almost half of the children in the study confessed to neglecting their hobbies for the sake of the internet and one in three children is believed to have an internet addiction problem.
- The majority of children start going online at the age of 7-8 years, which is constantly decreasing over time. One in five children starts to go online at a very young and sensitive age of 4-6 years.
- In addition to the aforementioned data, which revealed certain deficiencies in media education and media literacy levels among children, youth and their parents, and issues that cause anxiety and stress among the same populations,

the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute conducted a small-scale needs analysis. The analysis aimed to assess and specify the need for a media literacy initiative to support adults in order to better educate children and youth on the correct use of the internet. Ten parents and ten children aged between 10- 16 years old participated in the analysis, which was carried out in the form of a semi-structured interview. The basic findings from these interviews are summarised below:

- The primary issues that preoccupied parents concerning the use of the internet by their children were online privacy, cyberbullying and online gaming. Children were more preoccupied with their extensive use of social media, the peer pressure to participate in online activities and addictions to different online activities;
- All participants pointed out that schools and/or adults efficiently trained in media literacy should be responsible for informing children on the correct use of the internet and its positive and negative aspects;
- The majority of parents pointed out that they lack the skills and knowledge to guide their children on using the internet effectively. Even though they declared their intention to participate in a potential training seminar to support them on the best ways to educate and inform their children on the proper and healthy use of the internet and new media, they felt uncertain regarding the proposed duration (40 hours of training) due to their professional and personal obligations. Fewer hours would be more suitable for them in view of their everyday schedule; and
- The majority of children were aware of the potential dangers when being online but were unaware of specific behaviors to protect themselves (e.g., privacy settings, sharing their personal data, etc.).

It became clear that a media literacy programme was more than necessary. Adults, including parents and professionals dealing with children and youth on an everyday basis, needed to gain skills and knowledge on how to support children on the use of the internet, while children who use the internet from a very young age, without the guidance and support of an adult, needed to develop critical thinking skills on different aspects of their most common online activities. As a result, the key goal of the national EMCI training intervention was to inform and educate adults about children's and youth's online activities, to equip them with the skills to direct and support children and to prepare them to become multipliers of information and skills related to the safe and critical use of the internet by younger populations. Based on the research the topics, which were decided to be included in the national training programme, are presented in the following Table:

⁵⁶ <https://saferinternet4kids.gr/ethsies-anafores/saferinternet4kids-2016-2019/>

N°	Topic-Title
1.	New Media and Media Literacy. Coaching and MediaCoaching
2.	Online Privacy and Protection
3.	Media Addictions
4.	Disinformation and Fake News
5.	Cyberbullying
6.	Social Media and E-identity
7.	Sexualisation in the Media
8.	Online Gaming
9.	New Trends in the Media: Influencers, Online Shopping, Hate Speech and Dark Web

Table: EMCI training programme topics for Greece

These topics covered the fundamental issues related to media use by children and youth in Greece, based on the data provided by the relevant Helplines and by the interviews with parents and children. Following the Dutch example, it was decided that the topics should not be neither more nor less than nine to cover all relevant issues and avoid extensive duration of the training, which would discourage potential participants to take part.

These nine topics formed the core of the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute's nine educational files, some of which were co-produced with the corresponding team from the project coordinator, the European University of Cyprus. It was decided that each educational file would be called "Dossier", following the Dutch practice and because the word is extensively used in the Greek language as well, meaning a "file containing documents in paper form". Each educational file included three sections:

- The "Written Dossier" contained relevant and updated information on each topic with a specific focus on the Greek reality (for example, relevant statistical data and bibliography). Each file was developed by the Institute's team and by those professionals who would undertake the training of MediaCoaches at a later stage;
- The "Online Dossier" which included links to more articles, research, videos, video talks, interviews with experts and additional educational materials found on the web. Each Online Dossier contained at least five such materials to cover different aspects of the topic discussed and provide more learning opportunities to potential participants; and

- The "Interactive Dossier" containing exercises, further topics for discussions, assignments and quizzes for participants in order to practice their knowledge and skills on the topic. It was decided that the participants would deal with specific assignments from each topic in order to promote interactive learning and experiential learning. Each Interactive Dossier included at least four assignments and participants would have to select one, prepare their answers and send them to their trainers for evaluation and comments.

Finally, it was determined that all prospective participants who wanted to earn the "Certificate of Attendance" and the MediaCoach Certification should be asked to complete a final assignment. Instead of organising exams, the Institute agreed to request an "Action Plan" from the participants. This Plan would present four different activities which participants plan to organise and implement as MediaCoaches. These activities could include social media campaigns, training seminars for children/parents/ education professionals etc., sensitization campaigns, presentations, workshops, etc. The purpose of their Action Plan would be to practically implement the skills and knowledge gained through their training in real-life situations relevant to their respective professional roles. The Action Plans will be evaluated and commented on by the Institute's implementation committee.

Methodology

The delivery of the EMCI training programme in Greece was based on the findings of the following documents/ processes:

- the Environmental Assessment described the existing status of media literacy levels in the Greek population, their media consumption, their skills related to the critical evaluation of media and the existing programmes and initiatives related to media literacy;
- the Needs Analysis, as described in the previous section, offered valuable data on the topics which preoccupy children and adults on the use of new media;
- the research on the relevant professionals who would be willing and fit to undertake the potential role of a MediaCoach;
- the methodology implemented by the Dutch MediaCoach programme as a highly acclaimed practice at a European level with considerable positive results in the field of media literacy and MediaCoaching;
- the specifics of the Greek educational system, including lifelong learning and adult training practices and procedures;
- the experience of the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute in providing training programmes to adults and especially adults who deal with minors, children and adolescents as professionals on an everyday basis (including teachers, trainers, psychologists, social workers, librarians, counselors, coaches and careers); and
- the availability of human and educational resources for the support of the training programme.

Considering these facts and data, the Athens Lifelong Learning Institute proceeded to design the training programme. This process included the following three phases:

a. Preparation Phase:

During this phase, all the preparatory work was carried out, namely:

- Information and sensitisation campaign. The campaign included a) the design and uploading of more than ten messages on the Institute's social media platforms on the content and the methodology of the training; b) newsletters sent to more than one hundred recipients (organisations and relevant professionals); c) mails to stakeholders in the field of Primary and Secondary education, media literacy, to bodies representing professionals (e.g., school teachers and librarians) and to relevant public authorities; d) telephone communications with teachers, trainers, headmasters at Primary and Secondary schools; e) announcements to relevant undergraduate and postgraduate University students; and f) announcements and publications on the local media.
- Selection of the trainers to undertake the training of MediaCoaches. Following the Dutch example and bearing in mind best practices in the field of adult training, it was decided to recruit two trainers for each of the training programmes. The criteria for the selection of trainers were their educational and professional background (in the fields of media, education, psychology, coaching, counseling and/or other relevant areas). Their participation in the MediaCoach training of trainers, hosted by the Dutch partner and their availability to co-produce the training materials and teach the potential groups of MediaCoaches. The following trainers have been selected:

a. Ourania Xylouri, a sociologist with extensive experience in capacity-building activities and who initiated the EMCI project idea and developed the EMCI project implementation plan; she also participated in the training of trainers and participated in the training of trainers in the Netherlands,

b. Xenofon Chalatsis, who is a psychologist and a trainer of adults with extensive experience in the education of minors. He is an expert in media issues and has participated in numerous European projects as a researcher, an educator and a project manager,

c. Anthi Sidiropoulou, who is a University Professor in the Department of Media and Communication at the University of Athens with a specialization in communication psychology. The topic of her doctoral dissertation was the investigation of adolescents' relationship with the internet and the issue of addiction. She has also studied Sociology at the University of Cyprus (2004) and completed postgraduate studies at the Department of Sociology of the University of Crete, and

d. Alexia Kalogeropoulou, who holds a Psychology (BSc) and Human Communication (MSc) degree from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, has long experience as a professional journalist and communication specialist. She has also extended research in social media studies as a PhD candidate at the University of Athens.

The selection was an ongoing process and Anthi, who was the trainer for the first two groups, was later replaced by Alexia for the two final groups.

- Creation and development of the nine Dossiers for the respective topics.

The selected trainers cooperated in the development of the educational content of the Written, Online and Interactive parts of each dossier in an effort to include all relevant information simply and concisely, fit for adult learners. For some of the Dossiers, trainers cooperated with the relevant team from the European University of Cyprus since all materials were in the Greek language and both organisations shared some of the topics to be included in the training. Each dossier was up to 30 pages long so that participants can receive some information on a topic before their training on the same topic.

- Selection of the training methodology.

Following the Dutch example, apart from the dossier methodology, the "flip the class-room" methodology was selected in order to engage and actively involve participants in the training process. Moreover, other training methodologies were also selected as fit and relevant for the groups of trainees. These included case studies, activity sheets, plenary and small group discussions, presentations and short quizzes. They were selected and implemented during Implementation Phase 1, when face-to-face training sessions were organised and later adjusted for Implementation Phase 2 when training took place in online environments due to pandemic restrictions.

- Creating promotional materials to inform potential trainees.

The Institute developed a document titled "Study Guide for MediaCoaches in Greece", which included extensive information on the project and the training. The Guide included the following chapters:

- Objectives of the National MediaCoach Training in Greece
- Students at the National MediaCoach Training in Greece
- National MediaCoach Certificate
- Annual Refresher Programmes
- Network of National MediaCoaches in Greece
- National MediaCoaches in Greece: Skills and Competencies
- Principles for the MediaCoach Training in Greece
- Teaching Methodology during Training
- Content Structure: Dossiers
- Structure of the training meetings
- Profile of trainers
- Topics of the Dossiers/ training meetings.

The Guide proved to be a suitable and effective tool to attract potential trainees, providing relevant information about the content, methodology and structure of the training. The Guide was either sent by email or delivered on paper to members of the target group.

b. Implementation Phase 1

The information campaign resulted in the interest of one of Athens's largest private secondary schools. The communication and the commitment to participate in the training programme were achieved through personal meetings with the directors of the Gymnasium (for students between 12-15 years old) and the Lyceum (for students between 15- 18 years old). Both directors were interested in the project and the training provision and they decided to provide the MediaCoach training to all the teachers and trainers employed in both schools as a type of mandatory in-service training. This provided the training programme with the requisite formality and support on an administrative and organisational level, since implementation specifics such as training timing, frequency of training sessions and overall length were determined between two groups rather than for each attendant individually.

On the other hand, the provision of the training needed to be modified in some aspects so as to cover the specific needs and time restrictions set by the directors. Therefore, instead of providing the training programme as envisioned at the beginning (i.e., 40 hours, 10 sessions with a duration of four hours each, provision of one dossier/topic per session), the provision was slightly changed to suit the needs of the schools and the participants, who strongly declared that due to their professional and personal obligations they could not attend a 40-hour training seminar. The Institute agreed to continue with this modification, because it was a pilot programme and various implementation methods were required to determine the most successful method of delivery.

