Cross-sectoral challenges to media literacy

Case studies

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8 April 2025

The research conducted for this report was carried out from 2021-22 and funded with support from the UK Department for Science, Innovation and Technology

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Executive summary

As part of the research on cross-sectoral challenges to media literacy, commissioned in October 2022 by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, we carried out a series of international case comparisons to examine media literacy landscapes in countries outside the UK. Eleven were selected for analysis, categorised into three distinct groups:

In-depth case studies: Canada, France, The Netherlands.

Medium-length case studies: Belgium (Flanders), Finland, Ireland.

Short case studies: Brazil, Estonia, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden.

In selecting the countries, we looked for factors such as:

- A strong tradition of media literacy training within or outside formal education (e.g., Canada, Finland, France, Sweden).
- Similarities to the UK context in terms of one or more of the following:
  - Demography (e.g., France),
  - Intellectual framing of media literacy (e.g., Canada, New Zealand),
  - Challenges (e.g., Belgium, Estonia, Ireland),
  - Proximity in terms of geography and governance (Ireland).
- A high level of digital skills and digital literacy (e.g., Finland, the Netherlands).
- A global spread beyond Europe (e.g., Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa).

For all case studies, we conducted extensive desk research, reviewing policies, reports, scholarly publications, periodicals, and website entries. In addition, each of the medium case studies was based on an interview with at least one media literacy stakeholder, and each of the in-depth case studies included interviews with at least three media literacy stakeholders. The interviews and desk research took place from February to April 2023. We later contacted some interviewees for draft reviews of the manuscript.

The findings in the case studies represent a combination of the perceptions of interviewees based on their experience and knowledge of the sector, as well as our analysis of the wide range of sources used for the desk research in each case.

Main findings

A diverse range of definitions: In some countries, media literacy is seen as digital empowerment; in others, there is more of a focus on resilience against online harms; some countries focus on digital proficiency; others on critical skills.

A diverse range of players: Different stakeholders play key roles depending on the country; stakeholders include government departments (e.g., Ministry of Education or Culture), media regulators, public service media, libraries, NGOs and civil society groups, and tech platforms.

Focus on media literacy education: All the countries we studied have adopted an education-based approach to media literacy with a focus on delivery through schools, although to varying extents. Within the curriculum, media literacy tends to be viewed as a cross-curricular (or transversal) subject.

National media literacy strategy: Most countries still do not have a national strategy on media literacy, despite many stakeholders clamouring for one. Where these do exist (e.g., Finland, Flanders), they provide valuable direction and legitimacy for media literacy work.

Valuable programmes and events: Several countries organise dedicated Media Literacy Weeks (e.g., Canada, Finland, France, New Zealand) and support various media coaches or ambassadors initiatives (e.g., the Netherlands, South Africa).

Networks: Some countries (e.g., Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden) have established media literacy networks as a way to better coordinate the sector. Such networks are usually established as government initiatives but are run on a day-to-day basis by stakeholders in the sector.

The case studies demonstrate an array of approaches and attitudes to media literacy in different contexts. It was evident that there is no single model for effectively increasing media literacy levels, and that some more coherent approaches will likely be easier in smaller, more homogeneous nations such as Finland, whereas a larger country such as France will have a more disparate and fragmented sector.

Common challenges

Despite the diverse contexts and approaches among the countries studied, common challenges emerged.

Position of media literacy in schools

- There are challenges around approaching media literacy as a cross-curricular discipline: many stakeholders agree that it makes sense as an approach, but teachers lack the time to integrate media literacy when it isn't a dedicated subject with timetabled lessons, and it is harder to evaluate progress and success.
- The need to constantly update curricula to reflect the evolving digital environment requires significant resources.
- There are fragmentations and disparities across regions in terms of the standard of media literacy education offered, particularly in larger countries. There is often insufficient and inconsistent teacher training on media literacy.

Lack of coordination

- This was apparent across government departments, sectors, regions, and within civil society.
- Some coordination challenges are inevitable in an area that involves so many players, but these seem to be exacerbated when there is a lack of national policies and strategies.

Reaching vulnerable and neglected groups

- Reaching adults outside formal education is a challenge across all the countries we studied.
- There was widespread concern in particular about the challenges of provision for vulnerable groups, who are often difficult to reach and tend to be overlooked.

Funding and infrastructure

- The lack of a long-term structural policy around media literacy in many countries leads to a lack of long-term funding, especially for non-profits and government agencies, and a lack of infrastructure to deliver media literacy outside schools.

Measuring impact

- Evaluation is rarely carried out. This has implications for the quality of interventions as there is a lack of evidence about what works, and for funding, as funders want to see evidence of success.

Questions around framing

- There are tensions between balancing digital proficiency and empowerment with critical thinking and resilience against misinformation. Teaching everything requires extensive resources and different types of engagement with audiences, and isn't always possible.
- Several interviewees were aware of the risk of the broader societal benefits of media literacy being left behind in the increased focus on digital skills and competencies.

Platforms and the evolving technological landscape

- Some interviewees had particular concerns over how to keep on top of developments like generative artificial intelligence.
- There is often confusion among practitioners in deciding whether or not to work with tech platforms, and what sort of relationship to build, given that they are also the cause of (or closely associated with) the problems associated with online media.

Table 1: Summary of findings by case

Country	Aspect	Details
Canada	**Rationale**	○ Long tradition of media literacy initiatives (Association for Media Literacy was established in 1978). ○ Canada is a regional leader in media literacy, and has some similarities to the UK in its intellectual framing of media literacy.
	Findings	○ Education-based approach, focused on delivery through schools. Each province designs its own curriculum, so there are significant disparities. ○ Association of Media Literacy is a small organisation but has influence with teachers, as a membership organisation. ○ Media Smarts is another major player, as a resource centre/lab for media education, organising several projects including the annual Media Literacy Week. ○ The government only provides project-based funding.
	Challenges	○ Lack of on-going funding for non-profits. ○ Need to reach vulnerable groups. ○ The lack of value attached to media literacy in education among some teachers, accompanied by a lack of training and support. ○ The lack of evaluation of the impact of media literacy education, partly as a result of the decentralised approach. ○ The need to constantly update curricula, and the inadequacy of updated curricula in terms of providing for media literacy. ○ What to define as media literacy, given the overlap with digital literacy and technology use. ○ Lack of infrastructure to deliver media literacy education outside the school system. ○ Lack of a national media literacy policy, which leads to lack of coordination in the sector.
	Good practice	○ Media Literacy Week – considered highly successful ○ Media literacy successfully used as a tool to discuss social issues. ○ Ontario (and other provinces) remain good examples of integrating media literacy into the curriculum.
France	**Rationale**	○ Has similar demographics to the UK, along with a strong tradition of media literacy in education.
	Findings	○ France has a wide range of players and networks. ○ Lacks an overarching policy/strategy on media literacy. ○ Government input is through the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture. CLEMI comes under the Ministry of Education and it focuses on delivering media literacy in schools. Media literacy exists in the school curriculum as a cross-curricular discipline, but there are recent calls for it to become a standalone subject. ○ Arcom, the independent regulator for audio-visual and digital companies, also delivers media literacy programmes. ○ Public radio & TV in France support media literacy. Platform companies are also required by law to commit to media literacy education and report on their activities.
	Challenges	○ Too much focus on disinformation, translating to a focus on risk rather than opportunities. ○ Too much focus on digital rather than media literacy. ○ The need to reach adults and older people. ○ Challenges around coordination – lack of synergy between practitioners and also between government bodies. ○ Existing networks are useful, but they paint a messy landscape. ○ Teachers lack the time to teach media literacy.

Country	Aspect	Details
		○ There are challenges around having media literacy as a cross-curricular subject. ○ Regional disparities in media literacy education and provision, and disparities in levels of teacher training. ○ Funding is a major challenge. ○ Dilemma in relation to how to partner with tech platforms. ○ Lack of evaluation of media literacy effectiveness.
	Good practice	○ Effective coordination between stakeholders and networks. ○ The value of having media literacy as a standalone subject, given the limitations of having it as a cross-curricular discipline. ○ A clear role for the public service and commercial media sector in delivering media literacy. ○ The Press and Media Week in Schools run by CLEMI.
Netherlands	**Rationale**	○ High level of digital skills and digital literacy, with an established media literacy network.
	Findings	○ Media literacy is incorporated within the concept of media wisdom. ○ Primarily adopts a networked approach, with the Media Literacy Network as a key player. The Network identifies issues, sets goals and decides with its members what to promote. ○ The Alliance for Digital Inclusion is also significant, aiming to promote digital inclusion, supported by a mix of public and private funding. ○ The Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision plays a key role in the Network and the Alliance. ○ The National Library has a duty to improve digital literacy, and runs initiatives in partnership with schools. ○ Education is relatively decentralised, run at a municipal level. There have been moves to make media literacy a compulsory part of the curriculum, but these have been delayed. ○ The government's digitalisation agenda includes a goal to ensure that everyone is able to participate in the digital society.
	Challenges	○ Difficulties reaching vulnerable and neglected groups. ○ Funding challenges lead to a lack of infrastructure. ○ The rise of disinformation. ○ How to measure the impact of media literacy interventions. ○ How to work effectively with technology companies, particularly in a constantly evolving landscape. ○ Lack of coordination despite the Network, as there are just so many initiatives.
	Good practice	○ The networked approach is widely seen as successful, primarily led by the Media Literacy Network, and including a key role played by libraries, both in and outside of schools. ○ Media Literacy Week enables an impactful national campaign each year.
Belgium (Flanders)	**Rationale**	○ A well-established and well-defined media literacy policy, in a region with similar levels of internet penetration to the UK facing similar challenges.
	Findings	○ The Flemish government approved a concept note on media literacy in 2012 that took more of an empowerment stance. It made provision for formal and non-formal education. ○ Mediawijs was established by the government as the Flemish Knowledge Centre for Media Literacy, and it seeks to coordinate the sector.

Country	Aspect	Details
		○ VRT, the public broadcaster, also plays a role in media literacy. ○ Media literacy is approached as a cross-curricular subject in schools.
	Challenges	○ Lack of long-term structural policy and secure funding. ○ Limited coordination between branches of the government. ○ Insufficient integration of media literacy into the welfare system. ○ The constantly evolving digital environment. ○ Insufficient support for programmes that target adults.
	Good practice	○ A coherent, long-term policy on media literacy. ○ Mediawijs as a coordinating organisation, which is government-established and part government-funded but sitting outside of government. ○ The Mediawijs cross-department working group for government bodies working on digital inclusion. ○ Clear role for public service media delivering ML.
Finland	**Rationale**	○ Media literacy has strong legitimacy in Finland, which is widely seen as a world leader in terms of media literacy policy and implementation.
	Findings	○ Long history of focus on media education, in schools and universities. Media literacy is a transversal subject throughout formal education. ○ The country's approach now extends to lifelong learning. ○ A formal national media literacy policy was developed in 2019, in a collaboration between the government and a wide variety of stakeholders. ○ KAVI, a public sector organisation, is responsible for promoting media education at a national level. It runs Media Literacy Week and also houses Finland's Safer Internet Centre. ○ Implementation in the education sector is the responsibility of the Finnish National Agency for Education. ○ KAVI takes a flexible approach to media literacy delivery, depending on the region and audience.
	Challenges	○ Constantly changing requirements of media literacy as the media and technology landscapes evolve. ○ Reaching older people.
	Good practice	○ A coherent, long-term and collaboratively-created national media literacy policy that gives stakeholders a sense of ownership, provides a mandate for KAVI and a framework for its activities. ○ Recognition of media literacy as an activity underpinned by core values and driven by political commitment, which brings legitimacy to the sector and in turn allows for investment. ○ Effective sector coordination via KAVI . ○ Media Literacy Week
Ireland	**Rationale**	○ Geographic, linguistic, and governance proximity/similarity to the UK, with similar levels of internet penetration, and similar concerns e.g., increased attention on disinformation.
	Findings	○ Lack of an overarching national strategy - media literacy tends to be seen as a 'policy orphan.'

Country	Aspect	Details
		○ The new media regulator Coimisiún na Meán (which has taken on the responsibilities of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland) has a mandate to promote media literacy – one of its aims is to facilitate a coordinated approach to media literacy. ○ Media Literacy Ireland (MLI) is an informal alliance/network of different groups of stakeholders. It was established in 2017 by BAI but is not run by it (or its successor). ○ Media literacy exists in the primary school language curriculum and also at junior and upper secondary level, usually as a cross-curricular topic, especially at the junior secondary level.
	Challenges	○ Lack of long-term plan and strategies. ○ Lack of long-term funding for MLI. ○ Changing technology landscape. ○ Dilemma over whether technology companies should be part of the solution to the problems they caused. ○ Difficulty in expanding media literacy beyond schools.
	Good practice	○ MLI, which the government/regulator leads but does not own, and is a relatively small size, which enables it to be more agile. ○ The importance of voluntary support for MLI, which means members feel ownership of it, leading to highly successful projects. ○ Be Media Smart campaign. ○ The focus on general competencies rather than a tight definition of media literacy, which helps to'futureproof' its policy. ○ A national strategy that includes long-term funding.
Brazil	**Rationale**	○ A large country provides an interesting comparison; relatively advanced media literacy landscape in Latin America.
	Findings	○ Overwhelming focus is on the need to develop basic literacies and technological proficiency. ○ The Base National Common Curricular framework provides educators with guidelines on digital proficiency and literacy, but the education system is decentralised. ○ There is an array of non-profits involved in media literacy delivery, tending to target youth and focus on empowerment.
	Challenges	○ Need to invest in teacher training. ○ Decentralised education system can create disparities.
	Good practice	○ The use of the BNCC as a template to develop a media literacy curriculum, with standards that can be implemented flexibly.
Estonia	**Rationale**	○ Its use of media literacy to ward off Russian disinformation campaigns.
	Findings	○ The country has a Cyber Unit devoted to cybersecurity. ○ The Education Strategy (2021-2035) includes digital literacy. ○ Media education was introduced into the curriculum in 2002. Media literacy education tends to be cross-curricular. Media literacy is also done by the public service media.
	Challenges	○ Robust teacher training is lacking.
	Good practice	○ A curriculum approach that assesses media literacy competencies separately from other subjects, which offers a clearer idea of what children are actually learning.
New Zealand	**Rationale**	○ There is a strong public media sector and an emerging focus on media literacy. It represents a case from Australasia. There was British influence in the early days of the NZ media literacy curriculum development.

Country	Aspect	Details
	Findings	◦ The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture and Heritage plays an important role in media literacy policy. ◦ The Office of Film and Literature Classification also plays a vital role in how media literacy is defined particularly in terms of online harms and resilience to media content. ◦ Media literacy exists in the curriculum as the media studies subject-specific curriculum. ◦ The National Library of New Zealand plays a role in promoting digital literacy and digital citizenship.
	Challenges	◦ The work done by the Ministry of Education, the Classification Office, and the National Library is disconnected, with each focusing on a different aspect of media literacy. ◦ There is a silo approach to media literacy, where audiences like parents and young people do not intersect, making it difficult to have balanced media literacy delivery and participation from across the population. ◦ The media literacy curriculum tends to focus largely on preventing online harms.
	Opportunities	◦ The National Library of New Zealand's has a robust website on digital literacy, which makes multiple resources available.
South Africa	**Rationale**	◦ Highlighted by UNESCO as the most advanced media literacy landscape in Africa.
	Findings	◦ Media literacy is largely presented as digital literacy, focused on empowering people with the digital skills to work. ◦ South Africa gives special consideration to the fourth industrial revolution and the National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA) is tasked with increasing the public's digital skills, providing training on a national scale. ◦ Media literacy doesn't feature prominently in the curriculum, but it does come up in various subjects. ◦ Libraries focus on bridging the digital divide by providing access and some digital skills training. ◦ Civil society organisations tend to target young people, partnering with international institutions and tech platforms.
	Challenges	◦ The elderly are neglected, given the focus on preparation for the world of work. ◦ Heavy focus on digital skills could come at the expense of broader media literacy.
	Good practice	◦ Libraries provide e-learning on digital skills. ◦ The partnership between NEMISA and universities helps to deliver digital literacy training to the wider population.
Sweden	**Rationale**	◦ High levels of internet penetration. ◦ Long history of media education.
	Findings	◦ The government created a Commission on Media and Information Literacy and Democratic Dialogue in 2018 to promote media literacy, but the Commission is no longer in operation. ◦ The Swedish Media Council generates and compiles research in the area. It also aims to improve collaboration in the sector. The SMC runs MIK Sweden, the country-wide network for media literacy. Among other things, it provides a knowledge bank and maps media literacy work done in the country. It is responsible for collaboration, coordination, and monitoring of the sector. ◦ Before MIK Sweden, there was no central body to communicate research findings and international developments in the area. ◦ The Swedish National Agency for Education plays a role in digital media literacy, especially through the curriculum, where media literacy takes on a cross-curricular focus. ◦ The Swedish Educational Broadcasting Corporation has a mandate to provide educational resources for media literacy. ◦ There are regional disparities in the delivery of media literacy.

Country	Aspect	Details
	Challenges	○ Regional disparities. ○ Disparate and inconsistent approach to media literacy.
	Good practice	○ MIK Sweden provides a knowledge bank and carryies out mapping and evaluation of the sector in a long-term, systematic way. ○ Government leadership in coordinating the sector.

Part 1: In-depth case studies

1 Canada

1.1 Introduction

Media literacy delivery in Canada broadly rests on three groups of stakeholders: the ministries of education in the provinces, non-profits spread across the country, and grassroots teacher associations. The most significant are the ministries of education in the country's ten provinces and three territories, pointing to the emphasis that Canada places on media literacy education. Origins can be traced to concerns that Canadians had regarding the exposure of children to violent and sexist television and advertising content coming largely from the US.[1] To combat the perceived threat, teachers formed associations aimed at promoting media literacy education in schools to make children more critical in their engagement with media content. The first and most prominent of these was the Association for Media Literacy (AML) established in 1978. Part grassroots movement, part teacher association, the AML would later be invited by the Ontario Ministry of Education to write the Media Literacy Resource Guide, which eventually led to the inclusion of media literacy in the elementary and secondary school English curriculum in 1987.[2]

This made Ontario the first region in the world to introduce media literacy into a school curriculum, and other provinces in Canada soon followed Ontario's lead. By focusing on education and curriculum development in this way, the goal was to bring media literacy education to every Canadian child from kindergarten to secondary school. The various curricula themselves benefited from the legacy of the Toronto School of Communication, particularly the works of Marshall McLuhan. They were also influenced by works of scholars like Len Masterman and David Buckingham, reflecting the period around the 1980s when media educators in Canada turned to Britain and Australia for media literacy frameworks and practices. Other influences of the time included Paulo Freire, Neil Postman, John Fiske and Jean Killbourne among many others.

Outside of education, non-profit organisations also provide media literacy interventions to parents, the elderly, vulnerable groups, and others in society. Some of these are implemented as part of the annual Media Literacy Week, organised by MediaSmarts, which sees itself as Canada's centre for digital and media literacy and is the most visible of all the non-profits. In all these interventions, the federal government's role is focused on funding specific project-based initiatives through its ministries and agencies.

Initiatives such as Media Literacy Week and Canada's long tradition of sector-led media literacy education point to the leading role that the country plays, particularly in the North American region. This was recognised in the 2022 Expanded Media Literacy Index of the European Policies Initiative, where Canada ranked seventh out of 47 countries, most of them European. This places Canada in the first cluster of countries with the best media literacy indices, including media freedom indicators, education indicators, trust, and usage of ICTs.

These reasons account for the choice of Canada as one of our in-depth case studies. In terms of methodology, we reviewed relevant reports, website entries, and academic materials on media literacy using a desk research format. We also interviewed three media literacy stakeholders in the country. Some of the key documents that we reviewed include:

- MediaSmarts' Building a Digital Media Literacy Strategy for Canada, 2022.
- An academic article on the development of media education in Canada, 2020.
- A Brookfield report on The State of Digital Literacy in Canada, 2017.
- MediaSmart's Building Digital Capacity: Capitalizing on Digital Literacy Skills, 2018.
- An introductory book chapter on Media Literacy for Citizenship: A Canadian Perspectivev, 2019.

[1] See Hoechsmann, M., & Wilson, C. (2019). Media literacy in Canada. In R. Hobbs & P. Mihailidis (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Media Literacy* (pp. 883-888). Wiley Blackwell.
[2] Ibid.

- An academic article on Digital Literacy in Digital Strategy, 2019.

For the interview, the three participants were:

- Neil Andersen, President of the AML.
- Michael Hoechsmann, Professor at Lake University and author or editor of numerous publications on media literacy.
- Matthew Johnson, Director of Education at MediaSmarts.

The following sections outline the specific strategies on media literacy that have been implemented in Canada, and analysis of their successes and limitations.

1.2 Strategies implemented

The approach to media literacy in Canada is overwhelmingly education-based. This is mainly in elementary and secondary schools, although most universities also teach media and media-related courses, where media literacy is touched on in some fashion. In this section, we consider this education-based approach as well as the media literacy strategies of the major organisations in Canada and the role of the government, both federal and provincial.

1.2.1 Provincial media literacy education and curriculum development

Our desk research shows that **formal education** in the provinces is the main strategy for delivering media literacy in Canada. The three interviewees agreed on this point, and they referred to the responsibility that each province has to design its curriculum. Most of the provinces also have their separate Media Education Association. There is no national outlook for media literacy education in Canada, leading to what Michael called "a whole panorama of educational outcomes." This makes it unsurprising that media literacy education in Canadian schools is uneven across the provinces, with different priorities given to various aspects of media literacy. For instance, some form of digital or ICT literacy exists in the primary and secondary school curriculum of provinces like Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, but one is distinct from the other. Provinces also have the choice of embedding media literacy across school subjects or approaching it as a standalone course. Some smaller provinces develop curricula together, and others sometimes adopt the curriculum of larger provinces.

Ontario, the largest province, introduce media literacy into the curriculum in 1987, making the first to do so. The curriculum was mandated in 1998 when it became law for teachers to teach and assess media literacy. In the curriculum, media literacy was made a standalone course, where it comprised a quarter of the English curriculum, with competencies in areas such as speaking, reading, writing, and creating media. Reflecting on that period, Neil described Ontario as having "the most explicit and well-articulated media literacy curriculum". Since then, there has been an update to the curriculum in 2006.

The latest update was in 2023, an update that featured changes in the Language curriculum for grades 1-8 and for grade 9. This divided the Language curriculum into four strands, one of which is Literacy Connections and Applications. This strand provided for "transferable skills" to support students in communication. It also included "digital media literacy" to help students understand their rights and responsibilities online, how to navigate online environments safely, how to use digital and media tools for design processes, and how to use online tools for effective collaboration. One interviewee, however, criticised the 2023 update, noting that its use of digital media literacy is not within a context "that would help teachers understand or teach it" since "media literacy no longer has a distinct position". They added that the update privileges print literacy and "reads like something from the early 1990s", making it unfit for today's realities.

Outside Ontario, other provinces that have developed their curriculum include Quebec, which has made media literacy a broad area of understanding across curricular competence. British Columbia has also given considerable focus to digital literacy, integrating it fully into its curriculum.

1.2.2 The Association for Media Literacy – media education

Despite these differences in the provincial approach to media education, one thing that unites media literacy curricula in Canada is that they draw from Marshall McLuhan's 'medium is the message' concept, which stresses the need to understand each medium in its unique context. **The AML has been keen to sustain McLuhan's legacy**, adopting his ideas alongside those of Len Masterman to develop eight Key Concepts of media literacy. Some key features of the Concepts include:

- how to understand the media,
- the construction of media messages,
- audience negotiation of meaning,
- the unique message carried by each medium, and
- the social, political, and economic role that media plays in society.

Taken together, the principles underlying the Concepts form the bedrock of the media education curriculum in Canada, particularly Ontario.

