

45th EPRA Meeting Edinburgh
18-19 May 2017
Working Group I on Media Literacy
Mapping key initiatives and researching media use

Introductory Paper
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1 Background

The 2017 EPRA working group on Media Literacy (ML) expands on the work conducted in 2008 (Plenary session in Riga) and in 2014 (working group on “Media Literacy: Empowering Users” in Budva).

In 2008 ML was a relatively new concept and very few regulators had a duty in relation to it. However, by the time ML was chosen as a working group topic for the 39th EPRA meeting in 2014, the situation had changed. Twenty-eight regulators responded to a pre-conference survey about regulators and ML. The survey was coordinated by Martina Chapman and Stephen McConnell on behalf of Ofcom.

Based on the results, a comprehensive comparative paper¹ was produced which showed that a greater number of regulators were becoming more active in this area and activity could be categorised into four key areas:

- Education and awareness
- Research and report writing
- Stakeholder collaboration, and to a lesser extent
- Content classification.

Key findings from the 2014 working group on ML found:

There is no universally agreed definition of ML at a European, or even at a national (or regional!) level. However, there is general agreement on what it means – which is to access, understand, and critically evaluate media. This often, but not universally, includes safe and responsible use. Media Education, normally through schools, is also a key concept, as are creativity and self-expression.

Addressing the ML needs of children was a priority. However, during the meeting discussion it was also acknowledged that ML was a life-long learning activity, particularly in the context of a converged media world and the challenges that regulators face in relation to managing freedom of expression / hate speech issues.

It was also noted that ML is about the nature of citizenship, and the understanding and influence that people have on the media. As such, regulators have considerable influence, as do other actors such as educators, PSBs, commercial organisations etc. However, professionals from all sectors need ML training before they can help to play their role as in promoting ML.

¹ Empowering Users (Media Literacy) Background Paper: <https://www.epra.org/attachments/budva-wg1-media-literacy-background-paper>

Despite the acknowledgement that ML was an area of growing importance of regulators, funding for this area was problematic for some regulators who were operating on little or no budget. Stakeholder collaboration was widespread, particularly in relation to funding and outreach and it was clear through the level of stakeholder collaboration that regulators cannot do this alone and a multi-stakeholder approach was essential.

As ML is a broad and complex concept, closely linked to local cultures, with no universal definition, implementation of European-wide initiatives could prove very difficult – as evidenced by the difficulty in simply measuring ML levels across Europe called for in the current AVMSD.

2 Media and communications issues: The role of Critical Thinking (in a regulatory context)

Our ever-changing media and communications environment regularly presents new challenges for both regulators and consumers, with potentially significant economic, social and democratic implications. While some of the issues highlighted below have been on policy agendas for some time, others are more recent policy priorities.

This working group will look at the potential of media literacy, and in particular, the development of critical understanding and critical awareness, as part of the solution to these issues.

Assessing content for reliability and trustworthiness: Our complex and converged media environment increasingly means that people are becoming their own ‘news editors’. This puts significant responsibility on individuals to analyse and assess how trustworthy content might be, and at a time when it is increasingly difficult for people to identify the origin and authenticity. This is demonstrated by the current concerns around ‘fake news’.

Recognising and managing different types of content: People are navigating an increasingly complex media environment, with more exposure to new forms of advertising which can be hard for them to identify. Understanding the ‘economics’ of the internet, and how personal data can be used to target particular messages is essential in order to make an informed evaluation of content and services. This is as relevant in the world of advertising with ‘click bait’ and ‘viral’ content as it is in relation to ‘fake news’, online propaganda, hate speech and extremism.

Media plurality: An increasing dependency on social media as a source of news potentially limits the exposure that individuals have to a diverse range of news sources. It also provides them with alternative sources which may have been previously unknown to them.

Safe and appropriate use of content and services: Recognising and managing potential risks and unintended consequences resulting from the use of media. The more that users understand the regulatory frameworks that apply to online content, the better they will be able to make informed decisions about the suitability (or not) of particular content for themselves and those they are responsible for.

Understanding, comparing and acting on information rights and regulations: Regulatory frameworks work best when citizens and consumers have the ability to access, understand and compare information in order to make informed choices in the communications market, and know where to go to address issues.