The delivery of this first implementation phase can be summarised in the following Table:

Implementation Phase 1	
	2
Number of trainees in each group	20
Total number of trainees	42
Profile of trainees	Teachers in the Gymnasium and the Lyceum of all different topics (English language, Greek language, Physics, Mathematics, Religion, Physical education, Arts, ICT). The two school psychologists and both school directors also participated.
Number of trainers	2
Duration of each training session	4 hours
Number of training sessions	5 sessions for each group
Frequency of the training sessions	Once a month for each group
Total duration of the training	5 months
Number of Dossiers presented in each session	2 Dossiers
Time dedicated for the presentation and discussion of each Dossier	2 hours
Preparation of trainees	Dossiers were sent two weeks prior to the sessions for trainees to study and prepare their assignments
Educational techniques during the sessions	Presentations, plenary discussions, small group discussions, case studies, role-playing, real-life situations from the trainees' experiences, short video presentations, short quizzes, flip-the-classroom
Evaluation techniques	Evaluation of each training session, including all different aspects of the training (for example, the efficiency of the training materials, of the trainers, of the educational techniques, recommendations, etc.)
Final Action Plans and Final Evaluation	Still pending due to the Covid-19 restrictions

It had been decided that an extra session would take place so that trainees could present their Action Plans and receive feedback from their colleagues and their trainers. Trainees were asked to prepare four Action Plans each, describing potential activities they would organise to promote media literacy issues among their adolescent students. One month after the last face-to-face session took place where they could prepare and present their Action Plans for feedback and evaluation. Unfortunately, this coincided with the outburst of the pandemic, both schools closed and up to now, they still provide classes to their students in online environments. Both school directors recommended that the final MediaCoach training session be postponed so that it can take place in person when both schools reopen. This has not yet been accomplished and therefore, the final part of the Implementation Phase 1 is still pending. However, based on the evaluations received by trainees after each session,

it can be deduced that the majority of the participants evaluated the different aspects of the training positively:

- they developed skills and knowledge on all media literacy issues presented during the sessions;
- they felt competent and ready to address media literacy issues to the population of their students;
- they highly evaluated the educational content, the curriculum, their trainers, the educational techniques used, the time dedicated to each topic and the frequency of the training sessions; and
- they would recommend the training programme to other teachers and educational professionals.

It should be noted that contact with both schools was systematic, which facilitated the smooth implementation of the training sessions since both school directors provided their strong support and guidance, encouraging all trainees to actively participate in the training sessions.

However, it became apparent through the trainers' evaluation and feedback on the training that the duration of the training programme (20 hours) was too short for the efficient and deep presentation and discussion of the topics. They strongly recommended that effort should be made as it was initially designed, with a 40-hour duration and with one topic/Dossier discussed in each four-hour session. The Institute decided to try this implementation mode in the following training programmes, despite the complaints of adult learners that they could not dedicate 40 hours for training due to numerous other obligations. The restrictions imposed by the pandemic, however, made this type of implementation possible.

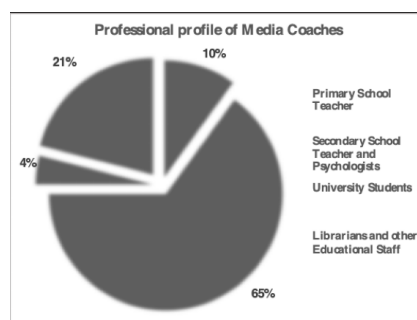
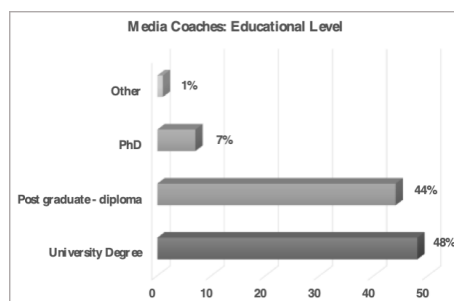
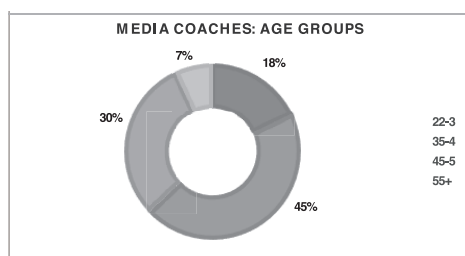
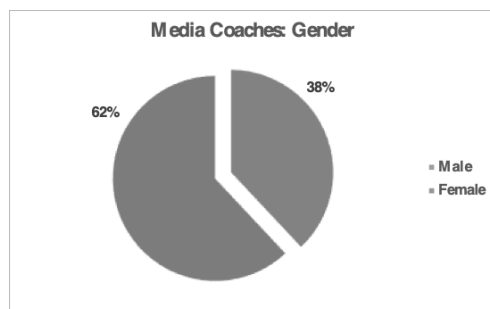
c. Implementation Phase 2

This phase coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown restrictions, which included closing all levels of public and private schools and other educational institutions. This provided the opportunity for the Institute to promote and deliver the training programme for MediaCoaches in the initially designed manner. After a brief information campaign which included the relevant data on the online implementation of the training programme (duration, number of training sessions, methodology and the e-learning platform), three more training groups were organised. They took place in the Moodle platform, in an area specifically dedicated, designed and organised for the MediaCoach training seminar.

The delivery of this second online implementation phase can be summarised in the following:

Implementation Phase 2	
Number of training groups	3
Number of trainees in each group	First group: 6 participants Second group: 8 participants Third group: 45 participants
Total number of trainees	59
Profile of trainees	Teachers in the Gymnasium and the Lyceum of all different topics (English language, Greek language, Physics, Mathematics, Religion, Physical education, Arts, ICT), school psychologists, librarians (in schools, University Departments and Municipalities), child protection professionals, University students, directors from local public services on education, educational professionals and researchers from the Institute of Educational Policy.
Number of trainers	2
Duration of each training session	4 hours
Number of training sessions	10 sessions for the first and second group 6 sessions for the third group (to be concluded by 22/ 04/2022)
Frequency of the training sessions	Once a week for each group
Total duration of the training	2,5 months
Number of Dossiers presented in each session	1 Dossier
Time dedicated for the presentation and discussion of each Dossier	4 hours
Preparation of trainees	Dossiers were sent two weeks prior to the sessions for trainees to study and prepare their assignments
Educational techniques during the sessions	Presentations, plenary discussions, small group discussions, case studies, real-life situations from the trainees' experiences, short video presentations, short quizzes, flip-the-classroom, Kahoot test, online tools (e.g. menti)
Evaluation techniques	Evaluation of each training session, including all different aspects of the training (for example, the efficiency of the training materials, of the trainers, of the educational techniques, recommendations, etc.)
Final Action Plans and Final Evaluation	14 Action Plans and Final Evaluation Sheets have been submitted for the first and second groups. These documents are still pending for the third group, which is still ongoing (till 22/ 04/ 2021).

The statistical data for all the trainees is presented in the following graphs:



It should be noted that the majority of participants (approximately 60%) are parents of young children, teenagers and young adults (up to 22 years old). This provided additional inspiration for them to attend the training workshops as they wanted to learn how to solve media literacy problems not only with their pupils, students, or related target groups, but also with their children.

Evaluation

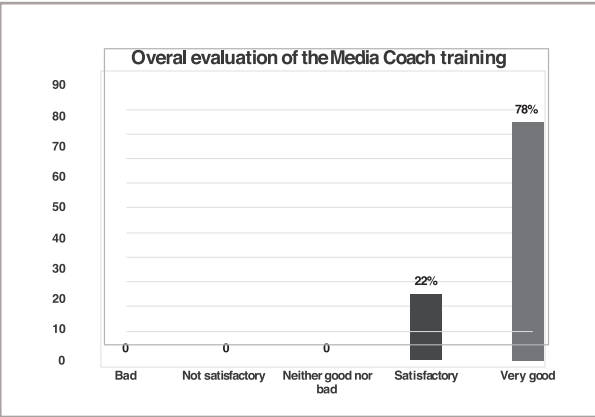
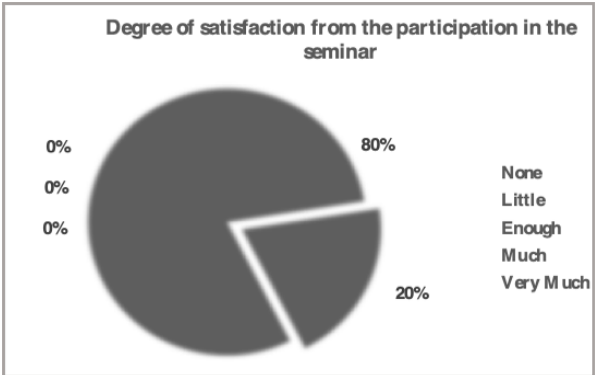
The evaluation of the training programme included the following tools and processes:

- Initial needs analysis: Titled "My expectations from the training seminar" and included personal data and their expectations regarding the programme's content, the topics they would like to focus on, the reasons for participating, etc.
- Evaluation of each training session: Participants were asked to evaluate and comment on the most interesting aspects of the workshop, the accuracy of the information presented and addressed, the instructional methods and methodologies, the consistency of the educational materials and online interactive resources, the trainers and the presentations and discussions that took place during the sessions. Finally, they were asked to provide their recommendations for the following sessions regarding content, methodologies and materials.
- Final evaluation: Participants who attended all ten training sessions and graduated from the programmes provided their overall feedback on different aspects of the programme, such as the usefulness of the programme, the practical implementation of the knowledge in future activities, the impact on their work practices and the aspects of the programme which they considered to be the most effective and efficient.

