



45th Meeting of EPRA Vienna – October 2017 Media Literacy *“Fostering critical thinking through working in collaboration”*

The Irish Experience, the Story So Far

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) was established by the Broadcasting Act 2009, which sets out the statutory duties of the Authority. Section 26 (2)(g) of the Act lists ancillary functions with regard to media literacy. Specifically, the Act requires the BAI:

“to undertake, encourage and foster research, measures and activities which are directed towards the promotion of media literacy”

Furthermore, the BAI Strategic Statement 2017-2019 has a strategic theme of ‘Empowering Audiences’, with a strategic objective to *“develop the understanding, engagement and participation of the public in an evolving media landscape”*. To this aim, the BAI has committed to developing, implementing and reviewing a set of media literacy activities which increases audiences’ ability to engage with, evaluate and understand audio-visual content in an evolving media environment.

To give effect to its statutory obligations, the BAI developed a Media Literacy Policy. Further information on this policy is contained in Section 1. Section 2 outlines the steps taken by the BAI to set up an Irish Media Literacy Network. Section 3 provides a brief overview of the next steps.

Section 1: The BAI Media Literacy Policy

In December 2016, the BAI launched its Media Literacy Policy. The Policy was developed in consultation with a large number of stakeholders across the fields of online platforms, broadcasting, press and journalism, film, education, government departments (Education, Communications) and other not-for-profit/civil society organisations.

The Policy is available on the BAI website at this link:

<http://www.bai.ie/en/viewers-listeners/understanding-media/>

Key elements of the Policy are also summarised below.

The BAI overall policy objective is 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’*.

The Policy also contains 5 objectives for the BAI in the field of Media Literacy. These are listed below:

- Provide leadership and coordination.
- Describe media literacy in a relevant and meaningful way.
- Encourage a wide range of stakeholders to participate.
- Foster media literacy research and the development of a comprehensive knowledge base.
- Be strategically aligned to other relevant frameworks and policies, at home and abroad.



45th Meeting of EPRA Vienna – October 2017

Media Literacy

“Fostering critical thinking through working in collaboration”

The Policy was developed through an extensive consultation process. We recognised that Media Literacy’s stakeholder base is very large and gathers a multiplicity of groups. We therefore consulted with a vast number of agencies and individuals who generously gave us their time and expertise in order to shape the Policy in a tool usable by and accessible to the wide number of stakeholders. In consulting outside of the ‘classic’ BAI stakeholder base (e.g. broadcasters), we ensured that the Policy reflected views from stakeholders in academia, press/journalism, film.

The BAI Policy recognises that Media Literacy is an umbrella concept. It identifies three core competencies, demonstrated by a set of skills, with associated success indicators or indicators of impact/growth.

The three different competencies can broadly be summarised as:

- **Understand and Critically Evaluate** (media content and services),
- **Access and Use** (in a safe manner, and to maximise opportunities), and
- **Create and Participate.**

Each of the competencies has a set of indicators of the skills necessary to achieve the competency as well as a list of indicators of success. This framework is intended to be used by the BAI to prioritise and organise the BAI’s own portfolio of media literacy work. The framework is also intended to help a wide range of stakeholders shape their own media literacy activities in line with their own strategic and business objectives. The framework enables stakeholders to adopt a ‘pick and mix’ approach where they can identify which media literacy skills most closely align with their core business or activities and their own strategic priorities. Similarly, the competencies and their associated indicators are not in any order of priority and some indicators are applicable across multiple competencies.

Section 2: Media Literacy Ireland (working title) – the Irish Media Literacy Network

During the consultation process it became apparent that there was a strong appetite from stakeholders to be involved in the promotion of media literacy but many stakeholders were unsure how best to contribute. There was widespread support for the development of a networking forum that would enable stakeholders to share knowledge, best practice and develop partnerships.

As a result, as part of the implementation of the Policy, the BAI decided to support the development of a network as the main vehicle for cross-sector communication, collaboration and knowledge-sharing on media literacy topics in Ireland.

Media Literacy Ireland (working title), the Irish Media Literacy Network held its first meeting in July 2017 and gathered over 35 organisations and individuals all with a remit, interest or activities in media literacy. Membership of the Irish Media Literacy Network is free, open to all media literacy stakeholders and the network is guided by a steering committee of 12 people across a number of sectors, setting the



45th Meeting of EPRA Vienna – October 2017

Media Literacy

“Fostering critical thinking through working in collaboration”

strategic direction of the network. The BAI role is primarily to facilitate the network (including through financial support) but we see the network as a collaborative entity that will eventually operate independently of the BAI

Like the consultation process for the Policy, the development of the Network gathers a wide range of stakeholders across broadcasting (radio and television, commercial, community and public service), online platforms, press and journalism, not-for-profit and civil society organisations.

The goals of the network are currently defined as follows:

- Promoting all aspects of media literacy across Ireland.
- Communicating through face-to-face events, activities and online channels to showcase best practice case-studies and sharing resources. Also to highlight opportunities for funding, partnerships and professional development.
- Creating a media literacy research archive of the most up-to-date national and international research relating to media literacy.
- Identifying gaps in provision, make recommendations on how to address gaps in provision and identifying potential opportunities for funding.
- Connecting people, organisations and projects to facilitate dialogue and foster the development of new partnerships and sustainable media literacy projects.
- Facilitating the sharing of information and supporting professional development
- Identifying and signposting existing media literacy projects, resources and research and creating a sustainable media literacy knowledge base.
- Coordinating cross-sector collaboration to develop a media literacy knowledge base, showcasing best practice case-studies and sharing resources.

Section 3: where we are now, and next steps

The first meeting of the Steering Group was held on the 4th October and a programme of activities for the first two years of operation of the network was agreed. This programme includes:

- Setting up a number of working groups,
- Carrying out an audit of existing media literacy research, projects and resources thus creating a sustainable and manageable database
- Developing an appropriate communications strategy to include four quarterly bulletins, and other communications tools
- Creating at least two opportunities for members to meet in person to showcase projects and share information
- Increasing the membership and actively targeting underrepresented sectors.



45th Meeting of EPRA Vienna – October 2017 Media Literacy “Fostering critical thinking through working in collaboration”

Events

To facilitate opportunities for members to network face to face, to showcase projects, share information and explore possible collaborations and partnerships, two Network events will be held between October 2017 and September 2018. These currently include a Campaign Masterclass, in anticipation of delivering a national campaign between October 2018 and September 2019, and a seminar with the overarching theme of Digital Citizenship, raising awareness of a range of key media literacy skills, as outlined in the BAI Media Literacy Policy.

Working Groups

While the Steering Group is tasked with strategic decisions for the Network, it is the Working Groups who will deliver much of the operational work on the ground. It is planned that each Working Group will consist of four to five Network Members, and will be tasked with addressing a specific objective set by the Steering Group. At present, priority has been given to

- A Communications Working Group whose role will be to foster clear, effective and consistent communication across the Network, and to propose the best solution for populating and managing the research, resource and projects database.
- A Research Working Group tasked with identifying existing media literacy research studies and gather summaries of which could be included in the media literacy database.
- A Projects and Resources Working Group to identify existing media literacy projects and resources and provide summaries of them for inclusion in the media literacy database.
- An Events Working Group to help develop, deliver and promote the Network events.

The project is ongoing and a long-term commitment for participants. It also reflects the importance of cross-sectoral and collaborative working in order to promote and support the development of media literate audiences.