3 Overview of the 2017 Working Group

There are three main activities planned for the 2017 working group on ML.

a) Working Group meeting in Edinburgh – 18 May 2017

The objective of this meeting is to set the overall scene and context for the cross-sector promotion of media literacy by looking at a range of initiatives/significant projects conducted by very different types of stakeholders. Research findings on the changing patterns in the use and access to media (to highlight the increasing relevance of media literacy) will be presented. A key theme for this meeting will be the shift towards the development of critical thinking as a counter to some of the emerging challenges in the media and communications sector.

b) EPRA-wide survey and pre-conference paper on media literacy in a regulatory context - May-June 2017

A survey exploring regulators' role in promoting media literacy is available online from mid-May to mid-June. The results of this survey will be used to create a comprehensive picture of how media literacy is defined and interpreted in different member countries, the role the regulators play, and how these factors have changed and evolved since 2014.

c) Working Group meeting in Vienna – 12 October 2017

The objective of this meeting is to identify emerging media literacy issues for EPRA members based on the member survey and where possible to provide some insight around these emerging themes. Using a 'share and learn' format, EPRA members will present a range of media literacy activities they have undertaken and explore the challenges and risks of developing and delivering these projects.

This meeting will also explore the potential for new collaborations and new ways for EPRA members to engage with media literacy issues.

4 Overview of Working Group meeting in Edinburgh – 18th May 14:30 to 16:30

14:30: Introduction. *Celene Craig, Deputy CEO BAI and EPRA Chair*

14:45: Presentation 1 – Summary of key findings from the European Audiovisual Observatory mapping project. *Maja Cappello, Head of Department for Legal Information, EAO*

15:00: Presentation 2 – Summary of media literacy research findings from Ofcom with a focus on critical thinking. *Alison Preston, Head of Media Literacy Research, Ofcom*

15:15: Presentation 3 – Case-study 1: Media Literacy in Public Service Media. *Stéphane Hoebeke, Legal counselor RTBF, in charge of Media literacy*

15:30: Presentation 4 – Case-study 2: Media Literacy in Community Media. *Michael Nicolai, President, AMARC Europe*

15:45 Panel Q&A

16:20: Closing remarks

5 Speaker Biographies

Maja Cappello joined the European Audiovisual Observatory as Head of the Department for Legal Information in 2014. She previously worked for the Italian regulator AGCOM from 1998, and was Head of AGCOM's Digital Rights Unit of the Media Services Directorate. She was also Vice President of EPRA from 2011 to 2014.

Maja will provide an overview of the recently published '[Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28](#)'. Commissioned by the European Commission, this project looks at over 500 significant media literacy projects from across 28 EU countries. Maja will present the key findings and looking in more detail at some of the projects focussed on critical thinking and working in collaboration.

Alison Preston is Head of media literacy research at Ofcom, the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries. She leads Ofcom's media literacy research, which provides a wealth of data on the media habits and opinions of children aged 3–15 and their parents, and adults aged 16+, interviewing over 6,000 people annually. Its [media use and attitudes reports](#) show trends since 2005 in the areas of take-up and use of different media, with a particular focus on internet habits and attitudes.

Alison will present some of the most recent key findings from Ofcom's portfolio of media literacy research, paying particular attention to key indicators for critical thinking among media users.

Michael Nicolai became President of [AMARC Europe](#) in 2016, having joined the Executive Board in 2013. Michael has been involved in community radio for more than fifteen years. In 2001, he became a board member of the association Corax e.V, becoming the coordinator of the daily programme at [Radio CORAX](#) from 2009 to 2016 and since 2016 Nicolai is the project coordinator at Radio CORAX. Since 2009, Michael has also provided radio-training for non-commercial radio and is member of the trainer network "radioworks". Between 2011 and 2015, he coordinated the EU Leonardo SMART project (Specific Methodologies and Resources for Radio Trainers) and the Grundtvig project MPAC (Media Participation for Active Citizenship).

Michael will outline how Community Media promotes media literacy, with a particular focus on developing critical thinking and working in partnership.

Stéphane Hoebeke is legal counselor for RTBF with responsibility for the coordination of Media literacy activities. He is also a member of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation aux médias.

Stéphane is the author of articles and books about media and freedom of speech, such as *Le Droit de la Presse*, with B. Mouffe, Academia-Bruylant, Anthemis, 3^e édition, 2012; *Sexe et stéréotypes dans les médias*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2008 ; *La liberté d'expression, pour qui, pour quoi, jusqu'où ?*, Anthemis, 2015

Stéphane will describe the actions that RTBF has undertaken to help promote media literacy with and within their audience, including the development of annual strategy: *Le Plan stratégique d'éducation aux médias*. This annual plan, first developed in 2014, is evaluated on a yearly basis and incorporates different actions from a 360° perspective.