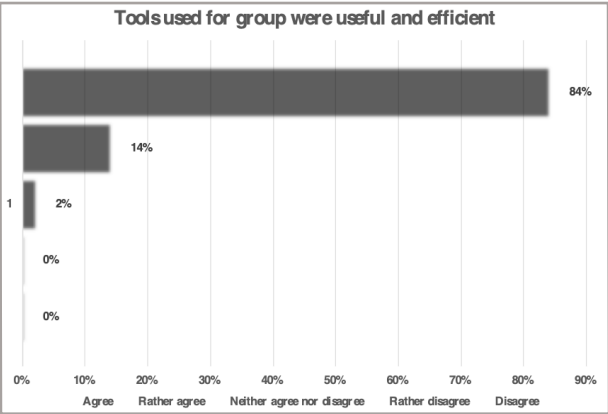
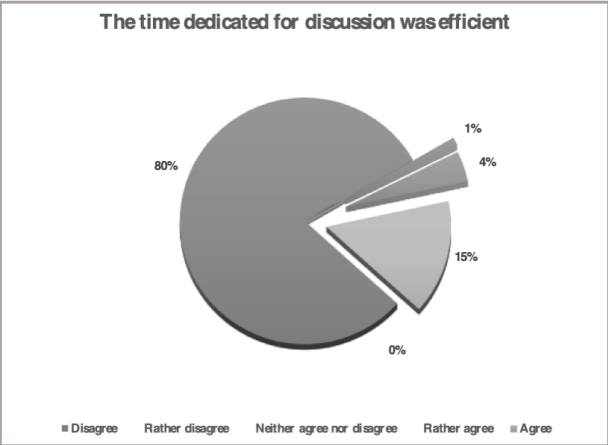
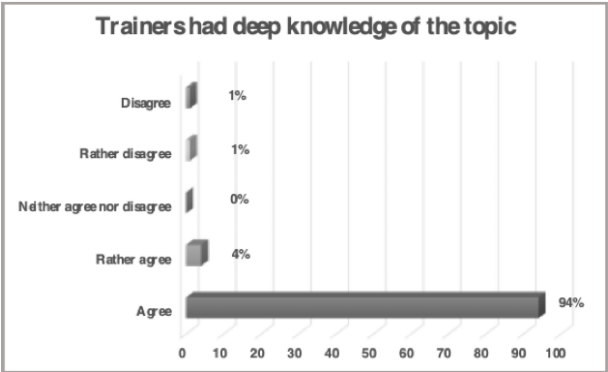
These were the evaluations requested by the trainees, which combined quantitative indicators (such as numbers of seminars, numbers of participants and numbers of trainers) and qualitative indicators (such as the quality of the training programmes, of the materials, of the methodologies and the techniques). Similarly, qualitative evaluations were asked from the trainers in order to gain their feedback on the educational process.

a. Evaluation of the programme itself

The results of the evaluation of the programme itself can be summarised in the following graphs as follows:



Regarding some aspects of the individual training sessions, the following evaluation data has been received:



Finally, all Dossiers received a high evaluation regarding their content, relevance, size and usefulness. The topics which were evaluated the highest are as follows:

1. Media literacy and MediaCoaching (Dossier 1)
2. Online Privacy (Dossier 2)
3. Media Addictions (Dossier 3)
4. Social Media and E-Identity (Dossier 6) and
5. Sexualisation in the Media (Dossier 7).

b. Evaluation of the programme's impact and effects

The training programmes are expected to positively impact the provision of media literacy education for children and adolescents and on the media literacy skills for adults and especially professionals dealing with minors through their everyday work practices. The following results can explain the foreseen positive impact:

- The participants in the training drafted high-quality Action Plans, which were highly evaluated by their trainers. Each Plan contained a detailed description of four media literacy activities they were willing to undertake to promote media literacy skills. It is expected that more than 1.000 students aged between eight and 18 years old will ultimately be reached once those activities will be deployed.
- Almost half of the participants from the first four groups have already implemented at least one activity from the proposed ones in their respective Action Plans. Activities including classroom presentations, social media campaigns, brief lectures and presentations and information meetings with students' parents.
- The impact of the training programme is expected to spread in different parts of the country, since participants in the three online programmes live and work in different parts of Greece. It would have been difficult to reach different regions through face-to-face sessions.
- All trainees have declared that they will pass on the knowledge they acquired on media literacy by informing their colleagues (at school, university, in public services, in libraries). Word-of-mouth communication seemed to work as the trainees from the last (5th) seminar were friends and colleagues of previous participants in the third and fourth seminars.
- Finally, the Institute is still receiving requests to be included in future training programmes if it is implemented again in the future.

Generally, the training programmes were positively received by all participants, the majority of which found them as being "useful and necessary" and "very useful and necessary". They thought that such interventions should be made permanent and structured.

Some testimonies received by participants are as follows:

"When the MediaCoach training seminar first started, I did not have high expectations because it was free of charge seminar and because I thought I was competent enough to deal with media literacy issues with my students. During the course of the seminar, I was astonished by the relevant data I was unaware of and on the different ways children can be approached and educated on the use of the media and especially social media. I highly evaluate all Dossiers and especially the opportunities we had to discuss the practical aspects of the topics discussed during the sessions. I now feel more capable of discussing these issues with my students; I am more self-confident about them." A. M. Primary School teacher.

"I feel inspired to organise media literacy educational activities with my students and their parents. The topics presented during the seminar revealed the information gap in the groups of adolescents and their parents and I now feel it is my duty to promote media literacy to both groups." D. K. High School teacher and counselor.

"The training programme was a very interesting and "capacity building" experience for me. The trainers were highly experienced and experts in the field of media literacy, yet very approachable, providing us with high-quality education. The knowledge and skills gained are valuable for my work as a school teacher, as a post-graduate student in the EUC and, last but not least, as a mother. Now I feel more confident to discuss these issues with my children, knowing that I will be providing them with the correct information, in the best way." A.V. Primary School teacher.

"I found the programme very interesting and useful. The instructors were very qualified and I learned new skills and I gained knowledge that I will definitely use in the future to train parents and teenagers." A. K. psychologist.

"Participating in the MediaCoach seminar was for me an unexpected and beautiful surprise! First of all, I truly expanded my knowledge and understanding of the digital world we all live in. Via the Dossiers I had the opportunity not only to find new information (digital Dossiers, links) but also contemplate on various topics. Last but not least, what I liked most in the seminars was the educational approaches. The instructors were well informed with a passion for passing on their knowledge; they were true MediaCoaches! I really enjoyed their time management and the balance they kept between theory and practice (case studies). They inspired me to make a YouTube series on my channel!" K. V. postgraduate student in Media, YouTube.

Lessons learned and next steps

The Athens Lifelong Learning Institute is very pleased with the results of the training programme. Despite the fact that the project began at a time when media literacy was not high on the agenda, especially among the population of education professionals and despite the fact that the word "media literacy" was relatively new in education in Greece, the success of the training has shown that such initiatives are welcome. They are imperative for the correct and healthy use of new media and to fill in knowledge gaps and skills deficiencies of adults who deal with children, adolescents and the youth to direct their efforts towards these populations.

Both the quantitative and qualitative objectives have been met, if not surpassed and the Institute implementation team attributes this success in the following factors,

which will be taken into account for future training programmes on media literacy when the European Commission funding is over:

- Quality, experience and expertise of trainers involved: One of the factors that determined the successful implementation of the training programmes was the trainers recruited to deliver them. They were highly qualified professionals with experience in adult education and eager to undertake different tasks in order to achieve positive results. As already explained, the trainers participated in the “train the trainer” event in the Netherlands and benefited from the educational process developed by the host organisation; they had the responsibility to create and develop the nine Dossiers, focusing on the Greek reality; they developed further educational materials (such as the case studies and the assignments for trainees); they developed the precise schedule of each educational session to the last detail, including alternatives in case an activity did not work. The high involvement of the trainers was key to the success of the project training activities and will be replicated in the future.
- The information and sensitisation campaign was well planned and brought in many potential trainees. The social media campaign, presentations in local media and the “word of mouth” proved to be the best ways to reach these audiences, who, despite their heavy schedules, dedicated 40 hours of their personal time to take part in the seminars. Similar campaigns will be conducted in the future for the repetition of the training for MediaCoaches.
- One of the most surprising aspects of implementing the seminars, which should be replicated and sustained, is the involvement of an “unusual” (at least in the case of Greece) target group of learners: librarians. The majority of in-service training provided to educational professionals usually targets teachers, trainers and educators. Very few educational initiatives target librarians, which was, in part, the reason that this professional group was highly represented mainly in the last (5th) training programme. Librarians participating across the country proved to be one of the most eager and engaged groups of learners, providing further dissemination and exploitation opportunities.
- The updated educational materials, the focus on issues and topics which directly affect Greek society as most relevant, and the educational techniques, especially in the online implementation of the training programme, were among the key factors of its success and they are going to be replicated for future similar initiatives.

These success factors should be considered and replicated if other organisations in Europe decide to implement such an initiative. The Athens Lifelong Learning Institute plans to continue providing this training programme in the future. The Institute has received an increase in applications from potential future participants and it expects to repeat the curriculum in September 2021, this time only online in order to offer this educational opportunity to professionals who live and work outside of Athens. Participants are prepared to participate in the training even if charged a fee.

Some valuable lessons learnt from the experience can be summarised as follows:

- Training interventions, even if were considered as “essential”, “valuable” and “important”, need time to be appropriately and effectively organised and implemented;

- A survey research about real training needs of the participants is essential to reveal the subjects that the trainees are more interested in or concerned about. The topics to be provided should be relevant to their work and everyday practices;
- The importance of group interaction and discussion can never be stressed enough. Especially in online training, group interaction and experiential learning proved to be key component of successful training;
- The participation of mixed groups of professionals (e.g., teachers, university students, librarians, childcare professionals, etc.) is meaningful and recommended. They all bring different experiences and their particular input is valuable for the whole group;
- The educational materials need to be interesting, up-to-date and brief to encourage learners to study before the training session and have some knowledge of the issues to be discussed during the relevant training sessions;
- The development of Action Plans by all participants, despite the initial complaints, proved to be an excellent learning tool for the trainees, who were asked to put in practice the knowledge and skills gained, adjusting them to their actual work environments;
- The certification proved an essential motivation for all participants. Educational professionals value training interventions that result in a degree or a certification to use them officially in their work practices;
- Managerial and organisational issues should be taken care of well in advance to guarantee the smooth implementation of the training sessions;
- Synergies with institutions and organisations in the field of education and media are important for the implementation of such programmes. They bring added value also in terms of future sustainability.

References

- Andriopoulou, I. (2017). Public Policy Status of Media Literacy in Greece. <https://cameraziano.net/2017/01/17/public-policy-status-of-media-literacy-in-greece/>
- Celot, P. (2009). Study on Assessment Criteria for Media Literacy Level: A Comprehensive View of the Concept of Media Literacy and an Understanding of how Media Literacy Levels in Europe should be Assessed. Brussels: European Commission
- Celot, P. (2015). Assessing Media Literacy Levels in Europe and the EC Pilot Initiative (2015)
- Cernison, M., Ostling, A. (2017). Measuring media literacy in the EU: results from the Media Pluralism Monitor 2015. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Research Paper No. RSCAS, 1. https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/45004/RSCAS_2017_01.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)1. (2018) Country Report Greece. https://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/image/document/2018-20/el-desi_2018-country-profile_eng_B43FFD54-01E0-8E08-F2E10DCA6B668AAE_52218.pdf
- Drigas, A., Bravou, V., Demertzi, E., Papagerasimou, Y. (2018). MeLDE Project: Media Literacy in the Digitalised Era: Supporting teachers through a whole-school approach, 2018-1-UK01-KA201-048041 https://meldeproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/MeLDE_IO1_GREEK_NATIONAL_REPORT.pdf
- European Audiovisual Observatory. (2016). Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28, Strasbourg, 2016, <https://rm.coe.int/1680783500>
- SaferInternet4Kids. (n.d.). Project Report 2016-2019. <https://saferinternet4kids.gr/ethsies-anafores/safer-internet4kids-2016-2019/>

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN MEDIACOACH INITIATIVE IN PORTUGAL

Tiago Lapa

Jorge Vieira

Cristina Guerreiro

Miguel Crespo

Sofia Branco

ISCTE Instituto Universitario de Lisboa

Abstract

This chapter illustrates the implementation of the training activities of the European MediaCoach Initiative in Portugal by the project's national partner, the University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE Instituto Universitario de Lisboa). The chapter begins with an introduction to media literacy in Portugal and highlights the European MediaCoach Initiative goals in Portugal. Furthermore, it describes the methods used to develop the MediaCoach training in Bulgaria, including the preparation, implementation and key factors that contributed to its success. The training programmes became more engaging by using an immersive approach through continuous learning and researching up-to-date information and news of digital literacy issues. The project offered seven courses and training, positively assessing and certifying 104 participants, but there were difficulties due to many dropouts in the training sessions. Overall, there was positive feedback on how the course challenged trainees to think outside the box and equipped them with knowledge and skills applicable to today's technological society.