The AML dedicates itself to promoting the Concepts and works with teachers to develop media literacy content for schools. It also works with librarians, consultants, parents, cultural workers, and media professionals. In operational terms, the AML is a small organisation run by about ten volunteers. It exerts its influence as a membership body for teachers, making it a hub for the sector, an interface between the Ministry of Education (for instance, in Ontario) and teachers.

1.2.3 MediaSmarts – research-to-resource

The other major organisation working on media literacy in Canada is MediaSmarts, which provides educational resources, public awareness campaigns, and policy recommendations. Matthew described the organisation's work as one based on a "**research-to-resource** cycle where the research identifies for us either what new resources need to be developed or how to update our existing resources." Once those resources are developed, their use by stakeholders and beneficiaries can be studied or evaluated to inform research, and so on, in a continuous feedback loop.

Hence, MediaSmarts is described as a "resource centre," a kind of "lab for media education," producing studies and materials that are needed in the sector (Michael). The organisation offers a resource library of nearly 300 lessons and dozens of parent and teacher resources and has consulted on curriculum for several provinces. Some of MediaSmarts' major initiatives include the following:

1.2.3.1 Young Canadians in a Wireless World

Young Canadians in a Wireless World is a research project which began in 2000 and is currently in its fourth iteration. It epitomises the research-to-resource model, providing information on young people's attitudes and behaviours regarding digital media and the internet.

1.2.3.2 Digital Media Literacy Curriculum

The Digital Media Literacy Curriculum comprises ten key concepts and four core competencies for digital media literacy. The curriculum serves as a resource for teachers and schools that teach media literacy across Canada.

1.2.3.3 Break the Fake

Break the Fake is a fact-checking web catalogue to help people spot misleading content and deal with disinformation. The campaign is also delivered through community workshops and school lesson plan instructions.

1.2.3.4 Digital Smarts

Digital Smarts is a programme delivered in conjunction with YWCA Canada aimed at supporting vulnerable and under-represented groups in areas such as privacy protection and security online, job search, online banking, and how to effectively search the internet.

Beyond these, MediaSmarts' perhaps most notable work is the annual **Media Literacy Week** that it organises. Throughout the week, different partners including schools, libraries, museums, and community groups across Canada host events promoting media literacy. It originated in Canada in 2006 and takes place every October. Other countries and bodies have followed Canada's lead by instituting their versions of media literacy week. Examples include the European Commission, the United Statesv, and Finland (see case study). UNESCO has expanded this with its Global Media and Information Literacy Week, which also takes place in October.

In Canada, the idea of dedicating a specific period to promote literacy also includes more specific areas such as science literacy. Consequently, there is Science Literacy Week, an opportunity for stakeholders such as schools, science centres, museums, libraries, and non-profit organisations to assemble and share ideas and knowledge about science. There is also Financial Literacy Month, when the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, a government body, intensifies its engagement with people and supports organisations to strengthen financial literacy among the population.

1.3 Other organisations: workshops, research, resources, policy

Similar to most other countries, it is difficult to ascertain the number of organisations involved in delivering media literacy interventions in Canada, something that Matthew alluded to. This is made even more difficult by the largely provincial nature of providing media literacy support in the country. Some organisations that still have a national mandate include the following:

- Canadian National Film Board (NFB). As part of its media literacy duties, it mainly provides training and educational resourcesv such as animation videos and digital storytelling that can be integrated into various school subjects across the provinces. This again underscores the central place that media literacy education has in Canada.
- The Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC). It is a non-profit focusing on building the digital expertise that Canadians need to participate in the digital economy. It does this mainly through capacity-building programmes, research, and policy recommendations.
- The McLuhan Foundation. It also focuses on digital literacy and the impact of digital technologies on people. It seeks to build communities and networks that aid critical understanding of the changes caused by digital media and provides spaces such as the McLuhan Library for public engagement on digital media literacy.
- Some organisations also focus on vulnerable audiences. One of them is ABC Life Literacy, which gives attention to the elderly, providing literacy skills that can be seen as part of lifelong learning. It further provides resources and materials to organisations that deliver and promote adult learning.

1.4 Role of the central government: funding

> *The government's role to date has been largely a matter of funding projects.*
>
> *Matthew*

> *We are in that era, not of core funding, but of project-based funding, and government is one of the sources for project funding.*
>
> *Michael*

The above quotes summarise the role that the Canadian government plays in the country's media literacy sector, one that centres on **funding**. Other than that, "the federal government does not have a formal role [in the sector] and does not mediate in any sustained manner" (Michael). Our desk research affirms this, as we saw in several projects that the government funds:

- Media Literacy Week, which the Ministry of Canadian Heritage supported with $225,000 from 2020 to 2022. The government has sometimes used the Week as an opportunity to launch relevant policies such as the guidance on privacy and video games in 2012.
- The Ministry of Canadian Heritage also funds media literacy initiatives and research through its Digital Citizen Contribution Program. Of particular focus are initiatives aimed at inclusion and against disinformation and other online harms, indicating a strong focus on online safety. Support, usually up to $100,000, is typically provided for one year.
- The Ministry of Innovation, Science and Industry supports the Digital Literacy Exchange Program, which involves $17.6 million in funding to enable media literacy providers to equip Canadians with the skills needed to participate in the digital economy. At least 36 organisations have been funded by the Program to deliver media and digital literacy initiatives. The Program is part of the larger Canadian Digital Charter, which focuses on privacy protection for all Canadians, data-driven innovation that is human-centred, and aims to support Canadian organisations to make the most of digital innovations.

Where the Canadian government has been involved directly is e-governance, specifically its 2022 Digital Ambition, which aligns with the Digital Government Strategy. The Strategy is part of the government's detailed plan to advance digital service delivery, cyber security, talent recruitment, and privacy. Included in the talent recruitment policy is the need to promote digital literacy among government employees in areas such as how to use computer services, data literacy around privacy issues, and cyber security. Overall, the Strategy and the Ambition show that considerable focus is placed on using digital technology, not necessarily for literacy, but to provide government services.

1.5 Analysis: successes and perceived limitations

The challenges in the Canadian context are broadly similar to those in the UK. For instance, **funding** is a major challenge in Canada (see report by MediaSmarts). This is not surprising as organisations delivering media literacy interventions in Canada tend to be non-profits, which require consistent funding.

Problems with funding, especially "ongoing funding" mean that an organisation such as MediaSmarts is "tied to funding cycles" and finds it hard to carry out evaluation or promotional outreach programmes on the initiatives or resources that they develop, as Matthew observed. To address the challenge, MediaSmarts tries to diversify its funding sources to include both government and corporate bodies. But this comes with other problems of perception, since "there's always going to be people who feel that [funding from government or corporations] compromises you in some way" (Matthew).

Other similar challenges include **the need to reach out to vulnerable groups** such as those with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and those with English as a second language. The challenge for practitioners is "recognising and meeting the needs of those different groups, while at the same time meeting the needs of the whole country" (Matthew).

Beyond this, however, the most pressing challenges relate to issues around education, the value that is attached to media literacy, how it is conceptualised, and the need for a national strategy. In this section, we consider these challenges along with the successes that have been recorded in the Canadian context.

1.5.1 Media literacy education and curriculum

All three interviewees agreed that **the inclusion of media literacy in the curricula of the provinces is the major success** of media literacy delivery in Canada. This, according to Neil, is especially so in places like Ontario where media literacy education has been mandated, giving it a certain profile, "a presence" (as he

would later note, the 2023 update to the Ontario curriculum means media literacy has been watered down). For Michael, the media literacy curricula in the provinces show that media literacy can be engaged with in a meaningful way in schools. Matthew concurred, noting that actions by the provinces to "bring media literacy into the curriculum was probably the most important" factor, coupled with the push by the federal government to provide internet access in schools at the turn of the century.

The focus on media literacy education is viewed positively because of its breadth and generational impact. Once it is mandated in schools, every schoolchild in the province of concern becomes an automatic beneficiary of media literacy training. It also means an entire generation can be targeted and the cumulative effect of providing education to subsequent generations can potentially translate to having media literacy competencies across different social strata.

It is difficult to measure the impact of media literacy education on school children. For instance, since 1998 when the media literacy curriculum became mandatory in Ontario, the evidence that children gain substantial media literacy competence as a result is unclear, partly because of problems related to evaluation:

> *We don't have, for instance, any good data on what students are actually learning and what teachers are actually teaching…. We have [a] few self-reports from students around some digital topics, but we don't have comprehensive data about what students are learning across the whole digital media literacy spectrum.*
>
> *Matthew*

One reason for this is the **decentralised approach to education**. Although each province has its curriculum, actual operationalisation rests with school boards and teachers. This makes it likely for teachers to emphasise some areas of media literacy and neglect other areas, all structured in a way that renders unique the approach taken by individual teachers. It makes it challenging for a national organisation like MediaSmarts to coordinate the resources that it provides to schools across the provinces.

Another challenge relates to the **need to constantly update curricula**. This can potentially be a major problem when one considers the pace of change across the digital landscape. In Ontario, the language curriculum (which includes media literacy), before now, was last updated in 2006, with the interviewees suggesting that it did not account for the changes that happened since then. The 2023 update has also been criticised as inadequate by Neil, who observed that it does not capture the essence of media literacy; his hope is that "teachers will find ways to bend the curriculum statements to lessons that are most relevant to today's students".

The more efficient approach, in Neil's view, is to have media literacy integrated into several school subjects, for instance, in geography and history, as this would give students real-world perspectives and applications of media literacy. He added that the ideal is to have a curriculum that focuses on how people create media content, including "media environments" and how this impacts the way people think, perceive, and make decisions. Still, the underlying issue remains that the changes in the digital environment will most likely have outpaced the updated curriculum just as implementation kicks off or that curriculum updates will fail to match up to what media literacy stakeholders require.

1.5.2 Relevance of media literacy and teacher support

Tied to challenges around media literacy education is the fact that some people, including teachers, **do not attach much relevance to it**, and, hence, do not see "the value of centring it in the curriculum" (Michael). Schools tend to distinguish between print literacy and media literacy, emphasising the former more than the latter. As a result, teachers tend to deprioritise media literacy pedagogy and it becomes something that "often does fall to the wayside" (Matthew). Most times, it would require crisis situations for educators to see the need for media literacy, and this attention usually lasts as long as the crisis remains top of the news agenda.

Teachers also face problems tied to **lack of training and support,** with no structure in place to equip teachers with the tertiary training they need to teach media literacy, even though the curriculum makes media literacy education for children mandatory. Teachers essentially "need a way to teach [media literacy]" just like teachers are trained to teach maths, Neil observed. To address this challenge, the AML now runs a graduate course for teachers who want to know more about media literacy.

1.6 Successes and challenges outside education

The interviewees described the role that media literacy organisations play in Canada as largely successful, even though there have been challenges. For MediaSmarts, its **research-to-resource** model was lauded as "extraordinary" by Michael, given the scale of material that is produced annually. Some initiatives that were highlighted as successful include:

- Media Smarts' Break the Fake campaign and Young Canadians in a Wireless World.
- The Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) also has a successful screen time recommendations programme, which has helped families regulate their screen behaviour in a healthy way and has given profile to the issue. According to Matthew, MediaSmarts was the only media literacy organisation that was part of the CPS Digital Health Task Force that developed the recommendations and was the originator of the '4M' model for promoting healthy screen use.

Perhaps the most successful of these initiatives is **Media Literacy Week**. The programme has become a major tool for promoting media literacy within and outside Canada. It has inspired "sister events in many other countries including the United States" (Matthew). One thing that has made the programme successful is the fact that organisations across Canada are encouraged to set up their separate events to celebrate the Week. Also relevant is the status that digital media literacy is gaining in the country:

> *We do consider Media Literacy Week to be highly successful…. I think the reasons why it has been successful are, first, a growing recognition of the importance of digital media literacy, and also the participatory element where we invite partners not just to take part in our events but to organise their own.*
>
> *Matthew*

Another positive for media literacy in Canada is the attention that stakeholders give to **indigenous cultures** and the history of injustices that indigenous people have faced in the country (see introductory book chapter that touches on the subject). Neil observed that the injustices and attempts to repair them have become media events, featuring the convergence of art, news, online materials, and literature – it is in this way that they relate to media literacy and the work that organisations carry out. Media literacy then becomes a tool to highlight social issues, bringing them into people's consciousness so they can be talked about as media experiences.

However, this could lead to the challenge of understanding what should be included in media literacy training. For instance, a 2017 Brookfield report on the state of digital literacy in Canada highlighted the **lack of an agreed definition of digital literacy**, noting that its meaning shifts from one practitioner to another, depending on their background, from digital literacy to computer literacy to information literacy to multiliteracy. In this regard, Matthew observed that there are differences between the way that "traditional" media literacy and "digital" media literacy are viewed in Canada.

The suggestion from the interviews is that traditional media literacy has expanded over the year and has now evolved into digital media literacy. Michael saw this expansion as problematic, saying, "The purview of media literacy is now so massive because it seems like everything to do with technology and communication somehow should have a media literacy response of some sort." As a result, media literacy training has become ambiguous, featuring everything from how to use digital tools in universities to helping people recognise fake

news. It is part of the expansion of the "task envelopes for media literacy," which can mean that people doing the work are spread too thin (Michael).

To address this, Michael suggested the creation of a parallel field called "educational technology" that focuses on digital proficiency. This might go some way to address the issue, but as Matthew observed, the fact remains that digital media literacy itself tends to be viewed separately under headings such as verifying information, privacy, empowering people to create content, or citizenship discourse. The solution could lie in identifying the connections and developing a metric with which to conceptualise digital media literacy holistically.

1.7 Developing a digital media literacy strategy

From all we have discussed so far, one theme has remained consistent: media literacy training in Canada mainly centres on education and the curriculum of the provinces. Hence, **the need to go beyond formal education** and reach out to the wider population was recognised both in our desk research and interviews. The major obstacle, on this front, is that "there isn't really an infrastructure for delivering any kind of [media literacy] education outside of the formal school system" (Matthew).

This infrastructural difficulty is tied to the fragmented nature of the sector, whether in the provinces or nationally. Consequently, organisations deliver initiatives and awareness campaigns, but there is little that unifies them, since the sector "is not that coordinated" (Matthew). There is no coordination between the projects, and the organisations that are funded do not connect or work together. When this happens, it is only during or after project implementation.

The lack of coordination in the sector was recorded in a report on privacy competencies, which shows that digital literacy delivery is split across different organisations that do not work in concert. This is said to have held the sector back from fulfilling its potential. The report lauded the approach that the UK has taken, particularly the role given to Ofcom as a "national office" that takes some level of ownership of the sector. Another article by Tamara Shepherd and Monica Henderson on Digital Literacy in Digital Strategy corroborated this stance, observing that, unlike the UK, Canada's media regulator, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) does not have a specific mandate for media or digital literacy. The result is the absence of a specific plan or strategy at the federal level, leading to the segmentation of media literacy provision in the provinces. The segmentation then makes integration at the federal level more difficult.

Solving the challenge of coordination in Canada, a Brookfield report suggested, would require the introduction of a **national digital media literacy strategy**. MediaSmarts has also campaigned for a digital media literacy strategy to provide coordination and leadership at the federal level, "partly to standardise digital media literacy education across the country" (Matthew). The organisation recognised the challenge of coordination in a 2018 report, and in 2022, it convened a symposium of stakeholders and came up with a document on the need for a digital media literacy strategy. The report was aimed at empowering people with the tools they need as digital citizens, not just in terms of technology usage, but also their critical engagement with it. It also raised key challenges around media literacy coordination in Canada, given that each of the provinces tends to have its separate approach, especially when it comes to media education.

The report contained ten principles and commitments to guide a national strategy. In general, the principles point to the need to:

- specify a role for government and the technology industry,
- provide for more funding, and
- embed coordination in the development of the strategy, regionally, provincially, nationally, and internationally.

It also called for a Community of Practice for the sector, a space where practitioners meet to discuss, share ideas, and support one another. The report praised the UK for its Online Media Literacy Strategy and the Media Literacy Taskforce – regarded as tools of coordination that should be replicated in Canada.

1.8 Conclusion

Our research of the Canadian landscape shows that the country has a vibrant media literacy sector,. We particularly recognise the developments that have taken place over the years and the successes that Canada has had in media literacy provision, successes that are tied to the actions of stakeholders.

These include the importance of developing media literacy education and ensuring that it is included in the curriculum. This was acknowledged by the interviewees as the single most significant success for media literacy in Canada. It is also one area that Canada, more than any other nation, has had the most experience with since media literacy has been mandated as part of the Ontario language curriculum for decades now.

From the interviewees' perspective, this has led to a significant growth of the media literacy sector in Canada, placing the country on the world map as far as media literacy is concerned. The Canadian example also highlights the relevance of programmes like the Media Literacy Week and the society-wide partnerships that it promotes. Canada further underscores the importance of having greater coordination in the media literacy sector, as can be seen in the growing calls for a digital media literacy strategy in the country.

2 France

2.1 Introduction

France resembles the UK demographically, with a very similar size of population, similar GDP, only slightly lower internet penetration. It does not have an overarching national media literacy policy, but has a strong tradition of media literacy in education, which is backed up by legislation. Like the UK, France also has a diverse range of players involved in media literacy, and multiple networks bringing them together.

For this case study, interviews were conducted with one leading expert at both a national and international level, who also runs a media literacy initiative, and representatives of two major players in policy and practice, CLEMI (the Centre for Media and Information Education) and Arcom (the independent audiovisual and digital communication regulator).

- Isabelle Feroc-Dumez, Scientific and Educational Director, CLEMI (Le centre pour l'éducation aux médias et à l'information)
- Divina Frau-Meigs, Professor at Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, founder of Savoir*Devenir and head of UNESCO chair Savoir*Devenir (part of UNESCO's MILID network)
- Mathilde Le Tarnec (with input from colleagues), from the Media Education and Copyright Awareness department of Arcom.

2.2 Overview: the major players and their role

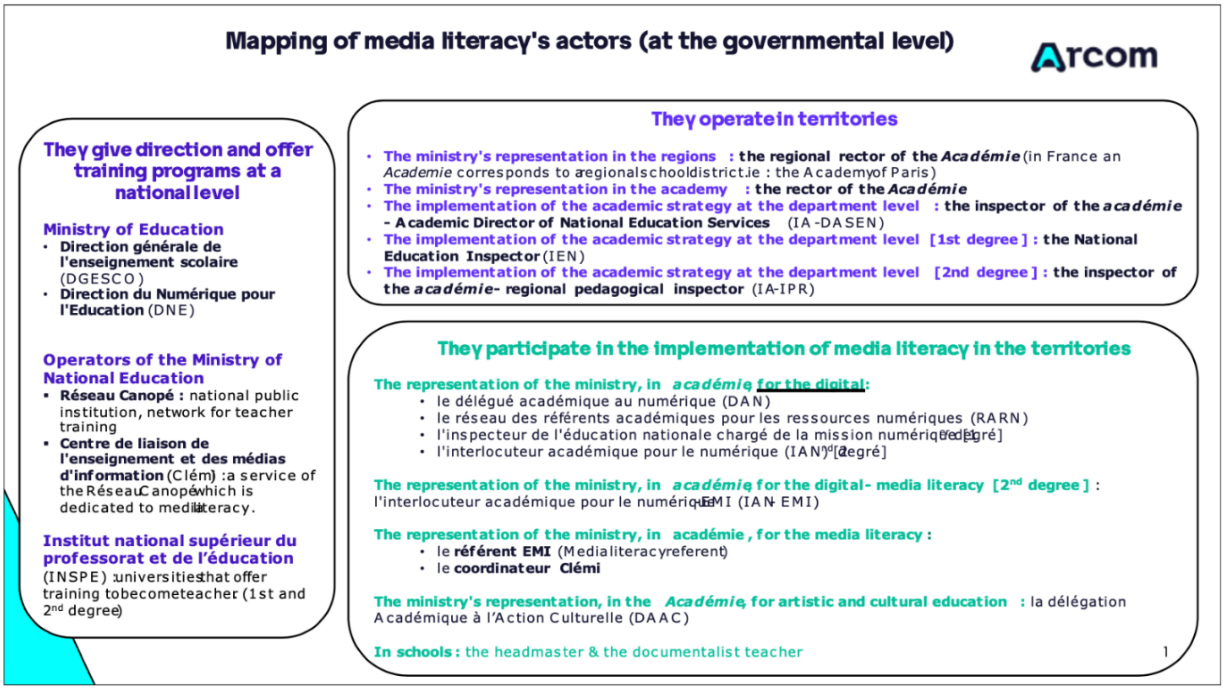
Media literacy has a long history in France going back more than fifty years. CLEMI, The Centre for Media and Information Literacy, was established by the Ministry of Education in 1983, and France now has an 'extremely rich' media literacy scene, as described by Divina Frau-Meigs. The European Audiovisual Observatory's 2016 Media Literacy Mapping in EU-28 report found that France recorded the highest number of media literacy networks (25) of any country studied.

Political and public attention on media literacy has rapidly increased in France over the past few years, according to Arcom. This can partly be attributed to the growing awareness of the potential risks posed by digital media and concerns over disinformation. Concerns around the dangers of social media also increased after the terrorist attacks in 2015 targeting satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, and the 2020 assassination of a history and civics teacher, Samuel Paty.

Attention continues to focus on media education directed at young people in schools. Media literacy – education aux medias et à l'information (EMI) - is considered a transversal competence that helps pupils to become responsible citizens in the digital society. Media literacy is defined by CLEMI as an approach that enables students to *"read, decrypt information from different sources, to develop their critical mind and to be able to build an opinion"*, and thus stresses the importance of critical thinking as a core competence for being media literate.

Given the number of actors in the French media literacy scene, it is useful to start with an overview of the role that each of the major stakeholders plays, to understand the landscape.

Arcom provided the following chart to clarify how media literacy functions at a national and territorial level:



2.2.1 *Government*

At a governmental level, media literacy work is primarily led by the **Ministry of Education** and its associated bodies, including CLEMI (see below).

The ministry also hosts a directory of resources via its Éduscol service. Frau-Meigs described this as a 'go-to' place for teachers as it contains resources that have been validated by the ministry, and its design makes it easy for teachers to find resources to target various media literacy competencies for different age groups and within different disciplines. It saves teachers time by clearly drawing out and making visible the transversal competence or subject matter of media literacy and how it fits into different disciplines.

The **Ministry of Culture** also plays an important role as it covers media, journalism and the press, and has funding to push media companies to do media literacy work, and to fund associations and grassroots groups. It has increased its support since 2016-17, according to Frau-Meigs, as a result of concerns around disinformation, as well as around the terrorist attacks on Charlie Hebdo.

The Ministry of Culture's Directorate-General for Media and Cultural Industries (La direction générale des Médias et des Industries culturelles - DGMIC) defines, implements and evaluates the State's policy in favour of the development and pluralism of the media, the music industry, books and reading and the cultural economy. Within this there is a media literacy group, which Frau-Meigs described as an informal and dynamic alliance, using a media and information literacy platform provided by the ministry to exchange information and opportunities. It holds an annual meeting, "rencontres du numérique," and can also be used for help applying for European Union funding, for example. It has an operator, CNC, the Centre for Cinema and the Image that has a programme as old as CLEMI called "*aller au cinéma à l'école/au collège/au lycée*" (going to the cinema at school). It is present in regions with DRAC that attach media literacy to arts and media studies; in the ministry itself, DGMIC, that funds media literacy projects every year and it also coordinates actions with popular culture associations and journalists.

2.2.2 *CLEMI (The Centre for Media and Information Education)*

CLEMI is part of Réseau Canopé, a government operator that is in charge of lifelong teacher training in France, with a particular focus on helping them adapt to the digital environment. CLEMI was established in 1983 by

the Ministry of Education and is an 'operator' of the Ministry, within Réseau Canopé. It is now the media literacy partner of De Facto, the French hub of the European Commission-funded European Digital Media Observatory.

