

45th EPRA Meeting Edinburgh
18-19 May 2017

Working Group I on Media Literacy
Mapping key initiatives and researching media use

Summary of EPRA Working Group on Media Literacy
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1 Background to the Working Group

Our media and communications environment presents new challenges for both regulators and consumers, with potentially significant economic, social and democratic implications. These challenges touch on a number of areas that are of interest to regulators including:

- Assessing content for reliability and trustworthiness;
- Recognising and understanding the difference between various types of content;
- Media plurality;
- Safe and appropriate use of content and services.

Citizens need to develop analytical skills that allow for better intellectual and emotional **understanding** of digital media.

This working group will look at the potential of media literacy (ML), and in particular, the development of critical understanding and critical awareness, as a way of addressing, in part, these issues.

2 Meeting purpose

- To give a flavour of the diversity of approaches and stakeholders that are involved in the promotion of media literacy across Europe
- To inspire and encourage EPRA members to potentially consider new approaches to promoting ML.

3 Meeting structure

- Four experts from different sectors, presented a different approach to promoting media literacy. The meeting started with [Maja Cappello](#), Head of the Department for Legal Information for the European Audiovisual Observatory, providing the broad European context by sharing some of the key findings from the recently published 'Media Literacy Mapping in Europe'. Commissioned by the European Commission, this project looks at over 500 significant media literacy projects from across 28 EU countries.
- Ofcom's Head of Media Literacy, [Alison Preston](#) provided an illustration of how critically aware UK adults are in relation to media content and services, based on the some soon-to-be-published Media Literacy research.
- The focus of the meeting then shifted from research and insights to implementation. Stéphane Hoebeke from RTBF, the French-speaking public service broadcaster in

Brussels described the actions that RTBF has undertaken to help promote media literacy, including the development of annual strategy: *Le Plan stratégique d'éducation aux médias*.

- Finally, Michael Nicolai, President of [AMARC Europe](#) outlined the role that Community Media plays in the promotion of media literacy, with a particular focus on developing critical thinking and working in partnership.

4 Key themes / messages

- ML is a broad concept and definitions can vary across international, national, regional and organisational levels, but the main characteristics of media literacy are the ability to use, understand and create 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.
- The essential element of ML that underpins all these skills relates to critical thinking and in particular the ability to analyse, evaluate and make informed choices about media.
- In the wake of the current interest in fake news and ways to counter fake news, EPRA's focus on media literacy is very timely - particularly as some of the media regulatory interventions that are deployed by regulators, depend on people having the skills and confidence to make informed decisions about their media content choices and engagement.
- Although trying to quantify or 'measure' the cognitive skills linked to media literacy can be difficult, Ofcom has, over the years developed a portfolio of research that provides insight into all aspects of media literacy, including critical thinking. The findings showed that there is a considerable knowledge gap between understanding how "traditional" and digital forms of media are funded. In addition, a significant minority of people don't know how search engines are funded; don't know how to spot advertising on search engines; don't know how to judge the accuracy of the websites listed; and, are not aware of the implications of sharing data.
- This knowledge gap prompts questions about how well equipped people are to make fully informed decisions about their media consumption and engagement.
- ML is also a concept that can be influenced by changing technological, social, cultural and political priorities. As a life-long learning subject, developing ML skills often requires a change in behaviour which in turn requires different stakeholders to provide different support to people at different stages of their learning journey. As a result, it is unlikely that an organisation working in isolation will be very effective at promoting ML in the long term.
- The theme of cross-sector collaboration emerged in three of the four presentations. The EAO project demonstrated that the majority of the most significant ML projects undertaken across Europe in the last 5 years were as a result of cross-sector collaboration.
- Collaboration was also a key feature in RTBF's work on media literacy, as well as in the Community Radio sector.
- In addition to the commissioning and dissemination of research, participation in projects, a potential role of regulators might lay in providing leadership, and in particular providing coordination with a view to fostering cross-sector collaboration – especially as regulators are

well placed to understand and to communicate to other stakeholders what is at stake, and regulators have existing relationship with a range of sectors with an interest or potential role to play in the promotion of media literacy.

- The EAO study showed that a very large proportion of the main media literacy stakeholders across Europe did not have a statutory responsibility in the area and a large proportion came from civil society. The potential for PSBs to be encouraged to be more active, or demonstrate more clearly, their activity in this area was also discussed. However, questions were posed asking whether mandating PSBs to do more on media literacy would be the most effective approach.
- The EAO research showed that critical thinking accounted for the most commonly featured media literacy skills addressed by the projects included in the study. Critical thinking skills were also a feature of the projects presented by Community Radio and RTBF.
- RTBF demonstrated the benefits of integrating the promotion of media literacy into its day-to-day business at both a practical and strategic level, and RTBF also acknowledged that they wanted to help their audience decode and critically engage with their content.
- Community Radio presented an approach that was centred on 'learning by doing' with positive outcomes in terms of the literacy of democracy and promoting inclusion, diversity and accountability.
- Measuring the impact of projects that promote critical thinking can also be a challenge.

5 Next steps/calls to action

Following today's meeting, there are two main activities planned for the working group:

1) 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 currently available online until mid-June. The results of this survey will be used to help shape the next working group meeting. Twenty-eight regulators responded to the last EPRA survey about regulators and Media Literacy helping to draw a comprehensive picture of how regulators are engaging with Media Literacy.

It would be appreciated if as many members could complete the current survey to help us add to that knowledge and help to create another worthwhile meeting in Vienna in the autumn.

2) Working Group meeting in Vienna – 12 October 2017

The proposed objectives for the next meeting are:

- Identify emerging media literacy issues for EPRA members based on the member survey;
- Present existing media literacy activities that EPRA members are involved in;
- Explore the potential for new collaborations and new ways for EPRA members to engage with media literacy issues.

If you have a project or an idea for a media literacy project that you would like to share at the meeting in Vienna, please contact Emmanuelle.