Introduction

The introduction of the European MediaCoach Initiative in Portugal occurred in challenging times and environments. Digital and media literacy initiatives and policies in Portugal are characterised by their political commitment to keep up with European Commission policies, but at the same time, suffer a lack of consistency and resources to bring initiatives and policies into action. This occurred amid a global trend which encompasses a paradigm shift towards a new media ecology dominated by digital technologies and platforms with a high impact on traditional media.

The main concerns regarding the media sector public policies in Portugal are focused on further legislation and regulation, the revision of the legal framework, the relationship between the state, public service and the market, local and regional media public grants, media ownership and pluralism, in line with the European Commission guidelines for the liberalisation of the telecommunications sector. Nevertheless, the past 30 years have been marked by the growth of the privatisation processes, market orientation of editorial policies and ownership concentration at the national level around a handful of media groups who have adopted cross-media and multimedia strategies with fewer mono-media groups that struggle to endure. This context has caused the restructuring of the press and radio sectors, accompanied by the liberalisation of television and telecommunications sectors.

The internet penetration rate in Portuguese households was 84.5% in 2020 (in 2002, only 15.1%) with a fast rate of mobile broadband uptake. The most frequent users are students and those who have already completed higher education. Unfortunately, considering the media literacy skill needed, the investment in infrastructure and equipment was not matched by an investment in formal education.

Despite the widespread use of internet and a general trend of change in digital literacy in the last decade, many initiatives have arisen primarily as a result of European legislation and the efforts of academia. Schools in Portugal do not have a dedicated budget or autonomy to implement media training. Some gaps were filled by civil society initiatives and private sector programmes, but most media-related projects and public policies followed a model which promotes the use of ICT equipment but has less focus on broader digital skills. In any case, those initiatives were small-scale in reach and fragmented, as they did not follow a coherent public strategy. Therefore, the situation is typically characterised by resource fragmentation, doubling of efforts, dubious quality standards and a lack of assessment of resources and results. One factor that might explain this state of affairs is the absence of a clearly identifiable public authority or agency chosen to facilitate implementation, monitor and evaluate media literacy initiatives in Portugal.

Besides the absence of an overall strategy and a formal structure for media education in Portugal, another key concern is the lack of continuous training of teachers, educators and other professionals who work with children and youth. Furthermore, there is still much to be done regarding the public awareness of the need for media and digital literacy amid profound changes in new media and informational ecology towards a networked communication model, with its impact in all facets of individuals' lives. As mentioned, notwithstanding an amorphous nature of the initiatives, the area of media and digital education has been generally growing in Portugal. Here resides the relevance of the implementation of the European MediaCoach Initiative to provide continuous training in the field of digital and informational literacy and to establish a multi-stakeholder network to discuss the necessary strategies to be adopted in this field.

Media Literacy in Portugal

Portugal has a mixed record across the various dimensions of well-being, with high levels of vertical inequality in life satisfaction and revenue earnings. Internet is used mainly to communicate and access information. However, according to a survey of the National Statistics Agency (INE, 2020), it was mainly activities related to learning that registered the most significant increase: users who communicated with teachers or colleagues through educational portals (from 14.5% in 2019 to 30.8% in 2020) and who attended online courses (from 7.7% to 18.0%). Work at home was associated with the Covid pandemic: in the country 31.1% exercised their profession in telework (in Lisbon 43.2%).

It is only after 1995 that issues related to the information industry and society in Portugal were more steadily mentioned in government policies. The Portuguese initiative for creating an Information Society was based on the Programme of the 13th Constitutional Government, which outlined the Government's intentions for the period 1995-1999. The Planning Options for 1996 launched the National Initiative for the Information Society, structured around four main axis: the school (Information Technologies in Education); the computerized company; local and regional public administration; and the availability of knowledge (libraries, museums, databases, research and development institutions). The Council of Ministers resolution, no. 16/96, approved on March 21, 1996, created the Mission for the Information Society (MSI) under the Ministry of Science and Technology. The main objectives of MSI were to prepare and support, in collaboration with all Ministries, the global and sectoral measures needed to carry out government programmes for the development of the Information Society and to identify international scenarios, at the technological and societal levels, that may have an impact on the development of the Information Society. In this context, Portugal has been developing policies and strategies for its implementation within the framework of the broader strategy of the European Union. The "Green Book for the Information Society in Portugal", published in 1997 by the Ministry of Science and Technology, was a landmark moment in the Portuguese strategy, becoming the basis on which subsequent national plan containing short and long-term steps for the creation of an Information Society in Portugal were drafted.

It is also important to highlight later public policies, namely those that took place shortly after the millennium (2005-2011), a period publicly recognised as a "technological shock". From that period, punctual and circumscribed studies emerged, which intended to assess the impact of these policies on children and education (Pereira and Melro, 2014). It should be noted that that much remains to be discovered about the effect on the lives of adults, including the consumption of information. Despite policies to promote access and digital inclusion, Pereira and Melro argued about a technocentric tendency supposedly generators of social and educational transformation.

They have duly valued the need for individual and community training to promote media literacy skills, not limited to access and technical skills but also enlarged to encompass "creation/production, interaction, critical thinking, the ability to select and evaluation, the expression and participation of citizens" (2014, p. 34).

Furthermore, due to political changes and structural and economic constraints in the country, it should be noted that the "technological shock" was not accompanied by comprehensive and systematic assessment processes to allow the collection of information on impacts of the adopted (Lapa and Vieira, 2019). If ongoing pro-

grammes are noteworthy, many of them with support or European funding, it is not known to what extent the objectives were achieved. Portugal has still a long way to go to achieve European standards in the communications sector. It has lower access and internet usage rates than most European societies and shows notable regional disparities. Furthermore, it is expected that there will be more people without any social support to enable them to learn to use ICT and who are therefore excluded in the digital spectrum. Thus, we can see that the weight of traditional variables of social inequality is still felt in Portuguese society.

In terms of public policy consequences, new levels of inequality have created new problems. For example, the use of digital networks as a form of economic insertion of consumers in the goods and services market. As shown by the INE data for 2017, 34% of the resident population between 16 and 74 years old reported having used the internet to place orders for goods or services. However, with the pandemic, the percentage of e-commerce users registered in 2020 marked the most significant increase in the series started in 2002. In 2020, 44.5% of people between 16 and 74 years old placed orders on the internet in the 12 months preceding the survey. The number of orders through e-commerce increased significantly: the group of users who placed three to five orders increased by 4.0%, those who placed six to ten orders increased by 9.5% and those who placed more than ten order increased by 6.9% (INE, 2017). However, since e-commerce is more common below the age of 34, online customers are mostly young. Moreover, despite the apparent increase compared to the beginning of the decade (15%, in 2010), the proportion of individuals who made purchases via the internet remains significantly below the EU-27 average. An important fact, since online commerce modalities can contribute to face disadvantages such as insularity, distance from urban centres or large consumer markets, reduce regional disparities in this area and face the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Still in this context, van Duersen and van Dijk (2019) argue that the digital divide of the first order remains a problem even in the Netherlands, one of the wealthiest European countries. This is due to common difficulties of gaining material access to ICT, which includes the concrete possibility to use internet over time, such as computer devices, laptops and TVs, smartphones, tablets, as well as software (including subscriptions) and peripheral equipment (printers, additional hard drives, etc.). New gaps, therefore, emerge as a result of rapid technological advances. As the authors point out (2019, p. 372), structural differences appear when specific segments of the population, systematically and for prolonged periods, take advantage of the best devices and peripherals, while others use devices (such as outdated or less capable smartphones) that allow fewer opportunities (for example, of specific applications). However, within Dutch society, it is predicted that those gaps will be filled while it will be more challenging for Portugal to fight inequalities in material access to digital technologies.

To move Portugal forward and inform strategy policy to reduce intra-societal inequality, research into fundamental indicators is needed. It remains to be seen to what extent it is likely or even effective for Portugal to follow the same paths as other European countries for the digital inclusion of its citizens. It is expected that further research such as the that carried out within the Europe MediaCoach Initiative will serve to identify priorities in terms of promotion of digital media skills. The research by van Duersen and Helsper (2018), once again from the Netherlands, gives clues as to the relationship between informational development and social development. The authors identified and separated "collateral" gains from other people's actions, regardless of

their socioeconomic or sociocultural characteristics. Such a result gives hope to a society like Portugal. It indicates that informational development does not have to be entirely linked to economic development, nor is it fatally compromised by the weight of the unequal distribution of resources (particularly cultural and economic).

Public policy and digital literacy campaigns can make a difference to concrete online practices, potentially correcting digital disparities. This can be achieved through targeted skills training initiatives and provision of opportunities so that individuals from different sectors of society can get involved in the digital world in various ways, which, in turn, can bring quality benefits of social activity in other domains (in the labor market, in consumption, in access to culture and knowledge, concerning social capital and subjective well-being, to give some examples). In this way, van Duersen and Helsper (2018) suggest that a semiological approach to thinking about and combating digital inequality could be more effective than a purely economic approach.

The EMCI training programme in Portugal

Aims, rationale and expected outcomes

In recent decades, it has become clear that the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) profoundly transforms the way children and young people, parents and educators, among other adults, live – how they learn, occupy their free time and interact, both in personal relationships and in activities. All the possibilities and benefits of using ICT, including access to knowledge, the collaboration and communication between people and organisations, social inclusion and wealth creation, are necessary to ensure, like any other means of interaction, appropriate mechanisms and strategies to minimise risks and damages that might occur with the use of these technologies. Since there is not an extensive and structured media education in formal school curricula and other institutions that host children in Portugal, besides the localised initiatives of agencies like the Safe Internet Centre, MediaCoach was a good opportunity to train specialised professionals, such as teachers, trainers, youth workers, among others, in the field of media education and coaching in our country.