CLEMI's activities cover four main areas:

- Training teachers and trainers in media and information literacy;
- Producing pedagogical resources in media and information literacy;
- Developing programmes for media creation in schools;
- Developing educational activities in schools and coordinating media cooperation.

CLEMI currently consists of a central staff of about 20 people who work with a national network based in each of France's 30 'académies' (school districts). Each district is led by a 'rectorat' or local education office, which acts as a liaison between the Ministry of Education and the schools in their district. The director of the rectorat appoints a contact to work with CLEMI, and also decides how much emphasis to put on media literacy. This means there is significant disparity between regions (see below for more detail).

A main focus for CLEMI is on training teachers to teach media literacy. The central CLEMI operation trains the coordinators within the local rectorats, who then do the bulk of teacher training in their area. The coordinators might be full-time or part-time, depending on the direction of the rectorat.

In addition to teacher training, one of CLEMI's main activities is the annual *Semaine de la presse et des médias à l'École*, or Press and Media Week in Schools, when CLEMI works with media companies to provide schools with free newspapers and digital access, and produces accompanying learning resources (see below for more detail). Other programmes in schools include critical thinking workshops, a game called 'Classe investigation' and 'Classes presse' run by regional branches.

CLEMI's approach to media literacy is based on competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) rather than on tools, aiming to give children the skills to be able to question and verify the information they are exposed to. It believes that it is essential to teach media literacy from 3 to 18 years old, Feroc-Dumez said. Previously the focus tended to be on older children, but CLEMI is now encouraging teaching media literacy to the youngest children also, aware that by 8-10 years old they may well be using digital devices and social networks, and it is important to start working on topics such as preventing cyber-bullying and spotting disinformation.

School librarians play an important role in CLEMI's activities: it is often in school libraries where students can access newspapers and other media, and the school librarians tend to be very involved in media literacy activities, often conducting specific projects in conjunction with other teachers. Their degree includes training in media literacy and since 2013, their mission statement includes media and information literacy.

In recent years, CLEMI has started to develop some resources for families as well as teachers, based on a concept of 'co-education,' Feroc-Dumez explained, which takes into account the importance of the role of the family in developing children's media and digital competences. These include guides in the series '*La famille Tout-Écran'* (The Fullscreen Family), which also hosts videos as many families will not have time to read whole guidebooks.

2.2.3 Arcom

Arcom is an independent audiovisual and digital communication regulator created in early 2022 through a merger of the former CSA (*Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel* – the broadcast regulator) and Hadopi (a government agency focused on online copyright). Both of these were already involved in media, information, and digital education.

Arcom sees its role in relation to media literacy as two-fold:

- Oversight: Arcom monitors audiovisual companies and operators of online platforms to ensure they implement measures regarding media literacy, and this is publicly reported each year.
- Production: Arcom runs its own media literacy initiatives, often in collaboration with other institutions, producing educational resources and running training programmes for teachers and students.

In 2022, Arcom created a new department dedicated to media literacy and copyright protection awareness, which is responsible for developing educational resources, building partnerships, and offering training programs to teachers and students. The *secrétariat général aux territoires* (Arcom's secretariat for regional delegations) was also strengthened by the opening of a new position in charge of the coordination of the actions of the regional delegations in the field of media literacy.

Arcom's approach to media literacy considers the standard aims of media literacy - the fight against disinformation, the decoding of the news, and the understanding of how the media works - but explained that it also aims to raise public awareness of media representation, meaning the impact of media on our perception of society and consequently on the way we coexist (e.g. gender equality, the fight against discrimination). It is also committed to raising awareness on copyright protection, and collaborates with the association *Generation Numérique* to go into schools and teach young people about copyright.

Arcom publishes an annual report on Media Literacy in the French media landscape. The 2022 report highlights media literacy actions carried out by French audiovisual companies (mainly public radio and television), and offers recommendations to help them increase their impact. One of this year's recommendations was to address all types of audiences, and not just to focus on the youth.

In January 2023 Arcom signed an agreement **with the Ministry of Education** and the Reseau Canopé to strengthen its cooperation related to media literacy in schools. This cooperation includes different commitments such as:

- The distribution of Arcom's educational resources to teachers;
- The organisation of national and academic training courses for teaching staff;
- The promotion of media creation in schools (i.e webradio, school newspaper);
- Sharing expertise on media representation;
- Raising awareness among the public of the need for responsible digital behaviour.

Arcom also partners with CLEMI to produce resources, and with other public bodies such as the data protection authority CNIL, the Defender of Rights authority, and with individual *académies* or school districts.

2.2.4 Audiovisual media companies

Since 2015, public media including France Télévisions, Radio France and France Médias Monde have been required to engage in media literacy activities as part of their public service missions, and they do a significant amount of work in the area. Along with Arte, INA and TV5Monde, they run an educational platform called Lumni, which aims to give access to culture, information and knowledge to children and young people aged 3-20 years-old. It can be used directly by students, or by teachers who are building lesson plans.

According to Arcom, media companies also help to increase public understanding of how media work by:

- broadcasting programmes related to media literacy;
- being present on social networks to fight fake news (ie. live fact-checking);
- organizing field actions (e.g., students visiting media offices, journalists visiting students in the classroom).

They work with CLEMI on Press and Media Week (see below) and other projects.

2.2.5 Tech platforms

Following a 2018 law to tackle the manipulation of information (LOI n° 2018-1202 du 22 décembre 2018 relative à la lutte contre la manipulation de l'information), which was described at the time as the 'fake news law', online platforms are required to commit to media literacy education, as well as other measures such as making their algorithms more transparent. This commitment includes an obligation to enable users to identify online media sources, the development of tools to verify the reliability of media sources, creation of partnerships with those contributing to media education and support for their projects and events, publicising of media literacy awareness campaigns, and support for disinformation researchers with regulated access to certain data.

The platforms are audited by Arcom on an annual basis, via a questionnaire that includes several questions related to their media literacy activities. Arcom's guidelines to platforms in relation to media literacy actions are to:

- Help users to be able to identify reliable and unreliable sources of information;
- Develop partnerships and support projects related to media literacy;
- Raise users' awareness on media and digital use;
- Support journalists' initiatives to tackle the fight against disinformation.

2.2.6 NGOs and civil society

Various NGOs and civil society organisations also play a significant role in media literacy. Since the increase in support from the Ministry of Culture related to concerns about disinformation, Frau-Meigs explained that many smaller organisations have entered the field. Many of these (such as *Entre les lignes* – Between the Lines) operate by sending journalists into classrooms to present their work. There is a certification available for journalists who want to be trained to work in tandem with school librarians. In 2021, the trade union of the press and the trade union of the audiovisual sector also created a common certification for MIL so as to enable journalists to work in tandem with school teachers and librarians.

2.2.7 Other stakeholders

CNIL (*Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés*) is the data protection agency, which has developed a framework of competencies in data protection and provides accessible resources for the public related to digital education. It hosts a collective, Educmun, that brings together educators, researchers, civil society and other institutions, united to promote a digital culture of citizenship. CNIL has partnered with Arcom to produce educational materials on digital citizenship.

Cémea (*Centres d'Entraînement aux Méthodes d'Education Active*) – a network of associations focusing on education outside schools (in holiday camps, with certification for youth workers and mediators).

CNC (*Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée*) – the National Centre of Cinema and the Moving Image, a public body established by law in 1946, which reports to the Minister of Culture.

La Ligue de l'enseignement (The Teaching League) - provides resources for teachers, including many related to digital and media literacy, as well as organising holiday camps.

2.3 Media literacy in schools: recent developments

As mentioned, France has a long tradition of media literacy, mainly targeted at children and young people as part of their citizenship education. As noted in the 2019 International Encyclopaedia of Media Literacy, the school curriculum started to refer to media from 1995, and media literacy became more integrated into the curriculum in 2006.

More recently, a 2013 school reform law (*La loi pour la refondation de l'Ecole*) specified that schools had a role to play in developing citizenship in the media-information society, and introduced media literacy as one of

the common bases of knowledge, skills and culture that every student must have acquired by the end of his/her compulsory education. This law was reinforced in 2015 after the terrorist attacks in Paris: the Ministry of Education introduced a civic education course from primary school to high school that includes media literacy.

In practice, there are two ways in which media literacy education usually happens in schools: either there are teachers or librarians who have had training and want to do it, or the school might not have in-house expertise but can call in a local or national NGO to do some training.

A 2021 report by an expert group for the Ministry of Education called for a media and information literacy curriculum that would include every age group. In January 2022, the Ministry of Education published a document called a 'circulaire' - which gives advice to civil servants and other officials on how to ensure standardised implementation of a regulation – on the topic of media and information education at all levels (*Généralisation de l'éducation aux médias et à l'information*).

This text, addressed to directors and their colleagues at the academies/school districts, school inspectors, head teachers and teachers, confirmed the importance of media literacy as a transversal competence within the education system, calling for it to be "at the heart" of education in schools, in light of the unprecedented flow of information that students experience online.

In an apparent attempt to reinforce and gain more control over media literacy education and tackle disparity across the country, the Ministry's circulaire introduced a new policy to create another network of officials responsible for media literacy in each area (in addition to CLEMI's coordinators). These 'referents' must be chosen by the director of the rectorat which leads the school district, and are likely to be chosen from the school inspectors' body. The CLEMI coordinators must work under the authority of the 'referents', who will oversee the actions of schools in their area, design and promote media literacy resources, initiate and implement training for the educational community, monitor and assess the actions of partners, and facilitate contact and collaboration with journalists and other entities.

2.4 Successful initiatives

2.4.1 Press and Media Week in Schools (Semaine de la presse et des médias dans l'École)

All interviewees highlighted CLEMI's flagship educational activity Press and Media Week in Schools, which has been running since 1989. Media partners participate by providing free newspapers and digital access to schools, and there is usually a wide choice of resources so teachers can find something they want to use.

Each year there is a specific theme, such as 'Information on all fronts' (2023) or 'Get informed to understand the world' (2022) and CLEMI produces a resource pack for teachers based around this theme. Arcom partners with CLEMI for the Press and Media Week, inviting secondary school students into its offices for training.

CLEMI considers the Press and Media Week to be a very successful activity. Teachers are not obliged to participate, but many do, and once they have tried it they tend to like it and participate in future years, and it also gives them experience using media in the classroom.

In 2022, CLEMI reported the participation of 21,297 schools, which include 270,000 teachers and 4,700,000 pupils, with 1,800 media partners involved. This was an increase of 836 schools compared to the previous year, with participation growing for the eighth consecutive year. The number also included 8,550 primary schools, the highest number so far. Frau-Meigs commented that Press and Media Week remains an important moment in the year and its significance and impact goes beyond the week itself as many activities and projects are prepared ahead of time and are evaluated later

One challenge, Feroc-Dumez highlighted, is that teachers still want printed newspapers, particularly for use with younger children, because schools don't always have sufficient computers and internet connections to

work with digital resources. Not all media companies have funds to provide printed resources, but it's important that a plurality of media are represented, even if they are struggling economically.

2.4.2 Other interesting initiatives

Yakamedia is a platform hosted by Ceméa (Centres d'Entraînement aux Méthodes d'Education Active – a network of associations focusing on education outside schools) which includes a large media library of educational resources aimed at the youth workers it trains (20,000 per year), giving them skills and tools to teach media literacy to the groups they work with. The training helps Ceméa to professionalise the work of these groups. They also run an 'Observatory of young people' in Normandy, a longitudinal study of young people's practices with the media.

International Educational Film Festival in Evreux, Normandy every year, is also organised by Ceméa, aimed at young people, parents, educators, association managers, politicians and local communities. It screens films that tackle topics such as Education, Childhood and Youth, cultural and intergenerational transmission, and the fight against all types of discrimination, and offers a range of activities for young people, as well as panels and debates with film directors.

My class at the cinema (*Ma classe au cinéma*) involves nearly two million children and young people each year, teaching them about the art of cinema and allowing them to meet film professionals and participate in a project. It is run by the CNC, or National Centre of Cinema and the Moving Image (Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée), a public body established by law in 1946, which reports to the Minister of Culture. It has been involved in film education for young people from kindergarten onwards for more than 30 years, both in and out of school.

Critical Thinking Encounters (*Rencontres de l'esprit critique*) is a festival that takes place in Toulouse, aiming to develop its attendees' critical thinking skills, understanding of the news and resilience to misinformation. Aimed at children and adults, the third edition will be held in 2023, and it has been a huge success, according to Frau-Meigs, because of its multi/inter-generational appeal, and for the dialogue it creates between existing stakeholders, and new ones such as municipalities and local politicians.

2.5 Perceived Challenges

2.5.1 Framing and focus of media literacy

There was a feeling among interviewees that currently, media literacy is **focused primarily on tackling disinformation**. Many of the smaller organisations entering the field focus on sending journalists into the classroom to present their work with an anti-disinformation focus, which is valuable but is not a holistic approach, said Frau-Meigs. Many of the new entrants are associations of journalists. Moreover, the increased involvement of school inspectors through the 'referant' role in regions comes with the risk that they will approach media literacy education through a risk-only perspective, rather than a more balanced risk/opportunity perspective, Frau-Meigs noted. Arcom aims to counter this with educational resources tackling different topics such as freedom of speech, fight against discrimination, gender equality, copyright protection, the prevention and fight against harassment, or environmental awareness.

An additional challenge related to framing is connected with perceptions of digital literacy in connection to media literacy, Feroc-Dumez outlined. She is concerned that there is **too much of a focus on digital** and media literacy risks getting swallowed up in this. She pointed out that a lot of younger children still consume traditional media (mainly TV) even if they do this on digital devices, and that even for older children, media literacy competences remain essential in interpreting the content that they encounter digitally. She also stressed that it is crucial to recognise that children and teenagers might be 'digital natives' but they don't have natural competencies to deal with disinformation and fake news, and the adults in their lives should address this.

School librarians have a role to play in media literacy, but many **focus more on information literacy** from a library science perspective, with a focus on search and curation rather than on other media and social media. The way to resolve this, said Frau-Meigs, would be to change the competitive exam to become a librarian so that it incorporates more modules on media knowledge, but this is a challenge.

Media literacy efforts are mostly dedicated to young audiences, and Arcom sees **reaching adults and older people** as one of France's main media literacy challenges. It has started to produce educational resources aimed at parents and plans in the coming years to adapt its resources on media representation for adults. A 'flash' consultation on critical media literacy education carried out in February 2023 by the Commission of Culture and Education of the *Assemblé Nationale* (National Assembly) recommended including older people in media literacy efforts.

2.5.2 Coordination of the sector

The richness of the media literacy landscape means there are **inevitable challenges related to coordination**. For example, multiple government ministries deal with misinformation and hate speech, not just the Ministries of Education and Culture, but also Health and Justice, for example.

Arcom also suggested that **the increasing number of actors running media literacy initiatives and the lack of synergies between them creates a lack of clarity** and means it may be difficult for teachers and the public to navigate the multitude of resources. Frau-Meigs was clear that coordination is an issue, but that there isn't an obvious solution that would allow the sector to maintain its independence. Existing networks are effective, but they are also messy, and aren't recognised as part of the policy debate. More coordination, however, would lead to a more centralized system, which practitioners may find less flexible and adaptable.

In summer 2022, 50 associations and 100 individuals wrote a letter to French President Emmanuel Macron asking him to make media and information literacy into a *'grande cause nationale'* – declare it a **national priority**. This would be a strategic move to make media literacy more visible and legitimate in the eyes of the general public, explained Frau-Meigs (one of the leaders and signatories of the initiatives). Despite CLEMI's history and reputation, many people don't know what it is, she added, and despite the best efforts of CLEMI and the Ministry of Education, many children will not be aware of media literacy or whether they have had a lesson on it. Declaring a 'grande cause' would prompt all ministries to get involved. The letter also called for the establishment of a dedicated media and information literacy fund and a governance body.

Strengthening CLEMI as a central hub for resources was suggested by the Commission of Culture and Education's 'flash' consultation on critical media literacy education.

2.5.3 Position in schools as a cross-curricular competence

Media literacy is a **transversal or cross-curricular subject** that teachers are encouraged to include within different disciplines, particularly as part of the "moral and civic education" discipline. Teachers choose to build media resources into their lessons, and they need to be trained appropriately to do this. Currently, teachers may have limited time or the knowledge to teach it. As Feroc-Dumez explained, all teachers, even those who teach maths or science, should be including media and information literacy in their curricula, but it is hard to evaluate how much they are doing, and she fears that many are doing very little, because of a lack of training or a lack of interest.

A study published in November 2022 by Arcom, based on research carried out in collaboration with the OpinionWay Institute, found that:

- More than 80% of teachers interviewed were concerned about their students' use of digital technology.
- On average, teachers devoted only 3 hours per term to media literacy. They cited lack of training as one of the main reasons.
- They expressed a need for pedagogical resources that are both dynamic and innovative to be able to engage with students. Practice-based tools are particularly appreciated by teachers.

Because media literacy is not a standalone discipline, it is not directly evaluated and therefore teachers and pupils might take it less seriously. Its cross-curricular positioning also has funding implications, as it is hard to claim success without evidence provided by evaluation, and therefore hard to ask for more public funding.

There have been recent calls to **establish media literacy in schools as a standalone subject**, including by the 'flash' consultation on critical media literacy education. This would be a welcome although somewhat painful step, according to Frau-Meigs (an advocate for it), as many experts, including CLEMI, have long been committed to media literacy as a transversal field.

Frau-Meigs suggested that were media literacy to have a more formal status, it would help persuade parents who were more suspicious about the potential controversies of media literacy teaching, for example after the assassination of Samuel Paty, which has had a somewhat chilling effect on media literacy teaching. However, media literacy has always involved innovating in classrooms and pedagogies, so wanting it to change status is somewhat of a double bind - you want it to be recognized but not constrained by an old-fashioned system.

2.5.4 Disparities across regions

Even though CLEMI has coordinators in each region of France, there are **important differences in the extent to which media literacy is implemented into the education system**, as noted by the 2022 Media Pluralism Monitor report which found that the apparatus was heterogenous at a national level, and that disparities exist between the existing tools available to teachers, and their implementation.

The level of implementation depends partly on the director of the school district, who has the power to decide how important media literacy is, explained Feroc-Dumez. The CLEMI representatives are chosen by the director of the district, who also decides how much time they will devote – it could be full time or could be three hours per week. As Frau-Meigs stressed, it can be very difficult to apply a national public policy in a homogenous way over a large territory.

There are also significant **disparities in levels of teacher training**. CLEMI aims to provide lifelong media literacy training for teachers, but it's optional and just one of many subjects that they could be trained on. Feroc-Dumez explained that it's often the teachers who are already aware of the risks of the internet and social media who are more likely to choose the training (i.e., those who actually need it less), and many teachers do not see it as a priority. All teachers will have some media literacy study as part of their initial training, but again there are disparities between the core training programmes in terms of how much is offered.

There are also significant disparities regarding the **number and level of media literacy providers** in each area and region – in some there is an abundance of competition and it's hard for a school or individual to choose which to use, and in others there are none.

The Ministry of Education's policy to introduce new 'referents' in each region is an attempt to reduce these disparities, but it is too early to say how successful this initiative is.

2.5.5 Funding

The interviewees noted that more funding was needed to expand CLEMI's work and keep up with the many changes in the media landscape since its inception.

Funding is also a challenge for audiovisual companies who play a role in media literacy, Arcom reported. In Arcom's latest report, public media services called the attention of public authorities to their lack of funding to be able to carry out media literacy actions. When a journalist visits a classroom to teach children about the media, they do so in their free time and are often not paid for it. If they don't do it in their free time, then covering for their time costs money to media companies.

Frau-Meigs noted that although there is a wide civic sector, **there is a lack of private or foundation funding for media literacy**, and a lack of coordination between public and private partners. In general there is a

reluctance to take money from big tech companies. “We don’t take money and close our eyes to where it came from”, said Feroc-Dumez, with regards to CLEMI’s approach.

2.5.6 Collaboration with tech platforms

Related to some of the funding challenges, **what sort of relationship to build with technology platforms** is an ongoing challenge for media literacy stakeholders. There is a willingness from the platforms’ side to work with public operators, but these are very aware of their public service obligations and are reluctant to endorse platforms with commercial objectives. There is a risk however, that by not engaging with the tech companies, the media literacy sector will miss out on essential training and updates.

2.5.7 Evaluation

The **lack of evaluation** of the effectiveness of media literacy activities and interventions is a significant problem, as noted by Frau-Meigs. Policy makers want to hear about impact, but media literacy’s transversal position in the curriculum means it is hard to evaluate the impact of teaching it in schools, as it is not tested directly. And for example, even a well-established operator like CLEMI tends to report the number of schools it has worked for in Press and Media week and estimates the number of children involved based on that, rather than getting a clear picture of the impact in terms of precise numbers of children involved in specific activities and projects (which would be harder data to gather).

2.6 Conclusion

There are several aspects of the French approach to and experience of media literacy efforts that are noteworthy. France shows that it is possible to have a **rich and thriving media literacy scene without centralized coordination** of the many stakeholders involved. Different stakeholders and informal networks work effectively, and in many areas there is a huge amount on offer. France’s **Press and Media Week in Schools** provides a focal point for CLEMI and many of its partner organisations each year, and as well as reaching a large number of schools, its impact extends beyond the week itself.

The experience of CLEMI in France demonstrates the difficulty of applying a national media literacy policy homogenously in a country of a similar size to the UK, even with a dedicated, well-established body with significant experience. Interviewees spoke of **regional disparities**, and some areas that remain ‘media literacy deserts,’ whereas other regions (often larger cities) benefit from an abundance of choice. These disparities risk contributing to and perpetuating wider inequalities, and it is crucial to keep this risk in mind when developing a nationwide media literacy strategy.

As in many national education systems around the world, media literacy is currently taught as a **cross-curricular or transversal topic** in France, meaning that it is taught within other subjects and doesn’t have its own space in the timetable. This makes sense because media literacy does involve cross-cutting skills and cross-cutting relevance, but means that how much teaching happens relies on the motivation of individual teachers, who may or may not have had sufficient training, to find time within the already busy curriculum. It also raises challenges for evaluation, with few ways to determine the impact of media literacy teaching.

Although, as in many countries, attention to media literacy has increased in recent years as a result of concerns around disinformation, it is clear that **media literacy work has a very wide scope in France**. Interviewees stressed the importance of maintaining a more holistic vision of media literacy (CLEMI’s focus on wider critical thinking skills, Arcom by including media representation and its impact in its agenda).

3 The Netherlands

3.1 Introduction

Since 2005, the Netherlands has viewed media literacy or media education as media wisdom, a term which Dutch society sees as more encompassing than media literacy. Media wisdom essentially incorporates all aspects of media literacy from media education to digital literacy and even buzzwords like digital citizenship. The term was introduced into Dutch lexicon by the Council for Culture, which serves as the legal adviser for the national government in the areas of arts, culture, and media. This was all part of the Council's 2005 policy recommendations report that set the stage for current developments in the Dutch media literacy sector.

In particular, the report led the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to ask a few key national organisations to think of an organisational set up for media literacy – an exercise which culminated in the creation of the Media Literacy Network (*Netwerk Mediawijsheid*) in 2008. The Network has its programme bureau at the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, but its portfolio was and continues to be shared among these key organisations who jointly run the Network as a "programme", directed by a programme manager and team. The Network is now the central player in media literacy across the country. In many ways, it encapsulates the media literacy context in the Netherlands, representing a collaborative approach to media literacy. This networked approach forms a major theme of our case analysis. It highlights a unique relationship between the Dutch government and the sector. It further symbolises the move by the government and stakeholders to expand media literacy provision outside of primary and secondary education, where schools have the flexibility to decide whether and how to teach media literacy.

Overall, the indication is that media literacy implementation both within and outside Dutch education has been successful, even though there have been challenges. The success of the Netherlands' approach was recognised in the European Commission DESI index, where the country had the highest internet user skills in 2022 in the continent, with significant digital literacy skills. The successes that have been recorded account for our choice of the Netherlands in this case analysis, where we review key documents and interview transcripts. Some of the documents include:

- Value-Driven Digitalisation Work Agenda policy of the national government, 2022.
- Dutch Media Literacy Competency Model of the Media Literacy Network, 2021.
- Better Internet for Kids Country Profile for the Netherlands, 2021.
- Digital Government Agenda, 2019.
- Coliblite National Report, 2018.
- Article on the Dutch approach to prevent and curate low literacy, 2017.

The interviews were conducted with the following:

- Mary Berkhout-Nio – Programme Director at the Media Literacy Network.
- Maarten Glorie – Media and Creative Industries Directorate, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.
- John W.M. Leek – Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (*Beeld & Geluid*), Board Chair of the Alliance Digital Society, and member of the core team of the Media Literacy Network.
- Sela Kooter and Marcel Betzel – Research and Policy Advisory, Dutch Media Authority (*Commissariaat voor de Media*).

3.2 Strategies implemented

The strategy for delivering media literacy in the Netherlands largely rests on a network approach. In this section, we discuss in detail the various networks that exist and the way they are organised. We also explore the role of media literacy education in primary and secondary schools before highlighting government policies in the sector.

3.2.1 A networked approach to media literacy

When it comes to media literacy in the Netherlands, the tendency is to establish networks of public-private partnerships. Beyond the Media Literacy Network, other notable networks include the Alliance for Digital Inclusion, the Association of Public Libraries, and the Netherlands Coalition for Artificial Intelligence. We discuss some of these networks below.

3.2.2 Media Literacy Network

The Media Literacy Network (hereafter, the Network) is the single most important organisation in the Dutch media literacy sector. The interviewees agreed on this point, with Maarten describing it as "the main strategy for media literacy in the Netherlands". Sela also saw it as "the most important party [for media literacy] in the Netherlands." It was established in 2008 by organisations such as the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, the National Library, the ECP (Electronic Commerce Platform) and the Kennisnet (an educational body) after the 2005 recommendation of the Council for Culture. Before this time, the Dutch media literacy sector was "very diffuse and very unorganised…a lot of initiatives, but very uncoordinated" (John).

As a result, the Network was collaboratively created as a central knowledge and expertise centre that connects organisations in the field, aids cooperation, and prevents fragmentation (see Coliblite report). The Network "started as a programme" and was "supposed to end after four years or eight years or so," but as the media ecosystem evolved, it has evolved in parallel (John). Essentially, stakeholders have found the Network to be useful, and today, it comprises over 1,000 media literacy organisations. These include libraries, cultural institutions, research institutes, media coaches, platforms, educational institutions, museums, publishing companies, and IT companies. The Network is managed by five core private and public partners including the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision and NPO (a public broadcaster).

This management structure means that the government does not control or coordinate the Network. Mary described the situation as that of "loose" coordination, where the government funds the Network, but does not issue directives or specify how its fund should be administered. Maarten agreed, noting that his and his colleagues' involvement at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science "means that we…follow the activities of the Network, that we have conversations with them about the important topics, and so on, but our main responsibility is to subsidise them yearly." This subsidy is typically set at €1.5 million (John); for 2022, it was €1.7 million (Maarten), reflecting adjustments for inflation.

Consequently, the Network is "not an executive instrument for government…it's more the other way around," since the Network proposes policies that the government can choose to implement (Maarten). In like manner, the interviewees were careful about describing the work that the Network does as one of coordinating the sector. Sela Kooter noted that "coordination" is not the right word to describe what the Network does. Instead, it has more of a flexible structure since the aim from the start was that "we must not organise it…as a bureaucratic central institution" (John). Therefore, the Network is designed to identify issues and challenges in the sector, set broad goals and visions, and decide with its members on the initiatives required to promote media literacy in the Netherlands.

As one might imagine, there are several initiatives that the Network runs, but notable among these is Media Masters (see below). The Network also operates schemes like the Dutch Media Literacy Competency Model 2021 which focuses on the media literacy skills that people need to access technology and engage critically with media content. The Model serves as a starting point for media literacy organisations, helping them to know where the gaps are and decide on the initiatives to deliver.

3.2.3 Alliance for Digital Inclusion

Beyond the Media Literacy Network, the Netherlands recognises the broader stakeholder involvement that is needed to achieve digital access and inclusion. This is where other government ministries come in, particularly the Ministry of the Interior and Royal Affairs. The Ministry is responsible for the wellbeing of citizens and has a remit for issues like digital citizenship, disinformation, tech, and media skills and awareness. As part of

fulfilling these tasks, the Ministry initiated the **Alliance for Digital Inclusion** (also known as the Digital Society Alliance; hereafter, the Alliance). The Alliance was created in 2019 as a collaborative initiative of the Ministry, a big private telecom company, and Her Royal Highness Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands, supported by other private and public allies (John). This means it has a mix of public and private funding – mostly in kind, but some out of pocket (John). It is aimed at addressing the challenges of digital inclusion and seeks to promote basic skills that people need to participate in the digital society.

Mary described it as a "brother" to the Network, since the Alliance aims for the integrated participation of digital exclusion-experience experts, and stronger participation of corporations like social media, energy, and insurance companies, next to different public organizations, as opposed to the more non-profit outlook of the Network. This means that the Alliance has what can be called a bottom-up approach, where it deals directly with partners in neighbourhoods across the Netherlands. Even at that, Maarten noted that the partners in the Network and the Alliance are "more or less the same".

Some initiatives that the Alliance runs include Allemaal Digitaal, a national campaign launched during the Covid-19 pandemic aimed at providing digital devices such as laptops and tablets to vulnerable groups. This initiative, according to John, led to the founding of Stichting Aleemaal Digitaal, together with IT companies in the country. Another initiative is the introduction of the national helpline (0800-number) for people who need digital assistance. There is also the Day of Digital Inclusion (set to hold on November 27 in 2023) and local digital testing grounds in several cities to develop local ecosystems.

3.2.4 Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision

The **Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision** (hereafter, Sound and Vision) serves as the operational home for the Alliance, highlighting how interconnected the Alliance and the Network are, given that Sound and Vision also participates in the running of the Network. John described Sound and Vision as the "mother" of networked-based organisations like the Network and the Alliance. This means Sound and Vision has increasingly become influential in the media literacy sector and the broader Dutch cultural landscape. Maarten buttressed this by saying that Sound and Vision "is more and more becoming part of a national discourse [on] the impact of technology and media in society".

Sound and Vision receives stable funding from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, though it is not a government agency – it simply carries the status of an institution. Sound and Vision also serves as the "national archive for media" (Maarten) and is the national clubhouse for media literacy, where partners in the Network gather for events, meetings, and collaborations. It also provides teachers and schools with audio-visual materials that can be used for lectures and presentations. This is coordinated by the Sound and Vision Education, which prepares digital teaching materials, including online and video fragments that can be used in school lessons.

3.2.5 Libraries

The **National Library** plays a role in coordinating the network of public libraries in the Netherlands (see Coliblite report). The National Library has a duty to improve digital literacy, which it defines as comprising information skills, IT skills, computational thinking, and media literacy. As part of its Strategic Plan 2019-2022, the National Library highlighted the need to work with local partners to deliver programmes aimed at improved digital literacy.

One of its flagship programmes is the Library at School initiative. This involves sending the library's media coaches to schools to ensure that they (the schools) use "all activities and working methods to stimulate the development of digital literacy among pupils and teachers" (see website). Partners that help in this include the SLO, which develops the school curriculum on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

There is also an Association of Public Libraries, which has more than 160 members and is responsible for the functioning of the network of library services. If we consider all libraries in the Netherlands, whether public or not, the IFLA Library Map of the World shows that there are 1,121 of them. These libraries, put together, serve

as an "infrastructure" (Mary), a "network of physical institutions, you could say, that are closely working together" (John). They support the viability of the networked approach to media literacy delivery in the Netherlands.

3.3 Media literacy in education

When it comes to education, there is a central framework for delivery where broad objectives and attainment targets are set at the national level, but municipalities are responsible for budgets, quality, and standards – allowing for decentralised administration. The schools, in turn, manage themselves, such that **schools are autonomous** in terms of curriculum, resource allocation, and assessment. Schools, therefore, have "curricular freedom" (see Coliblite report) and are not obliged to abide by curriculum policies set at the national level.

Information from YouthWiki also shows that teachers are not required to teach media literacy, although they are encouraged to. By implication, media literacy education then depends on the choice of individual schools, which have the final say in determining whether and how media literacy is taught. Digital/media literacy is also spread across the curriculum, which can make it difficult to teach effectively.

Stakeholders recognise these issues and their approach to solving them is to make media/digital literacy **mandatory in the primary and secondary school curriculum** so that schools will be obliged to teach it. For instance, Marcel pointed to the moves to make media literacy an official part of the curriculum. Mary also noted that one of the Network's goals is to make media literacy an obligatory part of the curriculum, not just for schools, but also for teacher training institutes – something that was part of the 2005 recommendations of the Council for Culture.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is aware of the delays to implementation, Maarten observed. He added that there is now an accelerated push to anchor media and digital literacy in the national curriculum, and discussions are still ongoing regarding whether it should be standalone or integrated into other subjects. This is all part of the government's 2019 Digitisation Strategy.

3.4 Government ministries and agencies

Government policy actions on media literacy are spread across several ministries. For instance, the Better Internet for Kids report shows that at least four ministries deliver interventions related to media literacy in the Netherlands. They include:

- Ministry of Education, Culture and Science: for media and education-related policies, including media literacy;
- Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate: for internet and telecommunication-related policies;
- Ministry of Justice and Security: for online crime-related policies;
- Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports: for health issues and cyberbullying.

There is also the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, with its initiative regarding the Alliance and the action it has taken to combat fake news and disinformation in recent times. Having different government ministries involved in this way can be a good thing, to ensure the different perspectives are coordinated, the government has appointed a digital secretary, Alexandra van Huffelen, who has a mandate to coordinate all efforts on media literacy across government (Mary). John added that the Alliance is working with van Huffelen to sketch a national plan for digital inclusion in the Netherlands in collaboration with the Network and other initiatives like the Health Coalition, which facilitates digital inclusion in health environments.

Government departments also work together on initiatives. For instance, a 2017 article on the Dutch approach to prevent and curate low literacy shows that with the Count with Language (*Tel mee met Taal*) programme, there has been cooperation between government departments. The programme is meant to support people with the language, maths, and digital skills they need to participate in society, and is a joint initiative of the

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. In 2022, the Alliance, working within the Count with Language initiative, carried out a project on the responsible use of artificial intelligence in digitally inclusive services (see report).

There is also the Dutch Media Authority, which supervises the media industry but has no legal mandate for media literacy (Sela). However, the Better Internet for Kids report shows that the Authority is responsible for protecting children from potentially harmful media content. It does this through NICAM (Netherlands Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media), the main purpose of which is to "secure the protection of minors" but also relates to media literacy because of the information it provides on content descriptions (Marcel). It has been successful in achieving this task through its **Kijkwijzer** classification system.

3.5 National policy on media literacy

In terms of government policy itself, the most recent and comprehensive is the 2022 Value-Driven Digitalisation Work Agenda – co-created by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Alliance – where the government spells out its digitisation policy. The policy has five programme lines, one of which centres on media and digital literacy – this is the goal of ensuring that everyone is able to participate in the digital society. Some of its key aims include:

- improving digital skills and knowledge;
- investing in media literacy, information literacy, and ICT literacy of all Dutch citizens;
- providing further support to initiatives like Count with Language, the Media Literacy Network, and the Digital Society Alliance;
- integrating digital literacy into the curriculum of primary and secondary schools.

The 2019 Digitalisation Strategy outlines the government's plans for digital transition, with an ambition to make the Netherlands the digital leader in Europe. This includes efforts to ensure the acquisition of basic digital skills, digital inclusion, sustainable employability, and lifelong learning. The Strategy is all part of the digital transformation ambitions of the government.

Related also is the 2019 Digital Government Agenda (see report) which aims to provide people with access to technology and the digital skills that they require. Mary noted that the Agenda could go a long way in solving the challenges in the sector, but cautioned that its effect will only be felt about five years from now, pointing to the time lag between policy implementation and actual changes on the ground.

3.6 Successes and perceived challenges

3.6.1 Successes of the media literacy network

> *The Network itself is a success because it helps everyone with competence models, for instance, a digital balance model.*
>
> *Mary*

> *The network approach has been really successful and has proven to be successful because it connects so many partners and they can help each other as well.*
>
> *Maarten*

> *The strength or the success of this Network organisation [is] that you're working together with different organisations with different types of expertise.*
>
> *Sela*

The interviewees agreed, almost in a taken-for-granted manner, that the most significant positive for media literacy in the Netherlands is the Network and the wider networked approach that we have described. This success is tied to the **collaborative approach** that a networked system facilitates. The Network essentially allows organisations to "work from collectively-developed programme[s]", where different parties come together to develop initiatives (John). What then exists is a "management programme approach" underpinned by dialogue sessions with experienced experts and public-private participation (John).

John added that there were times when the five partners running the Network considered ending the "programme," but they have seen that "a lot of organisations [and] also [the] Ministry are very happy with the existence of this Network." International partners in Belgium and the EU have also recognised the success of the Network (John). Hence, stakeholders in the Netherlands have realised that the Network does well to articulate the broad issues relating to media literacy in the country and the strategies and policies needed to address them. Consequently, the Network largely takes leadership of the sector, something that the Ministry prefers because "the civil partners know best what is needed" (Maarten).

A key intervention that the Network has introduced is **Media Literacy Week**, which takes place every November. The Network decides on the theme of each Media Literacy Week and events are held by partners across the country. It allows for "a real, very impactful, strong national campaign every year based on a theme or an issue that we collectively think is important with media literacy" (John).

As part of the Week, the Network organises Media Masters, one of its flagship initiatives widely credited as a success. This is a game where schoolchildren in the Netherlands compete in activities that are "media-literacy-injected" (John). It targets children between 10 and 12 years old and has been successful in getting "media literacy into the classroom in a very fun way" (Mary). The 2022 edition reached over 200,000 pupils, who make up more than 50% of children in the 10-12 age range across the Netherlands (Mary). Outside of the reach of the school curriculum, perhaps no other initiative can boast of similar numbers.

3.6.2 Other successes

There are other examples of the networked approach that the interviewees described as successful:

- The network of libraries and the collective impact they have made. The libraries serve as Digital Government Information Points (known as IDOs); there are 550 of these points in the Netherlands. They provide digital skills training to people who need help with things like taxes, unemployment forms, and accessing government services online (Mary). The libraries are especially useful to the elderly, many of whom visit libraries in the Netherlands (John). So, it becomes a way of delivering media literacy to this target group. The Library at School initiative (see above) is also considered successful, reaching about 20% of schools that have pupils of up to 12 years of age (Mary).
- JOGG, a youth health community that promotes healthy food and exercise for children; it also has a module about media literacy for schools. The organisation has a large network within schools across different municipalities, a factor responsible for its success (Mary).
- The Media Coach programme, particularly the National Media Coach Course run by the National Academy for Media and Society. The programme trains people for one year to become media coaches, after which they are sent to support schools and other organisations with media literacy help. On getting to an organisation, the coaches first assess the situation there before assisting with policymaking on media literacy, how to source funds, and media literacy education where needed. Mary noted that 3,000 coaches have been trained in the past ten years, adding that the programme is useful for knowing where to start and what is needed holistically. Without this, "what you basically see

is that the organisation starts with one project for maybe a day or a week, and they say, 'well, we're done.'" Hence, media coaches allow for an approach that is "long-lasting and impactful" (Mary).

3.6.3 Challenges in the Dutch media literacy sector

When asked to highlight the challenges that are keenly felt in the Netherlands, interviewees pointed to the following:

Vulnerable and neglected groups remain hard-to-reach,[3] with Maarten saying one of the challenges is, "how to reach vulnerable groups, for instance, because they are very hard to reach". Mary also spoke of the difficulty of reaching out to the elderly and those with disabilities, particularly those facing mental health issues. This is compounded by the fact that not all healthcare professionals are media literate, which makes it difficult to rely on them to provide the media literacy support that people with disabilities need.

There is also the challenge of maintaining **funding** for the large, diverse sector. Mary pointed out that more than a thousand organisations are working in the sector, both within and outside and Network, and deciding on who to fund and where to invest can be a dilemma. An "infrastructure" that guarantees media literacy education for all citizens needs significant funding to be effective. that

The rise of **disinformation** is a major concern for the Dutch Media Authority, although it does not have a legal mandate for media literacy, meaning "there's not a lot we can do about these challenges" (Sela). Responsibility mainly lies with the Network, with Mary observing that the need to combat disinformation is a key driver of initiatives in the sector.

Evaluation also presents difficulties for practitioners. This comes in the form of "how to measure impact over media literacy activities" (Maarten), especially because "it's pretty hard to measure success" (Sela). Mary added that there tends to be little or no evaluation of media literacy programmes in the country, suggesting that knowledge from one activity rarely feeds into the development of another.

Another challenge is how to relate with **digital platforms**. For instance, Mary stated that although it is useful to have platforms involved in providing media literacy support, their interests should be taken into consideration. John also noted that organisations like Sound and Vision find it hard to work with platforms "on the system side" to embed media literacy functionalities into the making of technologies. This connects with the challenge of the **evolving technology landscape** including innovations such as ChatGPT and quantum computing (John). For Maarten, the challenge that the Ministry faces is how to regulate platforms (along the lines of the EU's regulation) in a way that promotes media literacy for all.

3.7 Coordination

In studying the Dutch media literacy context, what comes across is that there exists an effective system of national coordination, in the shape of the networked approach. Nonetheless, more coordination would always help. Marcel expanded on this point, saying "there's a lot of fragmentation [in the sector] that you lose the broad oversight." Improvements in coordination would help to avoid duplicative initiatives and identify gaps to be filled (Marcel).

This led to questions on the Network and the platform it creates for cooperation amongst the over 1,000 media literacy organisations. What about its articulation of the broad issues and the 'management programme approach' that it facilitates? In their response to these questions, the interviewees once again acknowledged the successes of the Network in organising the sector but noted that "there's always room for improvement"

[3] *TEXT NOT FOUND*

(Marcel). Mary also lauded the appointment of the digital secretary (see above) but maintained that a more holistic solution was needed. The challenge essentially relates to the sheer breadth of the sector:

> *There are so many initiatives going on right now, which are very good, but it can also be too much and it's very hard to keep track of them all…. It can be unclear who does what and to what extent. So, that's the challenge*
>
> *Maarten*

Maarten added that although the Network is doing its best, **some initiatives are done outside of the Network**. For example, there are schools and libraries, some of which operate outside the Network, making it hard to map all media literacy initiatives and "to grasp the impact of the Network" in relation to broader Dutch society (Maarten). Also, government ministries and departments now have their "digital aspect," a digital side to virtually all their operations, all connected to media literacy to varying degrees even though they are routed outside of the Network (Maarten).

Within the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science itself, Maarten noted that it is good to have education and culture in one place, saying, "It helps because, in media literacy, we share the same goals as [the] education department does." A potentially valuable role for the Ministry is to serve as a point of referral between the Network and other agencies and units of government so that knowledge can be shared and organisations can help one another (Maarten). Mary noted that in government there is now a "sense of urgency" and an intensifying push from Europe, stimulating greater government involvement in coordinating the media literacy sector.

3.8 Conclusion

The Dutch context points to several positive initiatives such as the Media Literacy Week, Media Masters, Media Coach, and the policy move to mandate media literacy in the school curriculum. The Media Literacy Network has had the greatest positive impact in the Dutch media literacy scene, as it points to the relevance of a networked approach, as well as ensuring that the beneficiaries of media literacy interventions are included in conversations about media literacy – this has been one of the contributory factors to the success of the Alliance.

The networked approach also has limitations, that might be addressed by leveraging **the different functions that a loose informal network can have, as compared to a more centrally coordinated apparatus**. For example, a loose approach can accommodate knowledge sharing and cooperation (Mary). But as time progresses and the need to reach society at large becomes pressing, a shift to central coordination may be more effective in providing an overarching framework, "a strong programme to really implement things" (Mary). This speaks to the need to introduce changes as necessary in relation to the evolution of organisational processes in order to enjoy the full benefits of a networked approach to media literacy.

Part 2: Medium-length case studies

4 Belgium (Flanders)

4.1.1 Introduction

Belgium's unusual linguistic makeup has widespread implications, including for media literacy. Educational and cultural policies are decided at a 'Community' level, along language lines. There are two distinct media markets and regulatory systems, and media literacy policies and initiatives tend to address either one community or the other.

We focus on the Dutch-speaking Flemish Community, which comprises almost 60% of the population (the French speaking Community comprises about 40%, and German is spoken as a first language by about 1% of the population). We chose Flanders because according to the 2022 Media Pluralism Monitor, the Flemish Community has a more established media literacy landscape. There have been promising developments made in the French Community with the adoption by the Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles (FWB) government's Media Literacy Action Plan in early 2022, but it is too early to analyse its implementation yet.

Although the population of Belgium is far smaller than the UK, and the Flemish Community consists of approximately 7.1m people, the country has similar levels of internet penetration to the UK, and is tackling some similar challenges to the UK in terms of media literacy.

This case study is based on an interview conducted with Andy Demeulenaere, coordinator of Mediawijs, the Flemish Knowledge Centre for Digital and Media Literacy, and the review of various documents and websites.

4.2 Overview

4.2.1 Government policy

Discussion about media literacy, or 'mediawijsheid' (more literally translated as 'media wisdom') started in the Flemish parliament in 2006.[4] Flanders' media literacy policy is based on a *Conceptnota Mediawijsheid* (Concept Note on Media Literacy) developed jointly by the Minister of Media and Minister of Education and Youth, which was approved by the Flemish Government in 2012. This was a coherent media policy, according to Van Audenhove et al, with a broad ambition to develop a framework for media literacy that reached beyond the fields of media and education, and mainly took an empowerment rather than protectionist view. It provided a broad definition of media literacy and identified four strategic goals for media literacy policy:

1) Creating a strategic and sustainable framework for media literacy.
2) Stimulating and increasing competences – developing knowledge, skills and attitudes through both formal and non-formal education.
3) Creating an e-inclusive society and eliminating the digital divide, with particular attention to the media literacy needs of disadvantaged sections of society.
4) Creating a safe and responsible media environment, especially for young people.

The Concept Note reaffirmed the government's intention (first mentioned in 2008) to establish a body dedicated to media literacy), and in January 2013 Mediawijs was established by the government as a Flemish Knowledge Centre for Digital and Media Literacy. Mediawijs is a research and best practice based initiative, with an initial consortium of 12 partners, that aims to stimulate and coordinate digital and media literacy, working with the public, the media sector, intermediaries, researchers and policymakers. It provides resources for professionals and volunteers who help residents of Flanders and Brussels to actively, creatively, critically and consciously use digital technology and media, and thus involve everyone in the digital society. Mediawijs has government funding and was established by the Ministry of Media, but it is based at IMEC vzw, a technology and digital

[4] *TEXT NOT FOUND*

innovation research centre, and involves several other partners, so it has some distance from the government. As of late 2022, it was established in legislation that the government should fund an organisation that coordinates media literacy in Flanders.

Media literacy is currently one of the five priorities of the Flemish Government's Youth and Children's Rights Policy Plan 2020-2024, which includes a strategy and concrete actions for media literacy. Every five years there is a new transversal action plan that spans government departments, so from 2025 onwards, there are likely to be other priorities.

Since 2012 VRT, the Flemish public broadcaster, has also had a role to play in terms of increasing media literacy levels of all Flemish citizens, as part of its educational remit. It is a broad assignment, renewed every five years, which doesn't detail how the remit is expected to be fulfilled. VRT is the most trusted source of news in Flanders, according to the Reuters Digital News Report, and has significant market share, helping to ensure that media literacy efforts reach a large audience.