In terms of preparatory activities, a survey was conducted to determine the institutional and concrete conditions that would enable the project to be implemented in Portugal. The primary way this was achieved was through research (including researching available information regarding previous digital literacy policy and programmes in the country, interviews and contact with professionals). We also searched for ideal national partners. We tried to understand how we could reach teachers, youth workers and other professionals to participate in our MediaCoach training programme. To that effect, the environmental assessment was a great tool to systematise and gain an overview of the opportunities and threats to implementing the programme in Portugal. We contacted national institutions and specialists to assess the Portuguese context and its conditions to adapt the MediaCoach initiative to Portuguese specificities and collect relevant materials and data offline (mainly from official documents and academic literature) and online (mainly websites of official agencies and ministries, data banks, academic literature and websites related to media literacy in Portugal) to write an environmental assessment.

Regarding the initial difficulties in preparing for the project, the relative inexperience in implementing initiatives of this nature should be pointed out. It meant, from a

national managing point of view, a period of learning and researching. Second, in the beginning, it was not clear which institutions we should approach since there is no clear authority or entity designated by law to implement and/or monitor media education in Portugal. Furthermore, media literacy policies in Portugal are marked, on the one hand, by a political desire to follow the European Union policies and, on the other, by inconsistency and a lack of resources to put those policies into effect. Third, it soon became clear that on our own, we could not implement and meet the project's requirements. For instance, our institution (ISCTE-IUL) is not certified to award professional training certificates. We overcame this difficulty by searching for the right partners (in the end, a training centre called Cenjor), that would provide qualified trainers and was able to award certificates homologated by the national government agency Institute for Employment and Vocational Training. There were also some delays in getting the protocols finished and agreed upon due to bureaucratic constraints and the negotiation process.

Key stakeholders such as the national agency Foundation for Science and Technology, through its Safe Internet Centre and the training centre CENJOR, played a significant role in the development, implementation and exploitation of the project results; it was at the premises of ISCTE-IUL and CENJOR that trainees undertook the media literacy seminars. ISCTE-IUL and the project are also represented in the advisory board of the Safe Internet Centre. Through this agency, the project also had strategic access to other stakeholders since the Portuguese Safe Internet Centre is a consortium of various organisations (governmental institutions and agencies, NGOs, private companies, universities, unions and parent associations) and is responsible for nationwide awareness campaigns. As a result, we may advise on the implementation of such campaigns and collaborate with that Center. We also discussed policy recommendations through our participation in that advisory board. Although teachers and youth workers are clearly desirable target groups, we offered the MediaCoach training to all people interested in becoming MediaCoaches or had a specific interest in digital literacy. That included journalists, media professionals and students, people who work in the security and defense sectors, all sorts of educators, etc.

There were no specific criteria for participants besides a minimum level of education (high school). Work experience was considered but it was not a formal requirement. The recruitment process was carried out by CENJOR and trainers, who contacted interested institutions and prospective trainees. Some trainees passed through a professional requalification process and were directed by the Institute for Employment and Professional Training. Others contacted CENJOR to enrol in the training programme and learned about the programme through the internet and social media. Participants included post-graduate students, teachers, educators, or people with previous teaching experience, activists and non-profit organisation workers. There was an effort to expand the target group and include public and private school teachers.

On the internet, we disseminated the project mainly through a newsletter, social media (mainly Facebook and Twitter), websites (Cenjor website enrollment and MediaCoach national website) and using targeted information and communication. We also used the internal channels of ISCTE-IUL and Cenjor. We created a national website: <https://mediacoach.pt/> and started producing content published online. We used a varied communication strategy with the aid of a communication officer. This helped the dissemination and visibility of the project and created an authoritative image of the Portuguese MediaCoach initiative. Because of this, we were able to attract prospective trainees. We also used photography and other audio-visual content. Trainers' selfies

in class with trainees were helpful in creating cohesiveness and group spirit among trainees. Nevertheless, dissemination took some time to be implemented and should have started earlier. Twitter received less exposure than predicted, but specific events, such as our media literacy conference, were extremely beneficial in terms of creating buzz and visibility. The knowledge, competence and reputation of the national institutions involved were also used to demonstrate MediaCoach's authority. The same objective was pursued by stressing the following: it is an initiative funded by the Erasmus+ European programme; the programme replicated a successful ongoing initiative in the Netherlands and was adopted in other European countries.

In addition, we stressed the uniqueness of the programme's approach in terms of media training and coaching in Portugal. Furthermore, with certified former trainees in the Portuguese MediaCoach programme we made references to the experience and increased the reputation of the programme in our country. We also made an effort to complement the authority of the MediaCoach Training Programme by sharing data and knowledge online about media training techniques, pedagogical and educational practices concerning new media use and good practices in Portugal and other European countries, also acknowledging similar initiatives.

In terms of the training programme's learning objectives, the general objectives included establishing trainees' levels of digital and media literacy skills and designing instructional tools and recommendations for intervention in more relevant areas of digital media education and literacy based on the information generated. Another goal was to train people to act as assertive mediators among young people in their consumption/production of content, information and/or news and about the intentionality of sharing, the search for sources and the legal, ethical and deontological rules governing freedom of speech and copyright in a global world.

More specific goals included identifying digital and media literacy skills present in different disciplinary areas, taking into account the trainees' perceptions regarding their skills and training needs. It was a goal of the training programme to assess the level of digital and media skills in the educational and learning communities to identify the need for further training. In the end, the expected impact of the training and learned skills included the ability to train young people for the critical and safe use of the media, improving their understanding of legal and ethical aspects associated with the processes of creating and communicating media content and promoting the appropriate monitoring of risks and opportunities underlying these same processes.

It is also expected that Portuguese MediaCoaches will contribute to redefine educational objectives and methodologies towards the integration of teaching and learning opportunities emerging from new forms of communication and social participation, with simultaneous intervention at functional digital inclusion/exclusion levels. In this way, our trained MediaCoaches may participate in the democratisation of digital and media literacy by implementing strategies that promote the capacities of search, selection and analysis of information and enable its reflexive transformation into knowledge.

This also supports the creation of more critical and informed consumers, capable of producing content and communicating with others creatively and the formation of active citizens, able to contribute to a knowledge society, technologically innovative and competitive and capable of supporting the construction of sustainable, creative, intelligent and life-long learning citizens. In this way, we hope that the programme continues to support the development of favourable conditions for active citizenship and, consequently, the increase in civic participation in social dialogue with a relevant contribution to economic, social and cultural development.

Methodology

Concerning the schedule and structure of the training sessions, one entire training course lasted around three weeks, with 4-hour sessions in three or four days per week with a total duration of 40 hours. The training methodology included simulated practice, role-playing, discovery and self-directed exploration and case studies in the first 20 hours. The other 20 hours was taken up with presentations and research by trainees, discussion during sessions about those presentations and the assessment of trainees' work. The topics covered in the training programme included: Credibility and reliability of information; Digital influencers, power and territoriality; Fake news and online fact-checking; Authorship, plagiarism and copyright on the internet; Citizenship, gender equality and online inclusion; Privacy vs. phishing, fraud, e-commerce and the internet of things; Cyberbullying, moral and sexual harassment in online platforms; Online advertising, sponsored content and safe browsing; Hate speech on social media and digital literacy for parents, child caregivers and youth, teachers and young workers.

Besides the difficulties of delivering the training during the pandemic crisis, there were some more challenges concerning resources, dissemination and communication. There were also some problems with managing trainees' expectations and work. Nevertheless, trainees met the challenges of action research that were proposed. In addition, during the implementation of the project, other challenges emerged, such as considering trainees' expectations and planning sessions and enrolment dropouts. There was a need to provide the didactic material in a timely manner (immediately after the session or even before) and avoid deadlines. It was also important to invest in the relationship between trainees, stimulate discussion of presentations, sharing during sessions, coffee breaks and WhatsApp groups to create time for dialogue between trainees and trainers. It became clear that socialisation should not be neglected for the exchange of experiences, doubts, etc.

Using an immersive approach, the training programmes became more engaging. The continuous learning and researching for up-to-date information and news about digital literacy topics were crucial to maintain the trainees' interest and ensure training sessions were relevant to their daily lives (professional and personal) with topics they cared about. This was accomplished by introducing current affairs analogies, allowing trainees to equate new material and information with what already resounded with them and was in their sphere of awareness. Brainstorming activities and demonstrations also enriched the training experience in an ever-changing media environment.

Evaluation, lessons learned and next steps

The project ended up delivering seven courses with 104 trainees positively assessed and certified, but there were challenges concerning the significant number of dropouts in the training sessions. In terms of impact of the implementation of the project, there was overall positive feedback in terms of how the course made trainees think outside the box and equipped them with the knowledge and skills relevant for present-day technological society. At the end of each training session and after a successful assessment, the participants received a certificate issued by the training centre (Cenfor) and homologated by the national agency of employment and professional training (IEFP – Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional). The supply of the certificate was crucial to attract trainees and is a certification that they can refer to in their CV and use in the labor market.

Here is one of the comments from the trainees in one of the WhatsApp groups related to the project: *“To the trainers and Cenjor team, a huge thanks for the availability, quality of training, professionalism and good disposition that transformed this training into a space where it was possible to learn in a very relaxed and interesting. Thank you.”*

A trainee stated the following in one of the courses delivered during the current pandemic crisis: *“Dear trainers and colleagues, Once again thank you all for the environment created around this group! I think it has been proved that in even the most adverse contexts, routines can be resumed and create a minimum sense of normality! It was a victory for everyone to complete the training and we have learned so much from each other!”*

It is also noteworthy the work and feedback of Chief policeman João M. Cunha, a former trainee from the Safe School programme of the Portuguese police force (PSP). Not only does he go to schools to talk to children about risks, including digital ones, but he has also been on national TV to talk about such issues.



Concluding remarks

The main innovation of the implementation of the MediaCoach Initiative in Portugal related to the project's content and scope regarding media digital literacy. There was particular content regarding current affairs trends (such as fake news or the proliferation of the Internet of Things) that make the MediaCoach training programme stand out.

The management of participants' expectations and the use of resources posed a problem. This was also due to the existence of other competing projects and organisations which may also affect the future deployment of the programme, together with institutional inertia. Our plan is to create the conditions to develop a training MediaCoach programme that will become sustainable with the support of our partners (CENJOR and Safer Internet Centre). For example, we expect CENJOR to promote and give seminars with similar target groups in the future using materials from the project's Portuguese implementation. The national agency Foundation for Science and Technology, through its Safe Internet Centre and the training centre CENJOR played a significant role in the development, implementation and future exploitation of the project results, since they will be responsible for the dissemination of MediaCoaching activities inspired by the Dutch model.