The government also provides funding to the news media to provide free newspapers and online subscriptions for a week for the *Niews in de Klas* (News in the Classroom) project, which is coordinated by Mediawijs.

4.2.2 Media literacy in schools

Flanders does not have a strict top-down curriculum: its constitution allows for relative freedom in the way that education is delivered. There are, however, attainment goals for certain age groups, set as part of a framework that is established by the government. Since September 2010, media literacy has been one of these cross-curricular goals, and since 2018, there has been a new framework of transversal goals that include several on digital competence and media literacy.

As explained by Demeulenaere and the EACEA Youth Wiki site, these goals fall into three clusters:

- Actively using digital technology and media (e.g. the pupils demonstrate basic skills to create and share digital content, and to digitally collaborate, communicate and participate in initiatives);
- Responsibly using digital technology and media (e.g. 'The pupils distinguish between effects of possible addictive substances and actions on themselves and their immediate environment, including knowledge of possible addictive actions such as use of social media, games, virtual reality, gambling');
- Computational thinking (e.g. The pupils apply a simple self-designed algorithm to solve a problem digitally and non-digitally).

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, there has also been a significant (€385m) investment by the Flemish Government in access to digital infrastructures for children and schools. The Digisprong (Digital Leap) action plan has provided laptops to all children aged 10-18, as well as investment in infrastructure, software packages, network security etc for schools.

4.3 Perceived Challenges

Demeulenaere described the main challenges he sees for media literacy provision in Flanders, mainly related to policy and funding:

- **Coordination between different branches of the Flemish government**. To improve coordination, at the end of 2020, Mediawijs set up a working group on digital inclusion for government employees so that they could share their plans.
- **The need for a long-term structural policy on digital inclusion**. There are now many organisations working in the area of digital inclusion, but a longer-term policy would mean their future is more secure.
- **The need for more integration of media literacy into the welfare system**. Social vulnerability is a big risk factor for online vulnerability, and Demeulenaere would like to integrate media literacy training more effectively for those who work with adults and children with disabilities. He noted that in general,

those who choose to work in caring sectors are less interested in working with technology, which provides an additional challenge.

- **The evolving challenges of technology, which mean that the field is continuously changing**. Demeuleneare brought up the example of ChatGPT, which will require developments in education and policy, but as yet it is unclear how. He also highlighted a four-year research project that had been carried out on advertising, but was now less relevant because of the advent of influencer advertising.
- **Reaching adults.** Children and young people are prioritized, partly because it is easier to work with schools. There isn't enough funding for programmes for adults in the workplace, and there are large sectors that aren't reached yet at all.
- **Working with the media.** Demeuleneare explained that often what is needed is nuance, but the media tend to exaggerate and contribute to moral panics.

Overall, Demeuleneare noted that Flanders' media literacy sector is relatively well-funded, but that there is still much to do. Pushing for an overarching policy is high on his agenda: the next elections will be in May/June 2024 and Mediawijs is working on a memo to take to political parties and encourage them to incorporate media literacy into their action plans.

According to the 2018 paper by Van Audenhove et al, one thing to consider is that:

"What should be stressed in the Flemish context is that there is less attention to media literacy and citizenship. Often the discussion focuses on social participation and the daily functioning of individuals in society. This participatory approach reflects an awareness that extra initiatives are necessary for more vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society. In future years, it will be interesting to see whether or not the civic functions of media literacy emerge as a policy priority."

4.4 Key example: the role of Mediawijs

Mediawijs defines media literacy as a set of competencies: the knowledge, skills and attitudes that help people to engage actively, creatively, critically and consciously with media and technology, to further participation in our ever more digitised and mediatised society.

Demeuleneare explained the four main areas that Mediawijs focuses on:

- Digital inclusion – trying to get as many people online as possible with basic skills, with access, with social support and adequate accessible applications;
- Making and creating with digital media – such as digital arts, making journalism/news, creating other media. This includes Digital Fab Labs, which offer access to 3D printing technology and advanced digital tools;
- Approaching information and news critically – this encompasses everything to do with news, disinformation, advertising literacy and more, as well as cyber security;
- Addressing the online risks that relate to inter-personal interactions to help people make the most of the online environment. This includes how to tackle cyberbullying, sexting gone wrong, and privacy issues.

Mediawijs's particularly successful initiatives include:

4.4.1 De Schaal van M

De Schaal van M, a programme for 10-12 year-olds that is inspired by the Dutch initiative MediaMasters. It involves a challenge week on media literacy, with daily lessons that focus on the responsible use of smartphones, social media and games. Each lesson is an hour and is based on specially made episodes of a children's TV series made by the public broadcaster. After watching the episodes, there are class challenges, quizzes, extra videos and conversations to have at home. It is used in about 30% of primary schools, with positive feedback from teachers and pupils. It has the advantage of being scalable without adding to teachers' workload.

4.4.2 Media Coach

MediaCoach is training for intermediaries. This has several separate tracks: it was mainly aimed at teachers and librarians, but now also targets youth workers, carers and local government employees who want to develop a digital inclusion policy. Mediawijs is also working to introduce tracks for people who work with those with disabilities, with newly arrived migrants, and with low literacy adults. For teachers, for example, the programme consists of 10 days of training spread over a school year. Participants must prepare for each day of training by watching videos and completing online assignments, and have to start a project within their school during the training. The idea is that they are a coach for their colleagues to make media literacy happen throughout their organisation. The programme is seen as very successful and often has waiting lists for the teacher track, partly because starting a project during the training really helps to get it off the ground and continue it, Demeuleneare said. It has created a group of 'ambassadors' who can be called upon for focus groups and feedback when necessary.

4.4.3 EDUbox

EDUbox in collaboration with public broadcaster VRT: these are free educational packages of lesson content and activities ('boxes') aimed at secondary schools. Mediawijs is a content partner on themes such as AI, the mechanics of social media, identity, misinformation, cybersecurity or privacy. VRT's leadership of the programmes means that the packages have a wide reach and significant credibility.

4.4.4 The e-Inclusion Taskforce

The e-Inclusion Taskforce is a partnership led by Mediawijs of local authorities, public institutions and civil society organizations that work on digital inclusion of vulnerable groups. It was set up during the first Covid-19 lockdown, when people started online meetings every week on digital inclusion, discussing how to work most effectively and how advise the government. The network meets monthly and has funding in place until the end of 2024. It is effective at coordinating actions, keeping people up-to-date and relaying messages and feedback to the government.

4.5 Conclusion

There are positives in the Flemish approach to media literacy and the position of Mediawijs, starting with the 2012 publication of a coherent policy produced jointly by ministries and outlining clear outcomes: the establishment of a knowledge centre and media literacy as part of the national broadcaster's remit.

Mediawijs is now able to play a strong coordinating role for the various sectors connected to media literacy and for the individuals and ministries working on media literacy in government. It works with a broad definition of media literacy, encompassing critical thinking, creativity, digital inclusion and capacity to address online risks, meaning that its remit is relatively future proof and inclusive of an array of stakeholders. Its cross-department working group for those working on digital inclusion in government also serves as a useful model for good practice.

VRT's collaboration with Mediawijs as part of its educational remit, in the position of a trusted PSB which has significant market share, also suggests a potential greater role for public service media in media literacy provision.

Mediawijs's position as a government-established body that receives funding from government but sits outside it gives the organisation certain advantages. It means that it is also able to seek funding from other sources (including the European Commission), to lobby government, to create partnerships with other stakeholders, and participate in European Commission initiatives such as the BENEDMO and BELUX multinational hubs of the European Digital Media Observatory.

5 Finland

5.1 Introduction

Finland has a small population (just over 5.5 million). It is a relatively culturally homogenous nation, highly educated, with 93% of the population online. In recent years its proximity to Russia has increased concerns about resilience to misinformation, but it has a long history of media education, including at graduate level, that also underpins its approach to media literacy.

Media literacy has strong legitimacy in Finland. It is regulated and mandated through the Ministry of Education and Culture. In 2013 national guidelines for media literacy were agreed and in 2014 media literacy was adopted as a core element in the national curriculum. It is now mandatory from pre-school to secondary level, as well as in adult education contexts (see European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2023). In 2019 a new national policy was developed, *Media Literacy in Finland*, which is now the governing document for the sector. The success of its approach, which is characterised by stakeholder-driven, multi-layered networks supported by key institutions endorsed by government, has been widely acknowledged and it is regarded as an example of best practice by media literacy practitioners. It is currently number 1 in Open Society's Media Literacy Index and points to positive practices.

This case study is based on a one-hour interview with Dr Leo Pekkala, Deputy Director and Head of Media Education and Audiovisual Department, Finnish National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI), one of the leaders of the Finnish sector. A wide range of documents was consulted for the desk research, which are linked in text.

5.2 Overview

Finland has a long history of focus on media education, and the current, formalised support for media literacy is a continuation of what has been developing for many decades, according to Pekkala. While the history of media education has been based on recognition of its social and cultural influence, and its value for the quality of democracy, recent evidence of Russian interference through disinformation campaigns has validated the more structured approach adopted over the last decade. Recognition of the role of media in many aspects of society is reflected in the content of Finland's University of Lapland Masters in Media Education, which is based on research not only on media in teaching and learning, but also on media in society and media and psychosocial wellbeing. In addition, the University of Tampere offers a Masters in Teaching, Learning and Media Education, with media education as one of the three elements of the study programme.

All teachers in Finland have to have a Masters level degree with a teaching qualification and are widely respected as experts. The government's approach is to provide a framework for media literacy education, but not to dictate implementation. Teachers, and professionals working in the community with adults and vulnerable groups, are therefore able to tailor delivery to the requirements of the context.

Media education is underpinned by the principles of Literacy, Humanity and Ethicality; Diversity and Equality; and Sustainable Development and the Future. Strong media skills from media education are regarded as a 'factor in strengthening democracy', but also recognised as contributing to maintaining resilience against disinformation. Pekkala describes the goal of media literacy as 'the good life' for everyone.

Media literacy in Finland is recognised as an ongoing challenge, given the constant changes in the media landscape and the need to educate each new generation, as well as older adults who may never have had formal media literacy education during their schooling. The national policy, investment in research, and government funding that reduces or eliminates the need for private sector funding, ensures a long-term approach. Finland also collaborates with international communities about media literacy (e.g. the EU, UNESCO) as part of its commitment to the area.

Disinformation is not particularly successful in Finland, in part because of the widespread recognition of the need to critically engage with information, which comes from the solid base of media literacy across the population. In addition, Finland is a relatively homogenous nation; to really engage in society, you have to speak Finnish. It is therefore relatively easy to detect disinformation from foreign countries because the language is usually slightly wrong. This means that, while an emphasis on online dangers is important and present in media education, it is not the only focus of instruction.

Media education is a subject and skill set that is formally recognised through degree programmes and school-based programmes. The first education in the area of mass communication was delivered in the 1950s, developed in various ways and now media education is a well-established topic in the curriculum. The sector benefits from this longstanding expertise and understanding of media among its actors. Today, the country's approach to media literacy extends well beyond formal education to include lifelong learning and comprehensive outreach to adults and vulnerable populations across the country.

The sector as it stands is diverse and very active, often embedded in other areas and delivered by practitioners who don't specialise in media literacy, but combine it with their existing profession (e.g. libraries, health and social welfare, youth work). Media education professionals also exist, and collaborate with practitioners that do not specialise in the area.

While media education in Finland relates to broad, formal and informal instruction on and engagement with media, media literacy – the outcome of media education - is focused on the skills to 'interpret, produce and express media'. This in turn is differentiated from the skills to use media. Pekkala likens skills to knowing the words of a language, but not knowing the meaning: effective media literacy means that people have media skills, but also have a more in-depth understanding of how media works and the implications of using and engaging with media for society, democracy and personal well-being.

Media education is delivered via three main groups of actors:

- Municipal services, such as education, care sector, youth work and the cultural sector;
- Universities;
- NGO associations and institutions;
- Media companies and associations.

The Finnish National Audiovisual Institute, KAVI, is the public sector organisation responsible for promoting media education at a national level. Implementation in the education sector is the responsibility of the Finnish National Agency for Education.

5.3 National media literacy policy

The government first introduced a set of national principles for good media literacy in 2013 and updated this to a formal national policy in 2019. The policy has three objectives: to deliver comprehensive, high quality and systematic media education. Media education is seen as the mechanism for delivering media literacy. The policy describes desired media education as: 'topical, equal, relevant and of high professional quality' (p. 13). It should be practical, versatile and is underpinned by a collaborative approach to design and delivery.

The policy was developed collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders through workshops, discussions and other engagements, and emphasises the importance of collaboration among providers as a central theme. The collaborative approach to media literacy is regarded as essential because the work itself is complex, affects everyone and addresses so many different areas of everyday life, so there can be no one-size-fits-all approach that would work for everyone (see This is Finland, 2023).

Media education is recognised in the policy as an activity that is underpinned by a general commitment to equality, access and human rights, as well as by the social, community and organizational values relevant to delivery organizations and to users. As such, media education is not a neutral activity, but is driven by political

commitments and collective interests. This gives the sector the political backing it needs to have legitimacy, which in turn allows for investment in a systematic approach, focused on securing long-term and equitable funding across the sector, mapping the sector (actors, activities and funding), sharing best practice, gathering data about implementation and outcomes, developing and supporting leadership at different levels of delivery, and developing evaluation measures.

Alongside the National Media Literacy Policy, the Finnish Public Libraries Act 2016 and the Youth Act 2017 both provide frameworks within which media literacy is recognised as an important outcome.

5.4 Media literacy in formal education

The first degree in media education was set up in the mid-1990s, providing a systematic approach to identifying the principles that underpinned media practices. Now media literacy is taught at Undergraduate and Masters level. Rather than being a stand-alone subject, it is integrated at all levels of the education system, from pre-school to advanced secondary level, and teachers are expected to include media education in their teaching, in ways that are relevant to their subject. It is present in the school curriculum as 'multiliteracy' rather than simply media literacy, reflecting the increased complexity of media in the digital era. Multiliteracy is integrated into the transversal competences that Finland has identified for its secondary education curriculum; as such, it both supports and is fostered through the delivery of core subjects, rather than being a stand-alone subject itself (see European Education and Culture Executive Agency, 2023). The National Agency for Education regulates the school curriculum and specific outcomes are stipulated for each year group, although how they are achieved is left to schools to define and implement.

5.5 Media literacy at national level

KAVI is responsible for promoting media education in contexts outside schools – for example, among adult populations, such as older people or parents, and vulnerable populations. The focus on adult populations has received more emphasis recently, complementing the work in schools. KAVI was set up in 2014 and is housed in the Department of Art and Cultural Policy within the Ministry of Education and Culture. Pekkala notes that setting up the organisation was an important indicator of the government's commitment to the sector: ''it sent a clear signal to the field that now we have somebody who does this, an address, and there are some people you can talk to, and we are connected'.

One key task for KAVI when it was first set up was to map the sector in order to understand what was being done, and by whom. Over 100 NGOs deliver media literacy services across the country, alongside government offices, universities and municipal services. Mapping these organisations allowed KAVI to start building relationships with providers; it now acts as a hub that connects all the different actors delivering media literacy. It maintains close ties with its network, while NGOs operating at national level keep KAVI informed about what is needed at local level, where they do outreach. They also contribute materials and resources to the Media Literacy Week.

KAVI has important links to politicians and policymakers, which give it some government influence. It is responsible for overseeing media literacy implementation in line with government strategies, but delivering media literacy for adults and vulnerable populations is not regulated in the same way as the national curriculum and so KAVI doesn't dictate how this should be done. In other words, KAVI's approach to ensuring media literacy is delivered is more facilitatory than prescriptive. Pekkala emphasised the importance of taking a flexible approach because of the distribution of the population across different types of cities, towns and small villages. There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to these diverse spaces, so a flexible approach allows KAVI to provide guidance rather than dictating what needs to be done in absolute terms.

KAVI coordinates Finland's Media Literacy Week (see below), which takes place across the country. It also houses the country's Safer Internet Centre. The NAE works with KAVI, but responsibilities in each area are clearly delineated.

5.6 Resources and non-government actors

Funding for media education is provided by the Ministry for Education and Culture in the form of grants for organisations and projects within its remit. The scale of media education in Finland means that government funding is not always sufficient, and private funding must sometimes be sought to fill the gap (see 'challenges' below). Both the NAE and KAVI make resources available for media literacy educators, and KAVI has set up an online media literacy school where practitioners can access research, materials and share ideas about delivery.

In addition, the Finnish Society for Media Education is a key NGO that describes itself as an 'influencer' focused on research and practice relating to media literacy for children and young people, as well as vulnerable groups. It acts as an umbrella association for organisations working on media education, a hub for sharing best practices and resources among professionals and parents, generates resources, promotes media literacy and works with international organisations (e.g. at the UN). Their objective is 'to offer children and youth the necessary media skills to function in and influence society, and to support their well-being in the everyday media environment'. The regulatory basis for their work is the Youth Act. The Media Education Centre and the School Cinema Association also focus on providing media education resources and sharing practices.

The Finnish public broadcaster, Yle, provides resources for media education, while the media sector more widely supports media education through research, provision of resources, and of educational content about media practices for consumers, in order to prompt more responsible use of media among the population (see National Media Education Policy, p. 40).

5.7 Voluntary approach within a framework

Pekkala emphasises the importance of the voluntary approach to media literacy delivery in Finland. He believes that leaving space for creativity and choice on the part of practitioners facilitates more activity: 'I don't think that's the way to actually to promote this idea because it's based so much on individuals who are enthusiastic about this, and they learn about these ideas and then try them out, they see that 'okay, this works for me and I think this is a good idea' - and because they don't have to do it, they probably do much more.'

The approach works because there is a generally high level of trust in institutions and in the political system in Finland, as well as in the media, so that people are likely to be open to advice or guidance from an institution rather than to reject it outright. It is further helped by the fact that media education is a government priority and is delivered very widely, not only in schools. This means there is also widespread recognition that critically engaging with information is important.

5.8 Successes

5.8.1 Media Literacy Week

Finland's national Media Literacy Week is a particularly successful example of its approach to media literacy. Since KAVI introduced it, it has grown into a nationwide event with widespread buy-in not only from media literacy professionals, but also from services and institutions where media literacy is seen as highly relevant. The week takes place every February across the whole of the country and population coverage is very comprehensive, from preschool children up to senior citizens. For example, in 2022, the focus was on reaching adults and emphasising the importance of lifelong learning in media literacy, but media literacy work was still done throughout formal and informal education settings. 2300 kindergartens, schools and libraries receive materials to work with during Media Literacy Week, for use if they want to host an event or activities. KAVI also runs activities in collaboration with other participating organisations.

Preparation for Media Literacy Week takes place throughout the year. KAVI is the coordinating actor and develops resources for it, but NGOs and private sector organisations also contribute materials and resources for activities and events. KAVI works with more than 50 organizations, including all the biggest

telecommunications companies, TV companies and media houses, to develop content and activities. In addition, it acts as a hub for governmental agencies and NGOs who have produced campaign materials of their own. This allows it to be a central reference and coordination point for all the different actors involved in making Media Literacy Week happen, but without overdetermining the agenda. Instead, it ensures that work is tailored to the context where events are hosted. As Pekkala says, 'that way we can have multiple voices, and we speak with different voices to different groups of people. And it's not just one message coming from one government office, but it's actually really this multitude of organizations that are doing this'.

5.8.2 National Media Literacy Policy

The second significant success is the collaborative creation of the National Media Literacy Policy. The policy sets out clear objectives for media literacy education; the current landscape for media literacy education, including values, current developments, and challenges; the range of actors involved in media literacy delivery, and the roles of different government departments in paying attention to media literacy (not only the Ministry of Education and Culture).

Because it was created through the participation of stakeholders working in the sector, with a close knowledge of the landscape and the issues that needed addressing, the final content of the policy has buy-in from the actors who can make it a reality. Rather than it being a 'top-down' set of instructions, the stakeholders feel like it is 'their' policy. The national policy emphasizes the importance of communication between providers, utilizing the different strengths of actors in the field, making resources open access, establishing and maintaining networks. While not prescriptive, the fact that a government document specifically encourages collaboration gives institutional efforts to foster networking (such as the initiatives by KAVI or the larger NGOs) more legitimacy.

For KAVI, the policy constitutes a 'backbone that we can rely on', which gives them a mandate for their actions and provides the framework for their activities. It is also publicly available and written in accessible language, so that it provides a high level of transparency about what KAVI does and why. This helps justify the investment in media literacy at governmental level, provides support for the promotion of media literacy within and beyond schools, and gives KAVI itself legitimacy.

5.9 Perceived Challenges

While the Finnish approach to media literacy is recognised widely as a successful model, challenges remain. In the National Media Literacy Policy (pp. 27-29), eight different challenges are noted:

- Resources to implement at the desired scale, including uneven access to media among the population. This can lead to practitioners seeking short-term or project-based finance from non-government sources, which in turn leads to short-term thinking and sector fragmentation.
- The need for more collaboration, cooperation and networking among practitioners, to enhance efficiencies, inclusivity and the potential contribution of localised initiatives.
- Variable skills and competence levels across the media literacy sector, including for new forms of media.
- Variable distribution of media education, which favours cities and can neglect sparsely populated or remote areas.
- Fragmented media education, because of the scale of the endeavour. Groups that are harder to reach and may not have had any media literacy training still need to be specifically targeted, and some topics may still be overlooked in media education.
- The need for a more systematic approach to media education. There is a need for more data on levels of media literacy among the population; on the ways education is being carried out in non-formal settings and at secondary school level; and on changes and improvements to media education in recent years, to support the development of a stronger systematic approach.
- Societal and cultural changes (e.g. polarisation, racism, climate change) that can be fostered or challenged through media culture could be better integrated into media education.

- Limitations in awareness and value attached to media education among the wider population.

Leo Pekkala also noted additional issues for the sector:

- Media literacy education is a never-ending task. Delivering media literacy can be a matter of delivering 'what works' over again with new populations. However, practitioners can feel like they have 'done' one particular aspect of media literacy education, and do not need to repeat or evolve their approaches. This feeling of having 'done the job' of achieving media literacy can also affect funding allocations.
- As Finland gradually becomes more multicultural, integrating new populations into media literacy efforts, with different cultural and language skills, is also a growing challenge. Reaching these groups (and other adult groups) requires lots of different routes and techniques to teach them because of their diverse lives. KAVI has focused on this area of media literacy work in particular, in recent years.
- Related to the challenges of data collection above, the sector needs a formal media literacy evaluation tool. Research already conducted suggests that a comprehensive evaluation of media literacy is impossible to achieve, so the focus is on collaboration with other Nordic countries to identify specific outcomes that can be measured.

5.10 Conclusion

Finland's media literacy landscape bears some resemblance to the UK context. It has a diverse range of actors delivering media literacy, it is attempting to span both formal and informal education sectors, and reach populations beyond school age, it is recognised and endorsed at national level and government policies are in place that legitimise the pursuit of media literacy by NGOs, commercial companies and government ministries and agencies.

That said, some aspects of the Finnish approach constitute positive practices that relate to some of the challenges that the stakeholders in our research identified. The positives include:

- The existence of a national policy, collaboratively created by stakeholders in the sector, offers clear and comprehensive aims and objectives for the sector. It provides the basis for a long-term approach to media literacy, a direction and outcomes for the sector to aim for, legitimacy for government funding, and ensures a strategic approach at policy level that incorporates and anticipates the value of media literacy across a range of policy areas.
- Media education is distributed rather than siloed. This means it is integrated into the school curriculum across all subject areas, and beyond the school context, it is included in a range of services that the adult population and vulnerable groups access, such as the care sector and youth work. This approach has its challenges, as noted above, but it does mean the reach of media literacy is much greater, and more easily accessible, than if it were a specialised skill that only some people can deliver and others have to buy in. It also means that the relevance of media literacy is more widely recognized than might otherwise be the case.
- The flexible 'coordinating hub' role that KAVI adopts means that media literacy resources for implementation are readily accessible and shared among stakeholders, and research on media education is widely available. It also offers an ongoing opportunity for dialogue among stakeholders and between stakeholders and the coordinating body, which provides a convening point for the sector and maintains contact and collaboration over time.
- Media Literacy Week raises awareness of the relevance and importance of media literacy among a very wide audience. It is another location where collaboration between different types of organisation is successful, and engages the population in media literacy in an entertaining and relevant way. This 'celebration' of media literacy also helps to illustrate its societal value, rather than simply focusing on the more negative framing of online harm and dis/misinformation.

6 Ireland

6.1 Introduction

Although Ireland is far smaller than the UK (with a population of just over 5 million) its geographic and linguistic proximity means that there are similarities in governance and approach that make it a useful case for comparison. It has similar levels of internet penetration to the UK (92% of the population are online vs 95% in the UK) and as in the UK, there has been increased attention to the problems caused by disinformation and on media literacy as a potential solution. Media literacy does not play a significant role in the formal education system, where there is a greater focus on digital skills.

With the establishment of Media Literacy Ireland in 2017, Ireland has refocused its efforts on media literacy outside formal education, and the network demonstrates the value of improved coordination as well as the advantages and limitations of a voluntary alliance. The national regulator, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, leads but does not own this network.

This case study is based on an interview conducted with Martina Chapman, national coordinator for Media Literacy Ireland and an independent media literacy expert, who has authored several international reports on media literacy and is widely considered to be a leading expert in the field. Desk research was conducted using a range of documents/papers including:

- BAI's Media Literacy Policy 2016
- The 2022 Media Pluralism Monitor
- Digital News Report Ireland 2022
- International Encyclopaedia of Media Literacy entry on Ireland

6.2 Overview

As in many countries, responsibility for media literacy as a whole doesn't fall clearly under a specific government department. It is present to an extent in government strategies such as the ten year adult literacy for life strategy published in July 202,1 which focuses on digital literacy as one of three pillars alongside numeracy and literacy, and the Harnessing Digital – The Digital Ireland Framework, but it is difficult to build an over-arching strategy.

However, as established by the Broadcasting Act 2009, the media regulator – first the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) and since March 2023 the Coimisiún na Meán - which regulates all indigenous broadcasting (public and commercial and community), has a statutory obligation to undertake, encourage and foster research, measures and activities directed towards the promotion of media literacy.

In 2016, the BAI launched a media literacy policy, which aimed to empower Irish people with the skills and knowledge to make informed choices about the media content and services that they consume, create and disseminate. It was developed following wide consultation in coordination with key media literacy stakeholders beyond the regulator's usual base, including educators.

It included five strategic policy objectives:

1) To provide leadership and facilitate a coordinated approach to the promotion of media literacy in Ireland.
2) To describe and promote media literacy among citizens, consumers and stakeholders, in a manner that is relevant and meaningful.
3) To encourage a wide range of stakeholders to participate in the promotion of media literacy, in line with their specific business and strategic priorities.
4) To foster media literacy research and the development of a comprehensive knowledge base.

5) To develop a policy that is strategically aligned to other key learning frameworks and policies.

Rather than attempting to define media literacy, the BAI took an approach that aimed to be more future-proof and accepting of the fact that media literacy is a dynamic concept, by describing what media literacy means for individuals and society. It therefore outlined a media literacy framework with three sets of core competencies, aiming to use language that would be widely understood by citizens, society and stakeholders from varying sectors:

1) Understand and critically evaluate broadcast, digital and other media content and services, in order to make informed choices and best manage media use.
2) Access and use broadcast and digital media content and services in a safe and secure manner, to maximise opportunities and minimise risks.
3) Create and participate, via media, in a responsible, ethical and effective manner, in the creative, cultural and democratic aspects of society.

Each of these competences is accompanied by several skill indicators for individuals and success indicators/collective impact.

During the BAI's consultation in preparation for the launch of its media literacy policy it became clear, Chapman explained that although media literacy was something that everyone supported, many stakeholders didn't initially understand the broad scope of media literacy and as a result didn't necessarily recognise the role that they might potentially play in the promotion of media literacy. There was also a clear appetite for leadership in the area.

The subsequent establishment of Media Literacy Ireland was a response to this. A multistakeholder approach, including journalists, online platforms, academia, civil society, and public authorities was believed to be essential.[5]

Facilitated by Coimisiún na Meán, MLI is an informal, independent, alliance of stakeholders who work together on a mainly voluntary basis to promote media literacy. The strategic direction for MLI is set by a voluntary Steering Group consisting of two co-chairs (one representing Coimisiún na Meán) and up to 16 steering group members from the membership. Membership is free, but its members are expected to participate and share experiences and resources.

Membership currently stands at over 300.

6.3 Media literacy in schools

According to the 2019 International Encyclopaedia of Media Literacy, media education in Irish schools has a relatively long tradition, first becoming part of the curriculum in the 1970s. The first National Media Education Conference was held in Dublin in 1985, which led to the establishment of a Teachers' Association for Media Education (TAME), which aimed to support and encourage teachers of media education. Since the early 1990s, media literacy has been represented in the English curriculum and as a thematic element within social, personal and health education (SPHE). More recently, there has also been focus on digital literacy and support for ICT education. The 2022 Media Pluralism Monitor report found that there remains substantial scope for mainstreaming media literacy into Irish primary and secondary education curricula.

[5] *TEXT NOT FOUND*

6.3.1 Curriculum design

As the Department of Education's Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 highlights, the Primary Language Curriculum developed in 2019 promotes digital and critical literacy as an important aspect of children's learning in English and in Irish.

According to the European Commission's Youth Wiki, most media literacy education within secondary school takes place at the lower secondary level/the junior cycle (aged 13-15), through the specifically designed, 100-hour optional course Digital Media Literacy; and within a compulsory core subject Civic, Social and Political Education. The Digital Media Literacy course is well-respected but as it is optional, it relies on schools having the capacity and interest to deliver it.

At upper secondary/Senior Cycle level (16-19 year-olds), media literacy is addressed through the optional subject Politics and Society. The Leaving Certificate Applied, a state examination for vocational senior second level students, includes media literacy and digital safety within its module Communications and the Digital World. This is one of the four modules within the subject English and Communications.

Further high-quality resources are available from external providers including WebWise, which is funded by the Department of Education (and other funders including the European Union) and approaches media literacy through an online safety lens. However, their adoption is limited firstly by awareness, then by the competence and confidence of the teachers to deliver it, and then by the fact that if children won't be tested on it and teachers won't be rewarded for teaching it, then motivation to deliver it is very low.

Chapman highlighted a need for teacher training on media literacy to increase competence, confidence and motivation, and the need for critical thinking to be considered a core competency to be applied across all subjects. She also noted the challenges related to changing the curriculum, particularly for a topic like media literacy which must take into account the constantly-evolving technological, societal and political context.

6.4 Interesting practices

6.4.1 Media Literacy Ireland

Media Literacy Ireland is a key player in Ireland's media literacy scene. After its establishment by the BAI in 2017, it is now the flagship base for media literacy stakeholders and activities focused on media literacy outside formal education. It concentrates on four main work areas, as described by its coordinator Martina Chapman:

1) **Communication.** MLI provides a platform both for members to communicate with one another, and for MLI to communicate with stakeholders, fostering discussion around the issues, identifying gaps and providing a space for solutions to these. This takes place through standard communications channels: the website, newsletter, social media and events.
2) **Coordination.** Coordination is a highly significant, although less visible, piece of MLI's work. For example, MLI plays a matchmaking role between international stakeholders looking for funding, and MLI members. A lot of work goes into understanding the stakeholders, their key areas of interest, expertise, capability and red lines, which helps everyone to see the potential role they could play, Chapman explained. This is key to keep stakeholders engaged and active. MLI is also active on the international stage through close cooperation with international initiatives such as the European Platform for Regulatory Authorities' (EPRA) EMIL network. MLI also works very closely with the European Digital Media Observatory's Ireland Hub.
3) **Innovation.** MLI aims to support and facilitate its members to explore how to promote media literacy in new and innovative ways at national and international levels. For example, MLI is encouraging members to focus on evaluation of media literacy initatives and is represented on Ofcom's Making Sense of Media evaluation Working Group.
4) **Promotion of media literacy.** MLI aims to use the reach and influence of member networks to help amplify media literacy campaigns. This includes member-led campaigns such as Safer Internet Day

and European Cyber Security Month, as well as the MLI-led Be Media Smart campaign. Promotion of media literacy initiatives is also achieved via the MLI awards programme.

6.5 Successes and Perceived Challenges

Media Literacy Ireland's status as a coordinating body has both advantages and disadvantages, as detailed by Chapman.

One of the reasons for MLI's success in carrying out its coordination role is the sense of joint ownership and common purpose. There is an acknowledgement that each stakeholder round the table might be there for a different reason – for example some are motivated by policy, others by public interest or by corporate social responsibility - but they share the same end goal, the promotion of media literacy.

The MLI steering group also deliberately represents a wide range of stakeholders, giving each a seat at the table and enabling them to influence, in a democratic way, the strategic direction of MLI's work. The stakeholder groups represented include regulators, news publishing, community media, commercial radio, commercial television, public service media, the independent sectory, the community and voluntary sector, the education and youth sector, information society (libraries), the film sector, technology platforms, and academia.

Media Literacy Ireland is an informal alliance of individuals and organisations. Coimisiún na Meán funds its coordination and covers essential costs, but MLI is not a legal entity, and therefore doesn't have a bank account, so it can't apply for or distribute funds. This means that the activities undertaken by MLI are almost completely dependent on the voluntary support of its members. The voluntary ethos can lead to highly successful projects, as demonstrated by the Be Media Smart campaign (see below), which took advantage of MLI's ability to be agile as a small and informal network.

To strategically tackle key media literacy issues which are ultimately connected to behaviour change, a longer term (5-10 year) fully-funded plan with commitments from a range of sectors, including government, would be necessary, Chapman argued. Media literacy requires lifelong learning, and a connection between formal education, informal education and general public awareness is needed, requiring long-term strategies, long-term funding and well-researched and carefully-implemented behaviour change programmes, which are extremely expensive to carry out effectively. This is particularly challenging given that technology continues to evolve. Without long-term, cross-sector strategic planning and committed funding in place, MLI is restricted in the range of approaches it can take which can result in limited results when addressing some specific topics.

As well as these broader issues, specific challenges include:

- **Coordinating a multistakeholder network.** The nature of a cross-sector, multi-platform network means that sometimes stakeholders will have potentially conflicting views and approaches. Some organisations are very 'brand' conscious and are very careful about who they are seen to work in partnership with (e.g. competitors). For example, some stakeholders and commentators view social media platforms as significant contributors to some of the issues that media literacy interventions seek to address – and as such are careful about their level of engagement. MLI believes that all sectors have a role to play promoting media literacy – and that roles, and approaches may be different. MLI works hard to ensure that MLI members have the opportunity to contribute to MLI work in ways that align with their own values, principles and organisational objectives. This approach can be time-consuming and requires significant coordination.
- **Reaching and involving vulnerable groups.** Given the potential reach of MLI activities through promotion via a diverse range of members, MLI has had relatively good success in reaching the general public, for example via the Be Media Smart campaign. As specific MLI members already address school-aged children with media literacy interventions, MLI does not focus on media literacy initiatives around formal education (although it does support the ad-hoc training of teachers via the EDMO Hub). However, this general approach to promoting media literacy does mean that reaching

the particularly vulnerable groups (e.g. those most vulnerable to mis/disinformation, or digital fraud, or lacking the digital literacy to understand the economics of the internet) are least likely to be engaged by media literacy initiatives targeted at the general public. Chapman highlighted a need to identify existing trusted community networks that can help to reach these groups on an ongoing basis, because such organisations can successfully integrate media literacy messages into what they do in a way that is appropriate and accessible for their audience. Libraries likely have a role to play here, although many people don't go to libraries.

6.5.1 Be Media Smart Campaign

Be Media Smart is a national media literacy campaign that help people to Be Media Smart and to 'Stop, Think, Check' that the information that they receive, from whatever source, is accurate and reliable.

This national media campaign consisting of radio, TV and online ads, as well as editorial material, raises awareness of the importance of making sure that information is accurate and reliable. The media campaign directs people to the bemediasmart.ie website which provides tips and resources on how to approach information critically, and links to fact-checking and debunking sites.

The campaign first launched in March 2019, to coincide with European Media Literacy Week, and had a general focus on verifying information in the run up to the European elections. In 2020, a second iteration was launched focused on mis/disinformation around the COVID-19 pandemic and in 2021, the focus was on ensuring that people were able to evaluate the information that they were receiving about the Covid-19 vaccination.

Campaign ads and videos directed consumers to the dedicated Be Media Smart website where further resources are hosted. Assets were created by national broadcaster RTE, while technology companies and other broadcasters and publishers gave free advertising space, and posters were displayed in libraries.

The campaign was delivered almost entirely through voluntary contributions from different stakeholders with seed funding of about €20,000 – Chapman estimated that paying for it would have cost about €300,000. She sees it as an excellent example of how a voluntary network of stakeholders can coalesce around an idea and amplify it, probably in a more effective way than if MLI had had to buy advertising space. For her, it demonstrated that when you can identify a message that numerous stakeholders can get behind, there is a general will to help out, especially when stakeholders can recognise a clear role for them to play and target their expertise. MLI's status as an informal alliance not backed by government helped to produce the campaign in an agile fashion, Chapman added: "by bringing stakeholders round the table on a voluntary basis, you can move mountains, and you can do it quickly".

The radio ads reached an estimated 2 million people during the 2019 phase, with approximately 750,000 people viewing the TV ads at least once. The concept was adopted by a number of other European countries and other organisations used the Stop, Think, Check tagline, which for MLI was a real indicator of success.

6.6 Conclusion

Ireland's experience with the Media Literacy Ireland network highlights some useful practices.

Like Ofcom, media regulator Coimisiún na Meán has statutory responsibility for promoting media literacy, and its approach, based on the BAI's 2016 Media Literacy policy, focuses on competencies rather than on a tighter definition of media literacy, which gives it more flexibility as the landscape evolves, a form of 'futureproofing' media literacy policy. Even though it was developed before disinformation became an issue of common concern, the competencies required to counter this - related to critical thinking, being able to interpret information, understand how media is made and how to make informed choices about its accuracy – were already set out as key policy objectives.

However, the broad definition of media literacy adopted by the regulator and MLI it doesn't fit neatly into a single policy area and this can be challenging in terms of securing long-term strategic planning on a cross-sector basis. Chapman suggested that an ideal scenario would be the development of a national strategy that identified some national outcomes, with a framework onto which practitioners could map their outputs – but given the cross-sector nature of media literacy, execution of this would likely be very difficult.

MLI operates effectively as an 'honest-broker' in the cross-policy world of media literacy, and the fact that the initiative is not Government-led has advantages. As an independent, informal alliance rather than a legal entity, Media Literacy Ireland has the potential to be far more agile and dynamic than a government-run body. The steering group has no legal obligations, and being a member of a formal board of directors might be less appealing to some participants, running the risk of creating a less diverse group. Still, MLI activity, reach and impact is potentially limited by its informal nature, due to limitations in the way that it can receive funding and the voluntary and 'in-kind' nature of support provided by MLI members.

Chapman also stressed the importance of Coimisiún na Meán providing leadership but not ownership of the Media Literacy Ireland network. Although there is significant input and support from the Coimisiún na Meán, she explained that "I think there is something of note there in that it is not seen to be owned by a government department or the regulator." Relatedly, the decision to include representatives from many different sectors in MLI's steering group means that stakeholders feel a strong sense of shared ownership, understand how the network is run, and that it isn't dominated by tech platforms, for example. News publishers and advertisers, who are traditionally outside of the broadcast regulator's remit, have also been willing to participate.

Part 3: Short case studies

7 Brazil

7.1 Introduction

In Brazil, non-profit organisations are the most active stakeholders who deliver media literacy interventions, and they tend to describe their work as media education. Media education, in this sense, is not necessarily restricted to the work that is done within school environments as it involves programmes that broadly relate to access, comprehension, and critical reading of media across society. This notwithstanding, what we see is that most media literacy interventions in Brazil tend to be delivered in schools.

With regard to educational policy, there has been debate on the need to include media education in the school curriculum, but this is complicated by the fact that education is decentralised across federal, state, and municipal tiers of government. The approach that the government has taken is to introduce the Base National Common Curricular (BNCC), a flexible set of guidelines to inform curriculum development for kindergarten, elementary, and secondary schools at state and municipal levels. At the university level, there are courses in the area of communication that touch on media literacy (e.g. the University of São Paulo's programme on educommunication).

When it comes to government policy, the focus largely rests on developing basic literacy in areas like reading and writing, particularly among young children. This is part of a wider trend of ensuring that people have the proficiencies required to participate in society, using educational means and methods. As such, the Ministry of Education plays an all-important role in the sector. The other ministry that might have had a role in the sector – the Ministry of Culture – has only been reinstated by the new administration.

This case study, therefore, considers the approach that the government has taken through the Ministry of Education and the non-profit organisations in the field.

7.2 Overview

What we see in the Brazilian case is the overwhelming focus on the need to promote basic literacy and technological proficiency that allow for participation in the digital society. The government takes the lead in this regard and has formulated policies on national literacy and curriculum guidance through the Ministry of Education. When it comes to media literacy proper, private and non-profit organisations are predominant. They tend to focus on digital empowerment and critical engagement with the media, particularly on issues like combatting disinformation.

7.3 Government policy: basic literacy

Figures show that more than five million Brazilian children were out of school by the end of 2020. The government's approach to solving the problem is to devote considerable resources to training on basic literacy in areas like reading and writing. As a result, the government created the Literacy Secretariat (called Sealf) under the Ministry of Education.

The Secretariat is responsible for implementing the government's National Literacy Policy known as PNA (*Política Nacional de Alfabetização*). Established in 2019, the PNA is aimed at combatting illiteracy within and outside formal education by seeking to improve people's reading and writing skills. It has five objectives:

- raising the quality of literacy and numeracy, especially in the early years of elementary school;
- contributing to the achievement of literacy for all children and raising the literacy rate of the population as contained in the National Education Plan;
- ensuring the right to literacy in order to promote citizenship and national development;
- positively impacting learning throughout the entire educational trajectory; and
- promoting the study, dissemination, and application of scientific knowledge on literacy and numeracy.

The PNA also recognises the role that the family can play as an agent of literacy education. Hence, one of the initiatives created under the policy's umbrella is the *Conta pra Nim* (Tell Me) programme. It seeks to achieve pre-literacy or family literacy, providing the resources that parents need to strengthen their children's reading and writing skills before they begin school. Children are encouraged to read and play; this, it is believed, will make them fitter and more skilled in the early years of elementary school.

Another initiative under the PNA is *Tempo de Aprender* (Learning Time), which aims to improve the quality of literacy in all public schools across Brazil. Its action plans include continuous training of literacy professionals (e.g., teachers), providing funding for schools and digital resources to support literacy, improving literacy assessments, and recognising the work that literacy professionals undertake.

Activities like these are widely promoted during the country's National Literacy Day, which was instituted in 1966. The Day is marked annually on November 14 and reinforces the importance that Brazil places on literacy education.

7.4 Government policy: ICT uptake in schools

In line with the government's drive to promote digital proficiency and empowerment, there has been considerable investment to provide ICT facilities in schools. Fantin (2019), for instance, writes about the e-ProInfo, the collaborative and digital learning environment of the National Program of Educational Technology that aims to promote the use of ICTs in public schools. Other examples include the Broadband in Schools Program (PBLE) and the One Computer per Student Program (see De Miranda, 2015).

Programmes such as these are not necessarily aimed at promoting media literacy or critical thinking, but at providing access to new media technologies and training on the competencies that students need to make the most use of them.

7.5 Media literacy pedagogy and curriculum development

The OECD 2021 Education Policy Outlook for Brazil shows that the education system is decentralised across the federal government, 26 states, and 5,570 municipalities. Each tier of government can legislate and formulate policy on education, but the Ministry of Education steers the system through national standards and frameworks and provides technical and financial assistance to the states and municipalities.

One framework is the Base National Common Curricular (BNCC), introduced in 2018 to guide pedagogy and curriculum development across kindergarten, elementary, and secondary schools in Brazil. It is aimed at solving the "fragmentation of education policies" and promoting collaboration between the tiers of government as far as curriculum development is concerned.

When it comes to media literacy, the BNCC situates it in the wider languages area, which makes up one of its five overarching subjects. At the early childhood education level, the emphasis is on basic literacy, such as listening, speaking, thinking, and imagining. At the elementary school stage, children transit to multiliteracy as part of the English curriculum. This includes a provision on the use of digital technologies to research, select, share, and produce meaning in literacy practices in ways that are ethical, critical, and responsible.

At the secondary school level, the emphasis shifts to proficiencies in digital technologies and computing. This is articulated in three main value propositions:

1) Computational thinking: the ability to understand, analyse, define, model, solve, compare, and automate problems and their solutions, methodically and systematically, through the development of algorithms.
2) Digital world: the ability to process, transmit, and distribute information safely and reliably in different digital artefacts, both physical (computers, cell phones, tablets, etc) and virtual (internet, social networks, data cloud, etc).

3) Digital culture: this includes building a critical, ethical, and responsible attitude in relation to the multiplicity of media and digital offers, and fluency in the use of digital technology to express solutions and cultural manifestations in a contextualised and critical way.

While the BNCC exists as a compendium of curricular guidelines, there is evidence to suggest that media literacy has been part of secondary school teaching in other forms. For instance, an article by Danilo Venticinque and Andrew Whitworth shows that media literacy is included in the National Exam of Secondary Education or ENEM (*Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio*) – the unified university entrance examination which was introduced in 1998. To help students deal with the media literacy aspect of the exam, schools hire journalists or encourage their teachers to teach students how to make sense of and interpret media materials.

At the university level, students have the choice of studying communication courses where media literacy is touched on in some sense. An example is the educommunication programme at the University of São Paulo. The programme draws from the work of Paulo Freire (i.e., *conscientização* or critical consciousness), highlighting the need for participation between teachers, students, and members of the educational community in the transfer and exchange of knowledge (see Soares, 2018).

7.6 The role of non-profit organisations

There is vibrant involvement of non-profit organisations in media literacy delivery in Brazil. A 2016 study by Caprino and Martínez-Cerdá, for instance, shows that the country has at least 107 media literacy organisations that deliver interventions on access to media content, critical understanding, and content production. Overall, the study notes that the initiatives tend to target youth and they focus on four broad areas that point towards empowerment:

1) Democratising access to communication, education, culture, and technologies.
2) Working for social change and social inclusion.
3) Helping beneficiaries to access their socio-economic benefits.
4) Guaranteeing and fighting for human rights and citizenship.

One organisation that focuses on empowerment is Recode. It has partnered with several organisations to achieve its goal of digital empowerment, providing training to people on how to use digital technologies, particularly for things like employment.

Other non-profits work to promote media education in schools. Examples include the Media Education Lab, an organisation involved in advocacy and the delivery of media education projects in schools. Its training gives attention to issues like analysis, comprehension, and production of media content (see De Miranda, 2015). There is also TechCamp, a programme set up by the US Department of State, that conducts media literacy workshops in Brazilian public schools on subjects like combatting disinformation.

Technology organisations also support media literacy delivery. For instance, Google.org is involved in the EducaMídia programme of Instituto Palavra Aberta (Open Word Institute). The programme trains teachers in media education skills so that they in turn can teach students. Another organisation, Lupa, combines this focus on media education with fact-checking. It operates on two fronts: *Lupa Journalismo* focused on fact-checking, and Lupa Educação focused on research, workshops, and training on media education in schools, universities, and private companies.

7.7 Interesting practices

There are two particularly interesting practices on media literacy in the Brazilian context: one is private-led, the other is government-led.