It was of primary importance to plan the schedule, the structure and the training methodology of the course carefully. It was challenging to motivate and recruit prospective trainees when presenting a course with a duration of 40 hours' training. In these circumstances, we felt the need to allow trainees to attend remotely or in person, even before the pandemic lockdown restrictions. It was also essential to invest in appealing programme logos and materials, use a communication officer and develop a communication strategy using communication tools such as press releases, conferences, press visits, publications, Website, social media profiles and tolls.

Our recommendations also include the use of photographs of the sessions and selfies with trainees (for internal communication purposes – it helped with the cohesiveness of the class but also for external communication purposes) and audio-visual content. An early communication strategy might help to capitalise on the project's visibility. It is also imperative to find the right partners with an invested interest and the motivation and proactiveness to scale up the project. Moreover, an adequate communication strategy ensures that a project like the MediaCoach Initiative remains visible. The training curriculum must also be renewed and updated on a regular basis to keep the training relevant. It is highly advisable to start planning actions early and start an assessment of the environment as soon as possible in order to increase the potential for scaling up. Furthermore, to inform strategic choices to support the scaling up and institutionalisation of the initiative, its expansion and replication. It is also important to find the right team structure. Multi-stakeholder alliances involving a diverse range of stakeholders at various levels (local, regional, global, international) and from various sectors (governmental, non-governmental, industry, etc.) appeared to be crucial.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN MEDIACOACH INITIATIVE IN ROMANIA

Ionut Codreanu

ActiveWatch

Abstract

This chapter illustrates the implementation of the training activities of the European MediaCoach Initiative in Romania by the project's national partner, ActiveWatch. It starts with introducing media literacy in the Romanian context before highlighting Romania's European MediaCoach Initiative goals. The Romanian pilot programme's primary goals were to accredit and certify the first generation of Romanian MediaCoaches, as well as to contribute to the updating of training curricula to represent current challenges and trends in (social) media. Furthermore, it describes the methods used to implement the MediaCoach training in Romania, including the preparation, implementation and obstacles that were ultimately overcome. The programme was designed for primary and secondary school teachers, school administrators and scholarly communication experts. The programme has met great success and contributed to an attitudinal change, as the Romanian team was able to meet the programme's objectives and train a high number of people.

References

- INE (2017, 2020). Inquérito à utilização de tecnologias da informação e da comunicação pelas famílias. Lisboa: Instituto Nacional de Estatística.
- Lapa, T, Vieira, J. (2019). Digital divides in Portugal and Europe: is Portugal still chasing the European train? Sociologia online n.º 21, December 2019, pp. 62-82
- Pereira, S., Melro, A. (2014). Acesso e usos do computador Magalhães na escola e em casa: Um estudo no concelho de Braga. In S. G. da Silva, e S. Pereira (Eds.), Atas do 2.º Congresso Literacia, Media e Cidadania. Lisbon: Gabinete para os Meios de Comunicação Social.
- van Deursen, A. J. A. M., Helsper, E. J. (2018). Collateral benefits of Internet use: Explaining the diverse outcomes of engaging with the Internet. *New Media and Society*, 20(7), 2333-2351.
- van Deursen, A. J. A. M., van Dijk, J. A. G. M. (2019). The first-level digital divide shifts from inequalities in physical access to inequalities in material access. *New Media and Society*, 21(2), 354-375

Introduction

Along with the medical system, the Romanian educational system is one of the most neglected domains in terms of public investments and necessary policy adoption. The "Education and Training Monitor 2018", issued by the European Commission, points out critical aspects that need urgent funding and action to redress the current situation. Most of the issues surround poor or inadequate funding for the public educational system (e.g. public funds are diverted simply to pay teachers' salaries and not necessarily to invest in the education of students, which should be the ultimate goal), the lack of concrete actions to reduce students leaving education prematurely, the lack of relevant skills and competencies for students in secondary and tertiary system to meet the European standards and goals²¹. Additionally, the Romanian system is confronted with historical and structural challenges when it comes to providing adequate opportunities for change to occur. According to a 2019 national survey¹⁵⁷, 30% of respondents considered students overwhelmed by the high number of disciplines they need to study and by their requirements. 14.7% considered that Romanian teachers lack competitive skills and knowledge.

Media Literacy in Romania

Within this context, media literacy is virtually absent in the public agenda as the current National Education Framework (National Education Law⁴) has no provisions to promote, develop and implement media literacy programmes in Romanian schools. It is mainly focused on developing digital skills or digital literacy. In February 2017, in order to comply with the National Digital Agenda 2020 and to overcome the poor results in previous Europe Digital Progress Reports (EDPR)⁵, the Ministry of Education adopted a new curriculum for primary and secondary schools that envisioned three major competencies for students: 1) To use the ICT responsibly and efficiently; 2) To solve various problems by using intuitive methods of information processing; and 3) To elaborate creative mini-projects regarding various social, cultural and personal aspects, by correctly crediting the information and respecting the copyright.

Despite the lack of dedicated policies in the field of media literacy, it is worth nothing that Romania has a 20-year history of initiatives and actions that were mostly initiated by Romanian CSOs employed in media education or media-related fields. The 2016 report "Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU – 28"⁶ issued by the European Audiovisual Observatory comprised around 20 media literacy projects and 11 key stakeholders that have developed programmes and tools for teachers and students. Nevertheless, these initiatives have no institutional support or acknowledgment, a reality confirmed by the 2016-2020 Educated Romania Programme commissioned by the Romanian Presidency. A thematic group analysed the Professionalisation of the Educational Management¹⁵⁸ and concluded that Romania's primary and secondary schools are very poorly connected to the community (CSOs including), due to bureaucracy and lack of institutional mechanisms.

57 https://adevarul.ro/educatie/scoala/sondaj-cea-mai-mare-problema-confrunta-invatamantul-romanesco-programmea-scolara-foarte-incarcata-1_5c540ac2df52022f753dd60f/index.html

58 <http://www.romaniaeducata.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Rapoarte-grupuri-de-lucru-Romania-Educata.pdf>

In this challenging social and institutional context, the replication of the MediaCoach model in Romania faced several obstacles that ultimately were overcome.

Due to the design of the MediaCoach Initiative, which requires full commitment from beneficiaries, it was critical to make efforts to collaborate with appropriate institutional educational bodies. Finding an institutional partner (public educational agency) would have not only contributed to the credibility of the programme, but also it would have assured the necessary incentives for the potential participants to enrol in the intensive training programme. Eventually, it was expected that future participants would have accepted the commitment requirements of the training programme because the programme would have included two major incentives: 1) graduation from an accredited training programme would have converted into professional credit points; and 2) the training programme would have been free of charges, as the development and delivery costs had already been covered by the project of the European Commission.

Due to the difficulty to access officials in Bucharest, the search for potential institutional partners continued for four months. Eventually, Brăila Teachers' Training Centre (BTTC)¹⁵⁹, a training institution that works under the Ministry of Education authority, showed an interest in our programme. In September 2019, ActiveWatch and Brăila Teachers' Training Centre signed a partnership agreement to replicate and certify MediaCoach Initiative in Brăila county and its surrounding area. It must be stressed that, according to Romanian legislation, only certified organisations and institutions can apply for accrediting training programmes. The National Education Law recognised county Teachers' Training Centers as the most relevant training institutions for developing and delivering an accredited course recognised and attested by the Ministry of Education.

The formal accreditation of the training programme was completed two months later, but the training programme could not be deployed without an official order from the Ministry of Education. In November 2019, the Romanian government fell and the new Ministry of Education issued the official order that acknowledged the training programme in February 2020. Thus, the political and institutional instability directly affected the recruitment of trainees and the timely delivery of the trainings sessions.

The first training sessions were held in March 2020 at the Brăila Teachers Training Centre, with 60 trainees. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 crisis placed the whole training programme on hold and the calendar and implementation plan were adjusted to the new context. The transition from face-to-face to online sessions was subject to additional bureaucratic procedures that the Ministry of Education had to implement. Eventually, the training sessions were resumed in July 2020, during the summer vacation, in an intensive online programme that would meet both trainees' availability and the pandemic restrictions that affected the whole world.

In conclusion, the replication and adaptation of the MediaCoach model in Romania was highly impacted not only by the political and the pre-existent bureaucratic conditions, but also by the pandemic that forced all involved actors to reset the course. Despite these obstacles, the Romanian team was able to train more than 120 potential MediaCoaches in Brăila's school system by December 19, 2020.

59 In Romania there are 41 Teachers' Training Centers one for each of the 41 counties, that are responsible with developing training programmes for the educational personnel in each county.

The EMCI training programme in Romania

Aims, rationale and expected outcomes

The training programme was designed for teachers in primary and secondary schools, school managers and scholarly communication experts. In January 2019, Brăila Teachers Training Centre carried out an analysis of training needs in the field of media education in Brăila county. In order to identify the educational and training needs, questionnaires and interviews were applied to the teachers and the management, guidance and control staff in primary and higher education. The target sample included 240 teachers (educators, primary school teachers and high school teachers) and 48 management, guidance and control staff in pre-university education from 48 school units in Brăila county (eight kindergartens, 16 public schools and 24 theoretical, vocational and technological high schools).

Almost half of those interviewed restated the need to participate in such trainings. It should also be noted that practical activities were the most appreciated by the participants surveyed (39%). Given the low priority that media literacy is given in national educational strategies, the training programme aimed to introduce media literacy not as an additional discipline but mainly as a set of skills that could be easily and creatively integrated within the current curricula. As such, the training programme was designed to assess media literacy competencies of the participating trainees and to empower them to redesign their learning experiences with their students.

In order to overcome the common confusions between digital literacy (that is quite familiar and promoted even in the national educational framework) and media literacy, the selected topics were organised using the Digital Intelligence - DQ Framework⁶⁰. This framework is built upon three central pillars (Citizenship, Creativity and Competitiveness) and the Romanian MediaCoach programme set out to tackle Citizenship and Creativity, taking into consideration both the teachers' interests and ActiveWatch's know-how and expertise. It is worth noting that the topics addressed in the Digital Citizenship component were linked to current and pressing issues in Romanian society and internationally. In addition, the topics chosen for the Digital Creativity aspect aimed at identifying and transmitting proper uses of media and technology that are inseparable from a well-informed digital citizen.

The main subjects that were addressed within the Digital Citizenship pillar were the following:

- media and information literacy (with focus on sensationalism and fake news impact in our lives);
- digital empathy and digital citizen identity (with focus on (social) media representations and behaviours when addressing minorities and gender issues, including hate speech and online misogyny); and
- privacy management, personal cybersecurity management and behavioural cyber-risk management (with a focus on online security, personal data and cyberbullying).