7.7.1 Workshop for Influencers

The private-led initiative is the Workshops for Influencers programme of the organisation *Redes Cordiais* (Friendly Networks). The programme targets influencers in Brazil on the freedoms and responsibilities that people have on social media networks. The idea is to turn these influencers into change agents, who are then expected to communicate with and mobilise their followers on causes related to media literacy, including the fight against disinformation.

So far, the organisation has trained more than 250 influencers, who combined reach about 140 million followers. The initiative is interesting because it does not follow the worn-out path of delivering interventions in schools or to youth, instead targeting influencers and the trust, social capital, and celebrity affiliation that they represent, in order to reach the wider population.

7.7.2 The Base National Common Curricular

The BNCC provides a set of guidelines for curriculum development in Brazil, serving as a reference for the states and municipalities. It gives the Ministry of Education the tool to achieve a semblance of coherence and standardisation in the country's decentralised education system. Soares (2018) makes the point that this is one reason why most people support the policy, although others oppose it on the grounds that it reduces the work of teachers to a series of checklists to be met.

In terms of media and digital literacy, the BNCC, indication that it should be approached as a cross-curricular item embedded in several subjects (see post by Cara Coscarelli and Ana Elisa Ribeiro). The BNCC also focuses on multiliteracies and the ability of students to use digital technologies (e.g., algorithms and computational tools) as empowered citizens. In practice, it may be that issues like critical media literacy are overlooked in favour of more appealing subjects like digital access and proficiency in technological hardware and software.

There is also the potential for the states and municipalities to go in different directions when developing their curricula based on guidance in the BNCC, ultimately defeating the goal of standardisation. This risk comes with running a decentralised system in a large country like Brazil. But as far as media literacy is concerned, the BNCC could be more explicit in stating the critical media literacy competencies that students need so that other tiers of government see the importance of including it in their curriculum design. Equally relevant is the need to invest in teacher training and equip libraries with the resources they need to support media literacy in Brazil.

7.8 Conclusion

The case analysis sketched the media literacy sector in Brazil, highlighting government policy, activities of the Ministry of Education, and the work that non-profit organisations carry out. Two policies, the BNCC and the PNA, shed light on how the Brazilian government has attempted to coordinate the sector by promoting positive and consistent practices across the fragmented landscape.

8 Estonia

8.1 Introduction

Estonia is a very small Baltic state (population of 1.3m) but interesting as a case study because of the way it has proactively used media literacy as a form of defence against disinformation and propaganda after a 2007 Russian disinformation campaign. It demonstrates the experience and value of a well-established strategy, where media literacy plays a role within the education system, within the social care system, and as part of the work of the public service media.

Estonia is a highly-digitised country, well-known for its advanced e-governance and digital services. Russian is the mother tongue of 29% of the population, and many Estonian speakers also speak Russian (and English, particularly younger people). So although Estonia itself is a small language market, with relatively high media concentration, its population is likely to access information from a wide array of sources.

In 2007, a Russian disinformation campaign surrounding the relocation of a Soviet-era statue in Tallinn resulted in riots among Estonia's Russian-speaking population, followed by cyber-attacks which affected the entire country. This prompted a massive cyber defence effort including the setting up of a Cyber Unit within the Estonian Defence League, which sees citizens volunteer "to protect Estonia's high-tech way of life, including protection of information infrastructure and supporting broader objectives of national defence".

It also encouraged the government to look at ways to make the population less vulnerable to propaganda. Estonia's Education Strategy 2021-2035 (a follow up to the 2020 Lifelong Learning Strategy, which set "A digital focus in lifelong learning" as one of five key policy aims) places significant emphasis on digital inclusion, digital pedagogy and digital literacy.

According to researchers from the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence and Estonia's International Centre for Defence and Security, "Systematic Russian propaganda aimed to divide the Estonian society through broadcasting disinformation to local Russian speaking minorities is still an issue." Estonia is therefore interesting to look at as an example of a country that faces a tangible national security threat from foreign disinformation, and how it responds to this.

8.2 The media literacy sector

There is no central coordinating body for media literacy activities, but there is good cooperation between the sectors involved, according to research by the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence which mapped the Estonian media literacy sector. The largest share of media literacy actors operates in the academic and education sector, followed by the state, research, media, NGO and donor fields. In terms of target audiences, the largest is professionals and teachers, the second is school children, and the third is minority ethnic and language groups and residents from certain regions away from the capital.

More than half of the actors in the mapping have created educational resources such as books, podcasts or other materials or campaigns, while almost half have engaged in training on media literacy and organized campaigns.

There is a government-led Media Literacy Week – which in 2022 became a Media Literacy Month – that gathers different players together to organize events and activities.

8.3 Media and information literacy in schools

Estonian children start learning digital skills in kindergarten and continue through to the end of high school. Media education was introduced into the curriculum in 2002.

The Estonian Ministry of Education defines media literacy as a *"set of skills, knowledge and attitudes that help to critically analyse and evaluate the information presented in different channels and to form adequate assessments".* The task of media education is *"to support and develop the student's development into a person who adequately perceives the surrounding information environment, is able to critically analyse and evaluate textual, pictorial, figurative and oral content, is aware of social-ethical norms and is able to create content himself/herself."*

As scholar Maarit Jaakkola explains, since 2014, the curriculum has included 'communication competence' and 'digital competence' among eight general competences. There are also eight cross-curricular topics listed, of which one is "Information environment" that aims "for the pupil to develop into an information-conscious person who senses and is aware of the surrounding information environment, is able to analyse it critically and acts according to his or her aims and society's communication ethics".

In his evidence to a UK parliamentary select committee in 2020, Siim Kumpas, at the time a strategic communication adviser to Estonia's government, further described the country's approach to digital competences in education, which comprise five pillars:

1) Information: the ability to find and access information and to assess the relevance and trustworthiness of that information, as well as being able to tell a fact from an opinion.
2) Communication: using digital means to communicate.
3) Content creation: being able not just to consume but to create content.
4) Safety, from basic digital hygiene to 'netiquette.'
5) Problem-solving skills: ability to solve basic IT problems, either software or hardware.

For younger children, these competences are integrated into other disciplines, and according to the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence mapping report, the focus is on how to work with different sources and ensure their reliability. Kumpas also provided detail of a compulsory 35-hour course that Estonian high school students take in the 10th grade, called 'Media and Manipulation,' which aims to give all students a basic understanding of what media and journalism are and how they function (including social media). Students are invited to consider questions such as: What is a fact and what is an opinion? What are the threats? Who are trolls? Who are bots? How do we make sense of them and protect ourselves from them? There are limitations, however, in terms of who takes this course: the course is not yet compulsory in Russian speaking schools, and it is possible for young people to leave school at the end of the 9th grade, so it doesn't reach all students.

A BBC article explained that in addition to the mandatory class, high schools usually offer additional elective classes about media. In such courses, students make media themselves to help them learn how content is created - whether videos, photos, social media posts, blogs – and how it can be designed to persuade or manipulate.

Speaking to the UK parliamentary select committee, Kumpas commented that the media and digital literacy skills being taught made Estonians "more resilient not only to hostile interference in the digital domain but to noise, rudeness, bad journalism and everything else." He stressed the importance of having a team in Government (in this case, strategic communications) who could see the problem of information disorder as a whole, and how it is changing the way we act as citizens: to see the educational, security, technological and legal elements of it. One of the biggest challenges, he added, is not undermining the complexity of this phenomenon.

The government mandates that Estonia's teacher-training universities teach elements of digital competencies as part of their courses. Additionally, The Estonian Media Educators Union provides training and education in media literacy for high school teachers, according to scholars Auksė Balčytienė & Kristina Juraitė.

8.4 Media literacy in universities

Universities in Estonia play an active role in media literacy. Both Tallinn University's Baltic Film, Media and Arts Institute (BFM) and the University of Tartu are involved in media literacy research and education, as indicated in the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence mapping report, and both play an active role in the Ministry of Education-organised Media Literacy Week. They offer free media literacy courses for teachers, primary school students and kindergarten staff, benefitting from sponsorship from foreign players such as the British Council or IREX.

For example, the University of Tartu has collaborated with telecommunications company Telia to offer a youth digital mentorship programme whereby 13-19 year-olds work with elderly family and friends to develop their social media skills, along with an adult mentor.

Tallinn University's BFM provides activities such as a camp for high school students from both Estonian and Russian speaking families/schools that focuses on developing knowledge about the media and distinguishing false from genuine information, while developing creative skills.

In terms of university-level teaching, as described in a BBC article, University of Tartu professor Maria Murumaa-Mengel designed an elective media literacy course that educates students about how journalists work in mainstream media, and teaches skills needed to independently seek additional information that might be needed to verify facts.

The University of Tartu and Tallinn University are also key players in the recently-launched Baltic Engagement Centre for Combating Information Disorders (BECID) as part of the European Commission's European Digital Media Observatory network of hubs. This aims to focus on several innovative media literacy projects, including: educating young social media activists on fact-checking, improving digital competencies among older and younger people through intergenerational training, promoting information resilience and encouraging civic activism among Russian-speaking residents, and enabling Baltic youth to co-create media literacy hackathons.

8.5 Media organisations

Public service media organisation ERR works with the government and relevant agencies to support the country's media literacy policies, according to a presentation by the European Broadcasting Union at an OSCE event in December 2022. ERR runs a media literacy week for which it produces educational outputs, as well as a project called Meediataip which aims to increase young people's knowledge of how the media works by providing online resources and sending journalists into schools. ERR also provides media literacy resources in Russian.

Private news media companies including Delfi, Postimees and Eesti Päeveleht also provide debunking, fact-checking and media education.

8.6 Youth sector

Digital literacy is also present in the youth sector. According to scholar Maarit Jaakkola:

"In Estonia, the youth work sector has been introduced to the very specific concept "smart youth work" (nutikas noorsootöö) (Estonian Youth Work Centre, 2013), with a focus on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and promoting digital skills and solutions related to this area." A youth information portal, Teevit, provides media literacy resources.

8.7 Ongoing challenges

According to the 2022 Media Pluralism Monitor, "a look at the real situation in schools shows that there is still room for improvement. For example, teachers to work in this field are lacking as there is no specific training in

media literacy and digital skills for teachers at different levels of education. In addition, the problems of media literacy in Estonia have mainly been addressed as the issue of digital skills." Maarit Jaakkola also noted that "Reflecting the ideas of critical media literacy and digital competencies, the underlying concept is information society."

Maia Klaassen, a Junior Research Fellow in Media Literacy at the University of Tartu, said "turbulent times in history, for example, have probably made our journalists, security forces, defense experts, anyone really, more resilient. But the Baltics are definitely not magically immune to disinformation".

Little attention is paid to some vulnerable groups such as the elderly or the homeless, as well as to politicians and working middle-aged middle classes, the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence research noted. Working with Russian-speaking communities is a particular challenge in terms of finding experts, and the different methodological approaches required to engage them. Part of the problem is that the most vulnerable do not recognise that they should improve their media literacy.

8.8 Conclusion

Estonia offers three key aspects of good practice. First, having a standalone course for high school students on media and manipulation as well as integrated digital and media literacy competences across the curriculum, is valuable both from a purely educational perspective and because of the potential it offers for more accurate assessment of learning (unlike in many countries where digital and media literacy are solely taught as cross-curricular/transversal disciplines).

The active role of Estonia's major universities in using their expertise to provide media literacy resources and organize training activities, as well as carrying out research provides ongoing high-level knowledge about different aspects of media literacy and its implementation. Finally, strong cooperation between the various sectors involved (state institutions, civil society, education and private sector) has been possible even without a central coordinating institution (although as previously noted, the country is small). The 2022 mapping attributed this to coherent interests and a shared understanding of the problem.

9 New Zealand

9.1 Introduction

In New Zealand, media literacy work takes place against a backdrop of strong public service media. National broadcasters dominate the media landscape, but co-exist with streaming services. Media are recognised as part of the 'fabric of life' in New Zealand, and a strong public media sector is perceived as a bulwark against excessive influence from commercially-driven, global services (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2017). More recently, there has been an emphasis on prevention of harm to young people via online and digital media, including streaming services and gaming.

Local content is government-funded via NZ On Air, catering to both national interests as well as various marginalised populations in NZ (Pasifika, Maori, Asian) in line with the regional and community broadcasting policy framework principle of 'support[ing] diverse communities to participate in and contribute to New Zealand's national identity'. The focus on regional news and ensuring underserved audiences (rural, indigenous minority groups) have media targeted to their interests, reflects an underlying recognition that media is important for social inclusion and participation. The country's approach to media literacy and media education is variable and does not attract formal support from New Zealand's media sector.

In education, media literacy has been a recognised element of media studies education since its inclusion in 2000 as a subject in the secondary school curriculum (media-focused topics were integrated earlier than this in related English and Film Studies curricula) (see Lealand, 2008). Media studies is also taught as a degree subject. The British Film Institute (BFI) was an important early influence on media education in New Zealand because media were first integrated into the curriculum via film studies. The integration of media studies as a formal subject led New Zealand educators to consider other models in the 2000s, particularly the Canadian approach to media studies education, as comparative benchmarks. Over the past decade, media studies as a curriculum subject seems to have lost profile and importance. The National Library of New Zealand also supports media literacy in schools via the librarian community, whom it promotes as a body critical for delivering digital literacy to students, and not only within the media studies curriculum. From a regulatory perspective, media literacy is a focus for the Classification Office, as a way of preventing harm through media.

9.2 Overview

While media literacy has long been noted as part of the media studies curriculum, media literacy (as opposed to media education or media studies) was first mentioned outside the formal education context in the Ministry of Culture and Heritage's 2008 review of broadcasting policy. In this document it was defined as having the tools to 'source, consume and manage' media effectively (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2008b). The focus was on the audience as 'end user', and on media consumption as well as reducing susceptibility to online harm (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2008a). Media literacy was also regarded as a tool for reducing copyright infringement in the digital era, by ensuring that users were aware of copyright law and its implications for their engagement with media online. At this point, media literacy was considered alongside formal media classification as a way of regulating the new digital media space. How to approach media literacy in the digital age was recognised as a key issue for consideration and introducing a media literacy programme was a possible option, although policy was not yet decided about whether it should be industry- or government-led, or a hybrid approach (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2008b).

While the potential importance of media literacy alongside other forms of regulation was recognised, the first formal media literacy programme was put in place in 2017, although there was some media literacy work in schools and adult education before this point (Henry, 2021). In 2017, the Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC) included media literacy in their briefing for the incoming Minister of Internal Affairs, as a potentially important tool alongside media classification, to help young people navigate the dangers of the digital environment. The idea of using media literacy as one tool alongside others to regulate media remained consistent, but there was a shift in the 2017 document from seeing media users as consumers, to a focus on

online harms, in particular for young people encountering content via unregulated media platforms (Office of Film and Literature Classification, 2017). This move was driven by OFLC research with parents and young people, which made clear that tools and skills for discussing challenging media content with children and teenagers were needed, as well as more information about the kind of content that was being encountered.

In 2017, the OFLC's approach to media literacy generated a range of resources under the branding Minds over Media, which had the goal of 'equipping New Zealanders to treat media consumption as an active and critical process; we need parents to confidently manage their children's access and use of media and games; and we need children themselves to be savvy and resilient in the digital environment' (p. 14). The Minds over Media content included two main reports: *NZ Youth and Porn* and *Talking with Young People about What they're Watching*[6], but was quite rapidly superseded by the Office's rebranding and a new range of resources.

Currently, there are three channels through which different aspects of media literacy are being promoted.

9.2.1 Te Mana Whakaatu, Classification Office

Resources and advice relating to managing or preventing online harm, particularly for young people, are made available by Te Mana Whakaatu, the Classification Office, (formerly the OFLC). The work is framed in terms of the Classification Office's purpose of balancing freedom of expression with prevention from harm; resources also include information about how classification decisions are made and how to apply to have content classified. The Office clarifies this combined role in the following terms: 'We help people in Aotearoa make decisions about what to watch, play and read. We don't exist to suppress voices but instead, when necessary, reduce harm'. The Office provides resources for parents, family and educators and librarians.

For parents, the resources provided reflect a continuation of the emphasis since 2017 on managing the potential for individual harm by educating young people about the content they are watching. The resources are designed to support parents and family members who want to have discussions with young people trying to navigate online content (e.g., https://www.classificationoffice.govt.nz/resources/parents-whanau/). They include downloadable guides, videos, quick tips and reflective prompts, and cover topics including advice on how to use parental controls, how to have conversations with young people about challenging content, critical thinking and information on teenage brain development.

For educators and librarians, the resources are more narrowly focused on the restrictions and limitations that arise as a result of classification decisions. The Office provides case studies of classification decisions and how they are made, as well as guidance about the kinds of films and copyrighted materials that can be used in a classroom setting for teaching about media.

The Classification Office also conducts research into New Zealand audiences, particularly their experiences with and opinions about harmful content.

9.2.2 Media literacy in the national curriculum

The National Curriculum for secondary education includes media studies, which incorporates media literacy. The media studies subject-specific curriculum is understood to align with the National Curriculum vision 'for students to become critical and creative thinkers and to be active participants in a range of life contexts', and incorporates many elements of media literacy including critical analysis of media, creative skills, as well as transferable skills that support participation in society and in employment. Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI), the Ministry of Education's Online Learning Centre, provides a range of resources and curriculum guides, links to assessment standards, and a community hub for media studies teachers. The website includes a specific section on media literacy, but at the time of writing the content had not been updated and links point to US and Canadian sites, rather than organisations promoting media literacy within New Zealand..

[6] *TEXT NOT FOUND*

From 2023, Level 1 Media Studies (equivalent of year 10 GCSE studies) will be dropped from the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), as part of the NCEA change programme and refresh of the New Zealand Curriculum led by the current government.

There is a National Association of Media Educators, a membership organisation for teachers of media studies (see https://www.name.org.nz/). Their activities include an annual conference, access to resources and curriculum content, and a Teachers' Forum. However, the site was not up to date at the time of writing (for example, no news commentaries have been posted since 2020, and the annual conference was last held in 2021).

9.2.3 The National Library of New Zealand

The National Library of New Zealand provides additional support for media literacy in schools through its focus on digital literacy in particular, based on the argument that school librarians are particularly well-placed to support the development of digital literacy among young people, teachers and parents / family. The Library's web pages suggest tools and resources that include step by step guides for different aspects of digital literacy (e.g. finding and evaluating content), as well as explanatory notes and videos explaining what school librarians can offer students, teachers and parents in their capacity as digital literacy experts (National Library of New Zealand, 2023b, 2023f). They suggest different actions librarians can take to support students' access to digital content, their skills to navigate the digital environment; teachers' professional development; and parental/family awareness of digital literacy in the school context (National Library of New Zealand, 2023e).

The Library links this work to positive outcomes for digital citizenship, because digital literacy (alongside information literacy and media literacy) is regarded as one of the key skills necessary for digital citizenship. As with digital literacy, the argument is made that school librarians can be 'champions' of digital citizenship because their work lies at the heart of the digital environment (National Library of New Zealand, 2023a).

The link to digital citizenship, while not grounded in any research evidence, is nonetheless the only area of media literacy-related activity in New Zealand that connects an aspect of media literacy to the societal outcomes of improved democratic participation and citizenship. However, this potentially more expansive understanding of the role of media literacy seems to remain siloed within the librarian community; no links are made from the National Library to the Ministry of Education, the TKI site for media studies, or the Classification Office's website. The National Library does explain the relevance of digital literacy to the National Curriculum on one of its web pages, but does not develop the connections further (National Library of New Zealand, 2023d). In other words, work on digital literacy and with librarians seems to take place in parallel to the focus on online harms and media studies in schools.

9.3 Interesting practices

Arguably, the country's most effective approach to media literacy is through the National Library of New Zealand website pages on digital literacy (National Library of New Zealand, 2023c). In large part, the effectiveness of this site is grounded in its design and clearly targeted, relevant information for its very specific audience (school librarians). The pages are well laid out and take readers through definitions of digital literacy and its importance; understanding the role that school libraries and librarians can play in fostering digital literacy; strategies for implementing digital literacy education in schools; and connections to wider issues of digital citizenship.

Each of the pages in the digital literacy section is clearly focused with straightforward titles and brief but clear bullet points that take the reader through the rationale for paying attention to digital literacy, including its connections to other areas of the National Library's work (reading engagement and school libraries) (see, e.g. National Library of New Zealand, 2023g). These pages help set the scene for school librarians to reflect on the role they currently play in relation to digital skills in schools, as well as how that role might be enhanced. The structure of the site also assists readers to go from one topic to another related area, thereby building a comprehensive picture of the digital literacy landscape and its value in their role. While it does not address the

whole of media literacy, it is an excellent example of a well-targeted set of information that communicates some of media literacy's basic principles and values to an audience that can use the information productively.

9.4 Conclusion

In the New Zealand case, insights come primarily from the potential to build on what already exists, rather than what has been delivered already.

There is scope for connection between the three main routes to media literacy education – the Classification Office, the Ministry of Education and the National Library of New Zealand. Each focuses on a different aspect of media literacy. For example, the Ministry of Education's work focuses primarily on media studies in the curriculum, of which media literacy is understood to be a part, and the TKI Online Learning Centre offers a range of curriculum-focused resources and explanations for teachers. Librarians can play a significant role supporting media literacy lessons with resources, digital literacy tools and techniques, and providing opportunities for students to access and use digital technologies.

Different approaches are used to reach different audiences for media literacy. The Classification Office focuses on online harm and the TKI and National Library support for schools and librarians integrates a more explicit focus on critical engagement, opportunities for creativity, and digital media (as well as media more generally) as an opportunity for transferable skills development. The messaging from the different organisations may not reach everyone in the same way because of their different target audiences; this may affect people's awareness of the benefits and disadvantages of media across the population.

Finally, the New Zealand case shows that there is still scope for developing the value of media literacy as a matter for life-long learning and social inclusion, alongside the value attached to media itself as part of the country's social and cultural 'fabric'. Media literacy could be used to create an environment where skills and capacities for critical engagement with media can not only address challenges such as radicalisation, misinformation and online harm, but can also contribute to more vibrant democratic participation from citizens.

10 South Africa

10.1 Introduction

In South Africa, media literacy is largely presented as digital literacy, which stakeholders tend to describe narrowly as training that will empower people with digital skills needed for work and set the country on a path to becoming a developed knowledge economy. As a result, practitioners typically focus on the need to equip people, typically youth, with the skills they need for employment purposes and to participate in the digital economy. Digital literacy then becomes about how to tackle the skills gap and bridge the digital divide so as to unlock people's potential.

This is all part of the drive to leapfrog development and secure a pride of place for South Africa in the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), characterised by artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and the Internet of Things, and having citizens that are digitally proficient in the most advanced way. Anything short of this is seen as a hindrance to the country's quest to becoming a knowledge-based society.

We see evidence of this focus in government policies such as the National Development Plan – Vision for 2030, which gives attention to providing ICT infrastructure and services for development purposes and economic growth (see report by Common Good First). This emphasis sets the premise for the operationalisation of digital literacy by government agencies like NEMISA (see below). There is a somewhat similar trend in the work done by libraries and in the education curricula for state schools. For non-profit organisations, there is more of a focus on critical media literacy skills like fact-checking and the need to fight disinformation. However, non-profits also devote considerable resources to digital proficiency and their work is usually done in partnership with private tech platforms.

10.2 Overview

In this section, we consider the approaches to media literacy in the South African context by discussing government action through NEMISA, the education curricula, libraries, and the work of non-profit organisations in that order.

10.2.1 NEMISA: digital skills training

As earlier noted, South Africa gives special consideration to the fourth industrial revolution, and the government ministry mandated with the task of achieving it is the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT). The education arm of this mandate is carried out by an agency under the DCDT called the National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA). It was established in 1998 to promote multimedia training and technical skills related to broadcasting, but its portfolio has since expanded to providing basic-to-advanced digital skills.