The main subjects that were addressed within the Digital Creativity pillar were the following:

- content cyber-risk management (with a focus on illegal online content);
- self-awareness and management (with a focus on online etiquette and the necessity of reconciliation of the offline and online identities);
- intellectual property rights management (with a focus both on the existing legal framework but also on identifying free educational resources that comply with intellectual property regulations; additionally, a high emphasis was put on promoting ethical standards in content creation); and
- healthy use of technology (with a focus on addictive design's role in our online behaviour, without dismissing the unlimited benefits of responsible use of technology within educational and creative processes) .

After concluding the training programme, most participants evaluated online safety and cyberbullying as highly important, followed by privacy, fake news, digital empathy and healthy use of technology when asked about the most relevant topics. These outcomes confirmed that the proposed structure and topics responded to participants' needs and expectations.

Methodology

One of the most difficult logistical aspect of the programme was delivering the training sessions, which involved constant cooperation between the ActiveWatch team, based in Bucharest and the Brăila Teachers' Training Centre located 218 kilometres away. Once the training programme was formally accredited by the Ministry of Education, it was crucial that the selection of participants, planning resources and the availability of the trainers be smoothly arranged so the training activities would not be disrupted. Fortunately, the formal agreement between ActiveWatch and Brăila Teachers' Training Centre had provision for the clear responsibilities of each partner that would provide both autonomy and synergy within the partnership. In this regard, ActiveWatch's primary responsibilities were developing the training curricula and the training materials, delivering the training sessions and assuring trainers' availability. ActiveWatch's trainers were in charge of the evaluation procedures required by the Brăila Teachers' Training Centre's methodology. Brăila Teachers' Training Centre's role consisted of undertaking all the formalities to accredit the training programme and selecting and recruiting participants, assuring the logistical support for the delivery of the trainings (including the training facilities), as well in finalising the formalities with the Ministry of Education when certificating graduates. Due to the vast experience of the management of Brăila Teachers' Training Centre, the certification process was completed in less than two months. It is worth mentioning that this bureaucratic process consisted of a series of formalities including the authorisation of the training course by a special committee designated by the Ministry of Education. Yet, due to the institutional context that changed in November 2019 when the parliamentary opposition impeached the government, the training calendar suffered a three-month delay. According to the national regulations, each training programme had to be certified by a particular ministerial order by the Ministry of Education; this order came only in February 2020 and it was the official recognition of the programme that allowed Brăila Teachers' Training Center started the recruitment process while ActiveWatch's trainers were responsible for delivering the programme.

⁶⁰ <https://www.dqinstitute.org/dq-framework/>

The original design of the training programme was modified to accommodate the availability of the enrolled participants as well as their prior participation in such formative experiences. Thus, the best approach was to deliver the training sessions at the end of the week on Friday (four hours face-to-face training) and Saturday (six hours face-to-face training) for four weeks, totalling 40 training hours.

For the first round of training sessions, 60 primary school and high school teachers were enlisted in two groups (classes). ActiveWatch designated one master trainer for each class, seconded by the project's coordinator and by a staff member from Brăila Teachers' Training Centre. The face-to-face training sessions were delivered in parallel, respecting the same schedule and topics.

In March 2020, ActiveWatch trainers delivered the first and last, face-to-face training sessions within Brăila Teachers' Training Centre facilities. One week later, the Romanian authorities suspended all educational and training activities nationwide due to the imminent COVID-19 state of emergency. This force majeure event stalled the entire training programme for further four months and imposed new changes within the design and the delivery process. Additionally, as the entire educational system was challenged by the lack of alternatives in teaching and evaluating the school population from kindergarten to university level, the Ministry of Education and other educational authorities focused mainly on adapting the regulating system to the new pandemic reality. This bureaucratic process has been subject to much criticism and frustration from the general public, and students and teachers, as uncertainty was rife during that critical period. The main focus was on organisation of the national evaluation for each Romanian student, so the "lost generation" scenario could be avoided. All training programmes other than digital training for teachers to transition to online education were put on hold. Eventually, after the critical milestone of the school year validation passed, the training programme was resumed. In July, the "Media Literacy at School and in Society" training sessions were resumed online. Despite that, it was summer vacation, and the last face-to-face meeting took place in March; it was a great surprise to meet the same enrolled participants from spring, showing the same or even higher interest the COVID-19 context for the training programme.

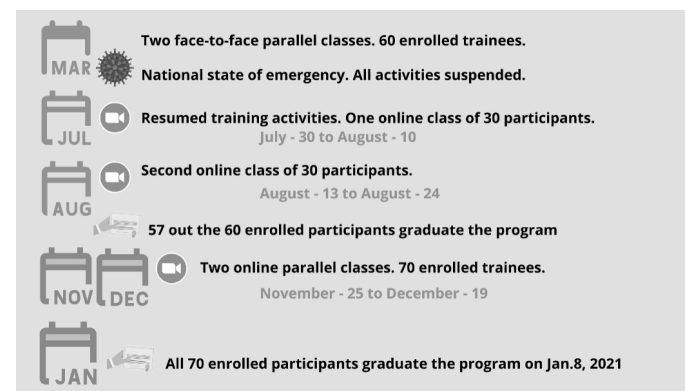
The training calendar and workflow were adapted, considering participants' availability and trainers' experience in delivering online training. Eventually, the two enrolled classes were allocated subsequently and not in parallel, as was initially intended. The first class expressed their availability for daily four hours online meetings, from 30th July to 10th August. The second class expressed their availability from the 13th August to the 24th August, at the same pace and frequency. On the 24th of August 2020, 57 of the 60 enrolled teachers officially graduated from the training programme.

Following the completion of the first two series of future Romanian MediaCoach programmes, the training programme required adaptation, particularly in terms of calendar design and workflow. Due to the high frequency and intensity of the online sessions, there was a high risk of losing attendance rate and interactivity. To mitigate that, ActiveWatch trainers decided not to deliver any new training sessions earlier than November 2020. This reflection and adaptation period were vital, as the prospected participants had already started a new school year and their online availability was limited.

Eventually, after completing a new recruitment session organised by Brăila Teachers' Training Center in late October, more than 100 teachers expressed their interest in the training programme. This high interest in a media literacy training programme

was equally flattering and challenging due to various logistical limitations. From the 100 enrolled teachers, it was agreed that only 70 of them could be included into two parallel online classes, while the 30 remaining teachers were postponed to a 2021 session. The calendar of the meeting was also revised, taking into account the availability of the teachers. As a result, the new calendar structure included three two-hour online meetings every week from Wednesday to Friday, as well as a four-hour online meeting on Saturday. The online meetings that took place on the weekdays were dedicated to in-depth discussions and presentations of the selected topics whilst the Saturday meetings were more practical workshops. During Saturday's meetings, participants were challenged to develop, and present various exercises related to the topics discussed during the previous week. The trainees appreciated this new approach as they had the opportunity to brainstorm, cross-check and adopt various pedagogical scenarios that allowed media literacy embedment in their own teaching or counselling.

The last two training sessions of Romanian MediaCoaches took place between the 25th November to 19th December. After completing the training programme, they had two more weeks to prepare a lesson plan that addressed either media literacy concepts or integrated them into other disciplines. It is worth recalling, since October 2020, new regulations for professional training programmes dedicated to teachers were adopted by the Ministry of Education. As a result, during the training programme, each online meeting was supervised by a designated official who took evidence on the proper delivery and organisation of the training courses.



By January 2021, 127 people graduated from the Romanian MediaCoach programme, called "Media Literacy at School and in Society" training programme. All participants met the criteria required by the Ministry of Education: Attendance and educational portfolio developed and delivered successfully. Statistically, the most appealing topic that was converted into particular lesson plans was cyberbullying (57 lesson plans), followed by online security (36 lesson plans), fake news (15 lesson plans), message decoding and critical thinking (9 lesson plans), anti-discrimination (9 lesson plans)

and copyright (1 lesson plan). Most of the graduates were primary school teachers (70), followed by high school teachers (49), teachers from Special Educational Needs Centres (5) and one from the Brăila County Center for Educational Resources (autonomous educational body that functions under the Ministry of Education authority). All enlisted participants enrolled through open calls issued by the Brăila Teachers' Training Centre using dedicated professional channels (mail groups and online professional groups). In addition, two graduates of the Brăila Teachers' Training Centre were trained as part of the curriculum in order to transfer further the competences and experience to continue the training programme in the future.

When adapting the Dutch MediaCoach Model to the Romanian context, various criteria had to be taken into account. Although the Romanian programme managed to respect the proposed number of training hours (40) for each programme, the pace and the frequency were impacted by teachers' availability and also by pandemic restrictions. As opposed to the Dutch protocol that suggests delivering this training programme within a 10-week timeframe, the Romanian programme was condensed to 4 weeks. This significant change correlated both to Romanian teachers' availability not able to engage in a two-month long training programme, and by the common practice followed by the Romanian training programmes' system. Teachers' participation was directly affected by workload and by the school calendar. These factors were decisive in every professional decision they made.

Throughout the training programme, a consistent number of participants stated that the density of their professional activities, as well as the pandemic restrictions, made it increasingly difficult for them to follow their formative plans. As a result, the proposed four-week training schedule was appreciated and regarded as fair and attainable. Another distinction to the Dutch MediaCoach Programme resided in the key role of the refresher courses within and outside the formative intervention. Whilst for the Dutch programme, the refresher course is promoted equally as an incentive to consolidate the MediaCoach community and extend the certification's availability, in Romania, at best, this follow-up event would only contribute to building the capacity of the Romanian MediaCoaches. Currently, the Romanian MediaCoach Programme has a valid certification until February 2024. In order to mitigate a potential disengagement from the first generation of Romanian MediaCoaches, partners must include the refresher courses within a broader advocacy campaign that aims to mainstream media literacy within Romanian schools. To date, ActiveWatch and Brăila Teachers' Training Centre could not organise any refresher courses due to the short span between the training and graduation sessions.

Evaluation

Despite its tortuous development and adaptation to the Romanian context, the European MediaCoach Initiative had a very positive effect on the implementing organisations, namely ActiveWatch. Over the last two decades, ActiveWatch has been one of the most active CSOs to promote media literacy in Romania. Despite the fact that its portfolio includes a variety of initiatives ranging from organising specialised media literacy seminars and selective training programmes, to the release of the first and only media literacy textbook for high school students, the effect was limited due to a lack of adherence and momentum among educational policymakers. For more than two years now, the history of adapting the Dutch MediaCoach Programme into the Romanian MediaCoach Programme has been perceived within ActiveWatch as a re-enactment of the long history of failed campaigns and initiatives that were to give media literacy a higher rank on the educational agenda. However, very few social and political data were significantly different to those of the late '90s. The European MediaCoach Initiative project has contributed to the revision of the ActiveWatch strategy. This is very challenging when it comes to addressing and promoting media literacy by a civil society organisation in a country that presents conflicting perceptions of human rights defended by NGOs.