The agency functions as a kind of government-based digital literacy organisation. Its mission is to provide digital skills training on a national scale so people can gain digital competencies in order to improve their quality of life. The focus is on empowerment and digital innovation and has little to do with critical media literacy per se.

For instance, one of NEMISA's flagship initiatives is the *Ya Rona* Digital Ambassadors Programme, which is based on digital literacy and involves selecting people among whom are the unemployed, women, and people with disabilities. Participants are trained on courses such as digital citizenship, cybersecurity, entrepreneurial skills, and ICT skills for development. After their training, they become ambassadors deployed to their various municipalities to train people as part of the goal of creating a national footprint for ICT skills in South Africa. The programme's aims are to:

- cultivate a digitally-skilled population that can solve technical problems;

- train people to be able to identify digital competence gaps; and
- train people who can spearhead the country's innovation in its response to its digital needs.

The pilot programme was launched in January 2020 in the North-West Province and the aim is to expand it across the country. In addition to Ya Rona, NEMISA also runs a separate programme called CoLab Digital Skills, a partnership scheme with universities across South Africa to expand digital skills training.

Outside of NEMISA, the government can also provide media literacy training. For instance, the government recently hosted a webinar on media literacy in October 2022. The aim was to raise awareness of media literacy and safe information consumption for youths, provide insight on parental guidance mechanisms that parents can use in relation to the media consumption of their children, and explore the role that parents and schools can play in promoting media literacy.

10.2.2 Media literacy education and curriculum development

South Africa is a quasi-federal state that has unitary tendencies. This means government policies are set at the national level but implemented at the provincial level, where there are nine provinces (see report by Common Good First). This governance arrangement is perhaps most clearly visible in the education sector. Here, the national Department for Basic Education (DBE) sets education policy, which the nine provincial education departments implement.

When it comes to the curriculum, the DBE has developed what it calls the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), outlining subjects and topics to be taught in primary and secondary schools. CAPS makes provision for media literacy in certain places, but this is spread across subjects like life orientation, language, history, and technology (see post and report by Madrid-Morales and Wasserman). In most cases, the initiative rests with teachers and schools in deciding how media literacy is taught.

Media literacy does not feature prominently in the South African curriculum, a point noted by Cunliffe-Jones and colleagues in their report on the state of media literacy in seven sub-Saharan African countries. In areas where media literacy is considered, the curriculum includes topics on critical thinking and problem-solving, mass media formats, responsible citizenship, self-esteem and bullying, use of formats to stereotype and mislead, accuracy of biases of historical sources, social effects of technology, and the media's role, including media freedom (see Cunliffe-Jones et al). Hence, media literacy finds expression, even if not comprehensively, across the four phases of South Africa's pre-university education system:

- At the Foundation Phase (typically ages 6–9), Cunliffe-Jones et al. show that learners use media texts like newspaper clippings in activities to engage with news items and evaluate content.
- At the Intermediate Phase (typically ages 10–12), topics on bullying, stereotyping and bias are covered. These include topics in history and the trust that people attach to information and its source. All these are mostly covered either in the English language or life orientation curricula, as Madrid-Morales and Wasserman show in their report.
- At the Senior Phase (typically ages 13–15), the life orientation curriculum includes topics such as the influence of media and other factors on personal lifestyle choices, social pressures including media that impact on sexuality, and factors that influence self-concept formation and self-motivation.
- In the English Language curriculum for the Senior Phase, teachers are expected to use media materials such as newspapers, magazines, and radio and television content. Web pages, internet sites, and blogs are also included as required multimedia materials for use in classes. The curriculum touches on literacy in general, including critical, visual, graphic, computer, media, and socio-cultural literacies.
- At the Further Education Phase (typically ages 16–18), the life orientation curriculum includes topics on the role of media in a democratic society (including critical analysis of media and campaigns), critical thinking skills necessary to participate in civic life, and influence of media on values and beliefs about relationships.

- The English Language curriculum at the Further Education Phase also flows in a similar vein, including literacy competencies in reading, speaking, listening, and writing.

One area that the national curriculum does not consider is information verification, particularly how to deal with misinformation. The exception to this, according to Cunliffe-Jones et al., is the Western Cape provincial education department, which introduced an online safety programme in 2020 that focuses on false information. The Western Cape curriculum was developed in partnership with Google South Africa and includes topics on misinformation such as click restraint, identifying fake websites and false information, and harms done by misinformation.

10.3 Libraries: information literacy and digital skills training

South Africa has a well-developed network of 1,879 public libraries, especially in urban areas, that support reading and literacy activities. These libraries are overseen by the National Library of South Africa, which was established in 1999 after the merger of the State Library in Pretoria and the South African Library in Cape Town. The National Library has a programme called Information Access Services through which it promotes information awareness and information literacy. This includes training on how to use the library and search electronic databases, and the provision of internet services.

The National Library does not provide services or training on critical media and digital literacy, focusing instead on bridging the digital divide by providing access to information technology (see article by Adedokun and Zulu). It is for this reason that public libraries make internet access available to all users in the libraries, although there are challenges related to internet connectivity, inadequate bandwidth capacity, and erratic electricity supply, particularly in rural areas.

Major cities like Johannesburg have fewer infrastructural challenges to contend with. For instance, there is the City of Johannesburg Library, which, apart from providing optimum internet access to users, also introduced an e-learning programme in 2021. The programme is aimed at training people on digital skills and providing access to free digital content and information about library services and facilities. It is essentially a website (https://www.cojelearning.org.za/) organised in partnership with tech companies to provide courses on the following:

- Training by Microsoft South Africa on free Microsoft Office packages for those who require basic to intermediary digital skills.
- An advanced digital skills module offered by IBM Digital Nation Africa in areas relating to 4IR such as coding, artificial intelligence, and data science.
- An online course by Google South Africa under the “Google Digital Skills for Africa” programme, which focuses on digital marketing.

What this shows is the attention that practitioners give to providing digital skills that people need to participate in the digital society. It underscores the emphasis that stakeholders in South Africa place on empowerment and employment. It also reveals the tendency for media literacy practitioners to partner with external organisations and tech companies as we see in the work that civil society organisations carry out.

10.4 Civil Society Participation

It is difficult to ascertain the number of non-profit organisations working to deliver media literacy interventions in South Africa, but the indication is that the country has a thriving media literacy sector. Organisations working in the area, however, tend to target young people as beneficiaries by partnering with international institutions and tech platforms. This approach may mean the elderly are neglected, given that they have a shorter working life span, where they could contribute to the future world of work.

One such organisation is Digify Africa, which focuses on empowering people with digital skills that are in demand in the digital economy. It has a strong partnership with Facebook on programmes like *Ilizwe Lam* (My Digital World). This is an initiative aimed at providing youths with digital skills through modules on online safety, privacy, news and media literacy, and digital citizenship. There is also Web Rangers, an initiative of an organisation called Media Monitoring Africa in partnership with other organisations like the DCDT, Google, and Meta. It is an international digital and media literacy initiative targeted at young people to provide them with the skills they need to engage with and use media and digital technologies responsibly.

When it comes to the work done by international bodies, we see examples like YALI Checks. YALI is the Young African Leaders Initiative, a programme by the US government. YALI Checks encourages its members to become promoters of digital citizenship and the fight against disinformation. There is also Tactical Tech, an international NGO based in Berlin which runs an initiative called Digital You in collaboration with the Goethe-Institut Kinshasa. The programme is aimed at promoting digital and media literacy in Africa, including South Africa. Overall, there is considerable influence from international (often Western-based) organisations in the delivery of media literacy training in the country.

Other organisations in the sector include Pearson which has a Digital Literacy Citizenship course for South African students. There is also the Literacy Association of South Africa that is aimed at building a strong literate community, focusing on literacy in general.

In terms of fact-checking, South Africa has Africa Check, the first and largest fact-checking organisation in Africa. The organisation carries out media literacy work in addition to fact-checking. It seeks to train people, especially young people, and journalists on how to be resilient to information disorders.

10.5 Interesting practices

We identified two interesting practices in the South African context. One is the e-learning programme of the City of Johannesburg Library, which provides an example of how a library can partner with external organisations to deliver media literacy training using a digital format. The second is NIMESA's CoLab programme.

The CoLab programme is a partnership between NIMESA and the following universities across different provinces:

- Walter Sisulu University – Eastern Cape CoLab
- University of the Western Cape – Western Cape CoLab
- Durban University of Technology – Kwazulu-Natal CoLab
- University of Mpumalanga – Mpumalanga CoLab
- University of Limpopo – Limpopo CoLab
- University of the North West – North West CoLab
- Vaal University of Technology – Northern Cape/Southern Gauteng CoLab

These CoLabs provide training on courses like Digital Skills Training, including a course on Digital Literacy for those seeking to become media literacy practitioners. The Digital Literacy course is a five-day training aimed at providing the knowledge and skills that prospective practitioners require to operate in the country's digital literacy landscape. It is a kind of media coach programme, where participants are trained on how to apply the skills they learn in any workplace or industry.

It shows the focus that South Africa places on subjects like empowerment and the provision of digital training that leads to tangible economic benefits. As such, the training does not consider critical media literacy, but is focused on digital proficiency that leads to increased workplace productivity. Nonetheless, it points to ways in which a government agency can partner with universities to leverage existing expertise in academic spaces and deliver media literacy training to the wider population.

10.6 Conclusion

The media literacy context in South Africa is defined by the work carried out by the government through NEMISA, the Department of Basic Education in the design of the curriculum, libraries spread across the country, and civil society groups in partnership with international bodies and private tech platforms. Stakeholders place emphasis on digital skills needed for employment and the much-touted fourth industrial revolution (4IR), often overlooking critical media literacy competencies. Based on this case analysis, the two examples of good practice are the CoLab scheme that NIMESA runs in partnership with universities spread across South Africa and the curriculum for media literacy, where media literacy topics are included in several subjects throughout pre-university education.

11 Sweden

11.1 Introduction

Sweden is characterised by high levels of internet penetration and regular use of the internet by the population to conduct day to day activities (Liubinene & Thunqvist, 2015). It has a long history of media education, with the first examples being the School Radio (1930s) and School Television (1960s) services. In the 1990s, Sweden was caught up in the march towards deregulation, and the focus of media education shifted from ideas of aesthetic and moral inoculation to popular culture, identity, and empowerment of children. Until the mid-2010s, provision of media literacy (medie- och informationskunnhighet in Swedish, or MIK) was somewhat fragmented, but since 2018 the government has taken on a stronger leadership role and mandated a more connected and coordinated approach, with a stronger emphasis on critical thinking and enhancing citizenship through media literacy. Key institutions are now more tightly connected, with national organisations acting as a hub for resources on media literacy pedagogy.

The country has adopted the UNESCO definition of media literacy, 'the knowledge and skills required to find, analyse, critically evaluate and generate information in various media and contexts'. It also works closely alongside the EU and supports its initiatives, such as Safer Internet Day, run by the Swedish Media Council each year.

11.2 Overview

Media literacy has been an element of national discussions for many years; when schools first started integrating technology into their provision during the 1970s and 1980s, for example, pedagogical discussions included questions about how technology could be used to enhance media literacy. Schools are very well-resourced with digital technologies and broadband, and are therefore well set up for digital literacy (Liubinene & Thunqvist, 2015).

In 2018, the government's focus on enhancing media literacy included setting up a Commission on Media and Information Literacy and Democratic Dialogue with the aim of improving media literacy, while also increasing resilience to online harms such as hate speech, propaganda and disinformation. The Commission (which has now stopped operating) provided a website with links to information about the organisations providing media literacy services or connected with media literacy in some way, research reports, concepts and definitions, and some resources for teaching, all of which are still available. When it operated, the Commission also hosted lectures on the topic of protecting democracy and digitisation that could be used by public institutions such as libraries and schools.

An overview of media literacy activity was published in 2018 for the Commission (updated 2020); the overview noted that a great deal of work was being done focused on media, but it was quite disparate and the focus on key international debates (e.g. misinformation, algorithms, online harms) was inconsistent (Cederholm, 2018). Facebook groups were acting as networks connecting different actors together, but at the time, there was no formalised institution that delivered the same function (and it was noted that adequate resourcing would be needed to do this consistently and over the long term). The summary outlined the basic requirements of media literacy (ability to critique information online as well as to understand how the media industries work and create media oneself) and identified it as an important skill for citizenship. It also observed the need for a central body to regularly communicate the latest research findings and international developments in the area of media literacy.

The report further noted that the different regions of Sweden adopt different approaches to media literacy – those that are larger and more well-resourced are likely to have a more developed approach. Media literacy work is structured through varying networks and connections between educators – some have blogs run by teachers, some informal networks, and some provide guides produced by individual teachers. One active region that has led innovation in the area is Östergötland. Their regional library, Regionbibliotek Östergötland,

published a book on the 'MIK Jam' workshop method in 2019, where participants from the library sector come together for one or more days and workshop new concepts, activities and prototypes for developing their approach to digital media literacy. The aim is to give them experience in creative digital design and improve their own media literacy work in the library context. The library has also provided courses relating to media literacy and digital skills across public libraries in the region. Across regions, libraries tend to have MIK-dedicated pages on their websites, often with links to national organisations that provide media literacy resources.

11.3 Key actors

The three most important actors in the Swedish media literacy landscape are the Swedish National Agency for Education, the Swedish Media Council, and the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Corporation. Beyond these, the Swedish Internet Foundation and the University of Gothenburg both support media literacy initiatives and research.

11.3.1 Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE)

The Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE) has oversight over all education provision in Sweden, including the national curriculum, access to digital equipment, and civic education like media literacy training (Forsman, 2019). The organisation introduced a digital strategy in 2016 that focused on equipping students with digital skills and ensuring schools integrated digital technology into their provision in ways that improve results and efficiency. A new updated national digitisation strategy developed by the SNAE will run from 2023-2027. Media education has been integrated into the general curriculum, especially in syllabi for Swedish language, social science, and art (Forsman, 2019). From 2018 the government mandated a stronger approach in the curriculum to digital media literacy, including teaching programming; training on skills to use digital technologies, systems and services; teaching students to use digital tools to solve problems and for realising their own ideas and initiatives; developing critical engagement with online sources; and critically assessing the social impact of digitisation (Cederholm, 2018).

Media literacy education in schools has historically been focused on digital skills and understanding (e.g. how to search online, understanding the role of algorithms, safe use of the internet, and the importance of digital competences in learning and teaching), but had some broader media literacy content such as source critique. In the current media literacy resources on the SNEA's website this kind of content is still provided, but resources have also extended into more contemporary issues (e.g. critiquing fake images, understanding algorithms) as well as tips from teachers about how to teach the content. The site also contains extensive links to content on the Swedish Media Council's website, as well as to the Internet Foundation (see below), the Living History website (where source critique is explored in the context of historical narratives), the fact checking blog Faktoider and the website Science and Public Education.

11.3.2 Swedish Media Council (SMC)

The Swedish Media Council (SMC) 'generates and compiles relevant research and disseminates information and guidance concerning media development, media use and its effects, regarding children and young people.' The SMC conducts research annually into policy development on media literacy and implementation initiatives (see below) and is also responsible for classifying film content. In 2019, the Swedish government instructed the SMC to improve collaboration among stakeholders in media literacy and increase its work on media literacy more generally. The 2019 mandate also required the Council to develop media literacy resources, monitor work being done in the sector, and create an online space for sharing knowledge about the sector. The Council also runs 'MIK för mig', an online resource for primary and secondary school teachers and librarians, offering resources they can use for media literacy lessons. A small number of resources are also available in Arabic.

11.3.3 Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority

The Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority is the national media regulator; like Ofcom, it provides regular overviews of media literacy activities, progress, media use, and industry actors and infrastructures. It ensures

a diverse and trustworthy media landscape with broad access for Swedish citizens, but does not have formal responsibility for media literacy. The Swedish Educational Broadcasting Corporation, part of the Swedish Public Service Broadcasting Group, is charged with providing educational and general knowledge programmes that support educators, and much of its content is relevant to media literacy. Its programmes are available to anyone engaged in media literacy pedagogy and included in the resources provided by MIK Sweden and the Living History websites.

11.3.4 Swedish Internet Foundation

The Swedish Internet Foundation manages the Swedish internet domains .se and .nu, and describes itself as a 'business-driven and public interest organisation'. Revenue from its management activities is used to promote the positive use and role of the internet in Swedish society. It conducts projects, research, and from 2008-2018, it ran the annual competition 'Web Stars', where students published a school assignment as a website. It thereby introduced students to media and digital production, alongside the more familiar consumption role. The competition was replaced by the 'Digital Lessons' service, a range of resources that can be used in schools (predominantly primary schools) to teach the history of the internet, source critique, online safety, and the impact of digital technologies on individuals and society. Ultimately their objective is to ensure digital competence across society so that citizens feel confident and positive about using the internet.

11.3.5 University of Gothenburg

The University of Gothenburg is an important centre for media research, and media literacy research. The University hosts the UNESCO Chair in Freedom of Expression, Media Development and Global Policy and the current postholder, Ulla Carlsson, received the 2019 Swedish UNESCO Prize for her work promoting media literacy in Sweden and internationally. Carlsson has been a particularly active figure in media literacy since the early 2000s, connecting Sweden with international organisations including UNESCO, the EU, and the Nordic Council of Ministers. She was also the Director of Nordicom, the Centre for Nordic Media Research based at the University of Gothenburg, which also produces a journal (Nordicom Review).

Nordicom is the home of the International Clearinghouse of Children, Youth and Media, and of NordMedia Network, an online platform showcasing research on media in Nordic countries for researchers focused on the region. Nordicom has included media literacy related work since its inception and NordMedia Network hosted a series of webinars on media literacy in 2020; in 2021, the webinar series continued with a series of monthly discussions focused on media literacy practices in different European countries. In 2022, the University launched a new research group, Visual and Media Literacy, defined as 'an interdisciplinary expert resource for audio-visual research and pedagogy'. The group will have a regional focus, working with regional and municipal authorities, a wide range of local organisations (schools, businesses libraries) and Visual Arena, the University's visualisation lab.

11.3.6 Other organisations

Other organisations have less of a profile in the Swedish media literacy landscape but are still active to some degree. For example, Media Smart is part of the international Media Smart movement, funded by advertisers, and provides resources for teaching primary school children critical thinking and engagement with media, and with advertising in particular. Surfa Lugnt, is a website focused on supporting adults with knowledge and advice as their children start to go online. The site has not had much activity since 2020 but is now being gradually updated by one of the main editors, Jesper Hultqvist. Netsmart is a resource for parents, teachers and students to support conversations and education for young people about being smart online. While the Netsmart website itself no longer exists, Netsmart resources can still be found on Youtube and embedded in other services (see, for example, this initiative by Mora Kommun, aimed at supporting digitisation in schools and in the curriculum, and focused on source critique, social media, online safety, and copyright).

11.4 Interesting practices

Based on the desk research we conducted, the most impressive intervention in the Swedish media literacy landscape is MIK Sweden, the country-wide network for media literacy run by the Swedish Media Council and established in 2020 in response to the new government mandate for the Council to strengthen collaboration and coordination in media literacy provision. The network includes 25 member agencies and organisations from across the country, who work on media literacy; it is overseen by a board comprised of representatives from the Swedish Library Association, the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Association, the Swedish National Agency for Education, the Psychological Defence Agency, and the Regional Film Association. In addition, it has an advisory council led by the Chair of the Swedish Media Council. In 2022 the council comprised the Community Education Association (which covers the provision of non-formal education across the country), the Internet Foundation, the Psychological Defence Agency, the Swedish National Agency for Education and the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Association. Currently, the network fosters dialogue with private sector media, including social media companies, but has not invited them to be full members in order to protect MIK Sweden's independence.

MIK Sweden situates its work in the context of the broader understanding of media literacy, explicitly countering the narrower 'source critique and source trust' that tends to be how media literacy is operationalised. It frames its existence in terms of the value of media literacy for building 'an inclusive, democratic society […] based on well-informed, committed, reflective, competent and aware citizens', and defines its purpose as supporting Swedish citizens to:

- understand the role of the media in society
- be able to find, analyse and critically evaluate information
- be able to express themselves and create content in different media.

The organisation also interprets media literacy as a skill that not only supports citizens in their ability to participate in school and work, but is also critical for protecting their rights as citizens. This rights-based approach to media literacy is not often found elsewhere. In Sweden, it reinforces the claim that media literacy is crucial for a healthy democracy and helps to communicate the relevance of media literacy to the public in ways that go beyond specific, instrumental situations.

MIK Sweden is responsible for collaboration, coordination and monitoring of media literacy activity, in order to make recommendations for improvement in provision, on an ongoing basis (Wagner & Novak, 2021). Knowledge-sharing takes place through regular meetings for members, a regular newsletter, themed according to key media literacy topics (e.g. online safety, disinformation, young people's online and digital rights), and seminars (delivered in hybrid form). It also hosts a Community Education Area, where actors engaged in non-formal adult and community education can connect with the national MIK network. As part of its public outreach work, network members also piloted a series of training workshops for other organisations and individuals who are involved in media literacy-related activities, and the plan is to roll these out across the whole country.

One of MIK Sweden's most impressive resources is its online knowledge bank. This was launched in 2021 and acts as a portal, where high-quality resources, information and research about media literacy are made available to a wide range of people, particularly teachers and librarians, but also children and teenagers, parents, and the elderly. As well as making materials accessible, the knowledge bank is aimed at ensuring visibility of what is being done so that organisations can avoid overlap and fill existing gaps, with any new initiatives they plan. Items provided relate to a wide range of media literacy topics (e.g. source criticism, fact checking, fake news, algorithms, freedom of expression, effects of social media on individuals, and AI). Resources are clearly categorised by type, topic and target audience. They include lesson outlines and materials, information on definitions of key terms and practices, frequently asked questions about different aspects of online activity, videos and podcasts (many produced by SEBC, see below) for use by the general public (children and adults), teachers or librarians, panel discussions, and articles on high profile cases of

media events and actors. The knowledge bank is actively curated and regularly promoted among target audiences.

MIK Sweden is also responsible for monitoring and mapping media literacy work carried out in the country, and this feeds into the country's obligations under the EU's new Audio-visual Media Services Directive, to report on efforts to improve media literacy every three years. The mapping exercise is focused on governance, structure and implementation, and outcomes (media literacy knowledge development). A pilot mapping was carried out in 2021 and is being refined based on respondent feedback. In relation to outcomes and evaluation, MIK Sweden is a member of the initiative to develop a Nordic media literacy index (with Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Finland), set up in 2020. This initiative has not yet reached a conclusion, but is focused on ways of measuring media literacy levels in the general population, as well as outcomes from specific interventions.

While MIK Sweden has not been formally evaluated, a recent survey of its members indicated that the network was particularly valued for three things: facilitating contact with other actors in the network, and collaborative communities; opening up possibilities for new collaborations; and providing an overview of media literacy work at a national level.

11.5 Conclusion

The Swedish case is an interesting example of a context where media literacy was widely supported, and practised in varying ways, but where until recently there was limited oversight of exactly what activities were being done, by whom, and where. The decision by government to mandate the Swedish Media Council with responsibility for media literacy consolidated the importance of the sector for Swedish society and legitimised the activity that was already happening. It was followed by 2-3 years of activity to develop coordination on a number of levels, which has resulted in a robust and multilayered approach to making media literacy work accessible, coordinated and visible. Organisations from across the country can be connected to the MIK Sweden network, particularly via its knowledge bank, and promotion of resources and the network itself via information and training sessions is well thought-through. The more complex tasks of mapping and evaluation are being considered in a systematic way, with pilot studies and research investment as well as a long-term approach being adopted.

The case suggests that strong government leadership on media literacy, publicly articulating its importance alongside investment in a coordinating body, can produce some very good results. Done well, it can build a strong foundation for media literacy work that extends beyond schools to the wider population. Nonetheless, it is clear that the Swedish environment is smaller, and the number of actors fewer, than in the case of the UK, so that the coordination, visibility and accessibility of media literacy work may be more straightforward to develop and maintain.

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