On a different subject, the challenge of adapting and implementing a functional model from a western, developed country such as the Netherlands required the ActiveWatch team to be more pragmatic, shifting from "problem-based interventions" to "solution-based interventions". As mentioned, the context is still not very favourable to media literacy and its future development, but this project permitted to ActiveWatch to regain momentum and its legitimacy and authority by building up a brand-new partnership with an educational body, Brăila Teachers' Training Centre, which has the experience to act as a mediator between a national NGO and the national educational policymakers.

Secondly, the European MediaCoach Initiative contributed to an attitudinal change, especially when it comes to claiming ownership for intellectual and creative work and efforts that support the Romanian MediaCoach Programme. The accreditation process of the training programme implied the complete ownership transfer from ActiveWatch to Brăila Teachers' Training Centre. This sole entity was enabled and empowered to convert a so-called NGO programme into a professional certified training programme. This paradigm shift proved beneficial to ActiveWatch's core mission and served as a reminder that the result is more important than the process. Thirdly, and possibly most importantly, since the training programme is consistent in terms of length, design and content, the project provided an ideal opportunity to reconnect with the teaching community. For ActiveWatch, it was a good opportunity to collect and process valuable input from participating teachers and be made aware of the challenges that they face on a daily basis.

Given the institutional, social and political context in Romania, it is difficult and rather hazardous to assess MediaCoach's systemic impact. At this point, the Romanian adaptation is a pilot programme for a new formative approach that is more pragmatic and more focused on current societal issues. The development of this intervention at the local level came as an opportunity for the ActiveWatch implementing team operating mostly in Bucharest and its surroundings. Despite all the inconveniences, the development of this programme in an emerging region of Romania turned out

to be beneficial and grassroots oriented, as it created the proper context to analyse the challenges between the two regions. Bucharest is the most developed region in Romania which reflects the diversity of professional and formative opportunities for teaching professionals from the metropolitan area. Other regions, on the other hand, are less well-served by alternative training systems, which restrict teachers' opportunities to access to appropriate training programmes.

When asked to make recommendations about how to improve the design of the Romanian MediaCoach Programme, the vast majority of graduates declared that the training programme was fairly balanced and structured and responded to their expectations and needs. Although most of them had limited knowledge of media literacy concepts and challenges, they concluded that their knowledge and skills increased significantly by the end of the training sessions.

"As a personal experience, this course meant for me an active commitment and made me leave the comfort zone. I consider that each topic was approached in an objective, creative and interactive manner and would be of real use for the teacher's activity, sometimes overwhelmed by the number and variety of technical and informational factors in his/her work. I appreciated trainers' warm and positive attitude and their unconventional recommendations to put ideas into practice." [C. S., primary school teacher]

"In the first two hours, I thought that I would not be able to apply any of the topics we were going to discuss in class. But I was wrong. I really appreciated the way the course was structured, that we were offered many concrete examples which can be applied in the class. Also, the Saturday "workshops" were the most important and, as we were challenged to work. These exercises helped me to rethink my lesson plans and to accumulate new information." [S. C., primary school teacher]

"I found it most interesting the challenge of transferring and integrating media literacy concepts into other disciplines. A real challenge! It is another step towards the so much needed transdisciplinary education." [G. T., high school teacher]

Retrospectively, the European MediaCoach Initiative also contributed to pilot and enabling a relationship between civil society actors, public educational bodies and teachers. Although they are not necessarily aware of their potential and strength, ultimately, they should work on the same side of the educational agenda.

Lessons learned and next steps

The key goals of the Romanian pilot programme were to accredit and certify the first generation of Romanian MediaCoaches, as well as to contribute to update the training curricula to reflect current challenges and developments in (social) media. Moreover, these objectives were met despite various obstacles and efforts to adapt to the pandemic and the bureaucratic hustle. Although it is hard to foresee what will happen in the coming years, we feel it is imperative that this pilot programme be extended in other regions in the country as all Romanian teachers face similar challenges.

In this regard, in the coming year, ActiveWatch, with the support of the Brăila Teachers' Training Center, will be fully committed to advocating for the replication of the model to other Teachers' Training Centres across the country. The replication process will consist of developing and delivering an exclusive trainer of trainers' programme for Teachers' Training Centre staff members.

The 2020 challenges revealed that organising and delivering of such training programmes is, in the end, feasible and with limited costs that could be covered by additional small grants (such as EEA Grants that currently operate in Romania). Additionally, to the replication strategy, ActiveWatch will advocate for media literacy integration in the national curricula and use the current Romanian MediaCoach programme as a best practice and as a good argument to convince relevant policymakers. This is a mid-term objective, as the national authorities and educational bodies still face consistent challenges in managing the educational system in the unpredictable context generated by the pandemic.

Long-term, as suggested by some graduates, ActiveWatch could create a dedicated training curriculum for parents in order for all related actors (teachers – students – parents) to be encouraged and engaged in implementing media literacy values in their everyday lives. As the "Media Literacy in Schools and Society" training programme is accredited until 2024, Brăila Teacher's Training Centre will include this programme in their formative portfolio and will apply for partial governmental subsidies that will allow them to organise future training sessions with minimum costs for the participants. According to a business model designed by Brăila Teachers' Training Centre, if subsidised, the training programme would imply a symbolic fee for the future participants (approximately 60 Euros)

Over the next three months, ActiveWatch and Brăila Teachers' Training Centre will organise a series of communication and promotional events to raise awareness within other education professionals and policy-makers as part of a more consistent campaign that would potentially popularise and multiply the Romanian MediaCoach pilot.

To some extent, one can say that, after almost three years' hard work in adapting and replicating the Dutch model into the Romanian context, the project has just begun.

Concluding remarks

For the last two years, the sinuous roadmap of the Romanian MediaCoach programme has confirmed on many occasions why the Romanian educational system is subject to public scrutiny and criticism and why the distance between citizens and schools is growing. The temporary success of the European MediaCoach Initiative replication and adaptation should be taken as a drop of water in the ocean. The personal commitment of some individuals and organisations that push for innovative pedagogical approaches and look for fresh air and new initiatives is insufficient. This model should be supported and encouraged by central authorities and involve schools, teachers, parents and students and their respective social interactions.

More than 100 Romanian teachers have now joined an exclusive and possibly delusory club of more than 500 MediaCoaches in Europe. They will continue to struggle to turn teaching into concrete learning opportunities for their students. For them to succeed, many institutional and political efforts need to take place in the next years. Policymakers must acknowledge that media literacy is not a snobbish concept that interferes with learning processes. On the contrary, media literacy represents a fully enabling learning experience.

CONCLUSION

Naomi Thompson

EAVI

When discussing the primal needs of human beings, there is a focus on fighting, procreation and food, there is no mention there of equally powerful need to understand our world, to socialise and to tell our stories. The pandemic brought this into sharp relief – there is a question posed in this book of how Europe would have responded to COVID-19 without modern media – and the answer is that we would have done what our ancestors did in times of plague – we would have continued to fight, eat and procreate, we would have congregated to share our understandings, stories and germs. Modern technology has saved us from such a fate as much as medicine has saved us from a higher death toll: we can (hopefully) find out from the press roughly what is happening outside our immediate sphere (recommended); we can wander onto Twitter for a fight (not recommended); we can order online for our food (recommended); we can share ill-advised explicit images and fantasise about the end of lockdown on Tinder or Grindr (not recommended); we can go to Facebook, Tiktok, or Instagram to socialise (recommended but don't overdo it).

While it can be argued, therefore, that the media has quite literally saved lives and sanities in the last 18 months, it is not without dangers. We are living in an age where the modern equivalents of the printing press, the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution have occurred in a 30-year period. It is no wonder that there is a corresponding social and political discontent, made worse by the absence of training for individuals in how to navigate this new world. Add in a plague and these are truly historic times, giving us an opportunity to speculate how they will be written by the historians of the future. Initiatives like MediaCoach, while training only 500 individuals in this first round, are historic and will deserve a mention in any textbook covering this era.

The success of the project is down to many factors – first of which is the passion, commitment and professionalism of everyone involved, especially when overcoming the challenges posed by these interesting times. The focus of empowerment and opportunity over protectionism in the topics covered ensured that participants, rather than feeling hectored and frightened, were enthusiastic and optimistic about their studies. The cooperation with certification bodies gave authority to the trainers and credibility to the courses, while giving participants a concrete goal, a sense of achievement upon graduation and genuine personal and professional development.

The excellence of the Dutch MediaCoach project provided a solid foundation for other countries to build upon, and is proof positive that initiatives which are successful in developed media environments can be adapted to less developed media environments with equally great success. The specificity of metrics provided by EAVI's previous studies gave the national teams a decent basis to examine both the media

environment and media literacy levels in their Member States, thus identifying where the need was greatest and enabled them to create a syllabus that addressed those individual needs, as well as being consistently reactive to the interests and requirements of the participants.

Finally, the sustainability and self-generating nature of the project means that MediaCoach is not a token effort to combat the scourge of media illiteracy but rather a productive project with real impact which further motivates organisers, trainers and participants. 100 teachers can teach 10,000 children in a single academic year, who teach their parents and peers, who teach their parents and peers, and so on and so forth, and she who saves one mind saves the world in time. Using schools as community hubs, this project has recognised and capitalised on the self-seeding nature of media literacy. One might say it spreads like a virus, but it's too soon to be so glib.

While not a deliberate factor in its success, in a twisted way, the pandemic had a positive impact on the project. If bad can be made worse by timing, certainly in the case of the Romanian team who had extraordinary obstacles to overcome, timing can also make the bad a little better. Lockdown restrictions forced teams to move their sessions online, which allowed for a greater social and geographic reach. Not being able to leave our homes has narrowed our view of the world to what can be seen through a screen and proved the need for the project. This spurred the enthusiasm of both organisers and participants, with many teams reporting an increased uptake from March 2020 onwards.

MediaCoach is an extraordinary project for an extraordinary time. All of the organisers, trainers and participants should be proud of their past and ongoing contributions and efforts. Well done!





Continuous technological advancements, together with social and political events, emphasise the need for media literacy in our societies' democracy. Media Literacy skills are crucial not only at the individual level but also the societal one. The European MediaCoach Initiative has made a substantial contribution to the advancement of these skills by training media literacy educators across Europe. This book provides insights and information on this three-year long experience in training 100 media literacy coaches in each of the following countries: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, and Romania. The chapters illustrate the varied experiences of the partners in replicating the excellent practice that was initially developed in the Netherlands by the Nationale Academie Voor Media by emphasising the strategic importance of media literacy at both the individual and community levels.

"Investing in media literacy means investing in people. Is there a better investment Europe can make?"

Paolo Celot at the European Parliament



European Media
Coach Initiative



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



SOFIA UNIVERSITY
ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI



ATHENS
LIFELONG
LEARNING
INSTITUTE



Nationale
Academie voor
Media & Maatschappij
www.mediaenmaatschappij.nl



ActiveWatch



CYPRUS PEDAGOGICAL
INSTITUTE

