



46th EPRA meeting
Vienna – 11-13 October 2017

Working Group 1
Media Literacy: Focus on the role of regulators¹
Summary of the Working Group
Martina Chapman, Content Producer

Following on from the Media Literacy Working Group meeting in May in Edinburgh², the theme for the meeting was once again Critical Thinking, but this time with a particular focus on “Fostering critical thinking through working in collaboration”. In preparation for the media literacy working group meeting, a comparative background paper³ was prepared based on survey responses from 25 EPRA members⁴.

Some of the main findings from the background paper were presented, such as:

- There is no universally agreed definition of media literacy although there is widespread agreement that the concepts of ‘access’, ‘use’, ‘understanding’ and ‘critical evaluation’ of the media are cornerstones of media literacy.
- Our understanding of media literacy evolves in response to social, technical, economic factors and this is acknowledged in the description of media literacy used by the *European Media Literacy Expert Group* which is:

“an umbrella expression that encompasses many possible definitions and includes all the technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow a citizen to access, have a critical understanding of the media and interact with it. These capacities allow the citizen to participate in the economic, social and cultural aspects of society as well as to play an active role in the democratic process. It refers to all kind of media (television, radio, press), through all kind of channels (traditional, internet, social media) and to all ages.”

- The interdependency between media literacy and digital skills is also reflected in the range of instruments and initiatives from the EU and the Council of Europe.

During the discussion there was also overall agreement that media literacy is not a silver bullet to addressing all the issues that we face as individuals, society and as regulators, but it is a great first

¹ **Disclaimer:** This document has been produced by EPRA, an informal network of 52 regulatory authorities in the field of broadcasting. It is not a fully comprehensive overview of the issues, nor does it purport to represent the views or the official position of EPRA or of any member within the EPRA network.

² Summary of the discussions by content producer Martina Chapman, Ofcom (UK), for the Working group 1 on Media Literacy: Mapping key initiatives & researching media use which convened in Edinburgh on 18 May 2017.

<https://www.epra.org/attachments/edinburgh-wg-i-media-literacy-summary-martina-chapman-ofcom-uk>

³ <https://www.epra.org/attachments/vienna-wg-i-media-literacy-focus-on-the-role-of-regulators-background-document>

⁴ The author would like to thank all EPRA members who contributed to the survey as well as Tone Gunhild Haugan-Hepsø and Emmanuelle Machet for their help in drafting the comparative background document.

defense in building resilience and empowering people to make informed choices not just about the content they consume, but also about data, including personal data, is gathered, used, distributed, and by whom...

The survey showed that there is overall agreement that the promotion of media literacy supports or complements statutory regulation by way of:

- raising awareness of existing rights and regulations,
- addressing new regulatory challenges and,
- protecting constitutional values
- and empowering users to manage their media as a parallel to the regulatory mechanisms in place to protect media users.

15 of the 25 respondents to the EPRA survey stated that they had a formal responsibility in relation to media literacy and there is some variety in the responsibilities that media regulators have in this field, and how those responsibilities are addressed. However, the two most common ways of addressing these responsibilities were through 'Coordination of a network or working group' and 'Delivery of projects in partnership with other stakeholders'.

Also, the majority of respondents (18 of 25) identified collaboration with other organisations as an essential element of a successful media literacy project.

Although these findings suggest that working in collaboration with other stakeholders is a priority for many regulators, less than half of respondents (11 out of 25) indicated that there was a forum in their country where media literacy stakeholders could share best practice or work together.

Similarly, while funding was identified as a "key driver for media literacy", the vast majority of regulators indicated that they received no specific funding for media literacy activities.

These findings pose some interesting questions for EPRA members such as:

1 What are the challenges facing EPRA members in terms of reflecting media literacy in its broadest description? How can these challenges be overcome?

2 The survey suggests that promoting media literacy has potential benefits for regulators and the majority of respondents believe that working in partnership is a key element of a successful project. However, less than half of EPRA member countries have a network or platform where media literacy stakeholders can meet and share best practice. Is there a role here for EPRA members in bridging this gap? What are the barriers to this and can they be overcome?

3 Are there ways that EPRA members could help facilitate or secure funding for media literacy projects?

4 The challenges facing citizens in relation to the verification of online content and information and managing personal data are significant and universal. Is there a way for EPRA members to work together more closely and potentially develop collective advice/resources/information that could be used by all EPRA members to help support the

promotion of media literacy?

The types of media literacy projects in which regulators are involved were broadly categorized into 5 groups:

- 1 End-user engagement / Projects / Campaigns (6);
- 2 Educational initiatives (6)
- 3 Research (5);
- 4 Policy, Guidelines and Publications (5)
- 5 Networks (3).

The presentations during the group reflected those categories.

1 **Tone Gunhild Haugan-Hepsø** from the Norwegian Media Authority presented their [research on Fake News](#)⁵ and how it has led to a partnership campaign with Facebook on how to spot Fake News.

2 **Stephanie Comey** from the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland [explained how the BAI had successfully adopted a consultative approach](#)⁶ to developing their media literacy policy, which was published in December 2016 and is available on their website. She also outlined the development of an Irish Media Literacy Network, which brings together a broad range of cross-sector stakeholders.

3 **Roger Loppacher i Crehuet** provided the group with a [comprehensive view of how the Catalan Audiovisual Council](#)⁷ is promoting media literacy in collaboration with the education sector. In particular, they are developing classroom teaching materials and resources, which are aimed at secondary level teachers (of pupils aged 12 to 16 years). The teaching resources both address how audiovisual language is used and provide tools to critically analyse media coverage of specific social issues such as fake news, advertising literacy and violence against women.

4 **Emilija Janevska** from the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services in FYR Macedonia outlined [their media literacy journey](#)⁸ since 2012 and in particular the setup of the “Media Literacy Network of the Republic of Macedonia” in response to the need for better cooperation among different stakeholders, including the data protection agency, working in the field of media literacy, with a view to achieving a more fruitful cooperation with more sustainable results.

Inspired by the presentations, a number of other regulators gave examples of different media literacy projects and shared experiences of reaching different audiences with ML messages, such as Youtubers in Norway and Germany, and undertaking research in Malta. Others emphasized the key role of educators in developing critical thinking skills in young children, thereby equipping them better for navigating media content and services.

⁵ <https://www.epra.org/attachments/vienna-wg-i-media-literacy-the-role-of-regulators-by-tone-haugan-hepsø-nma-no-additional-reference-paper>

⁶ <https://www.epra.org/attachments/vienna-working-group-i-media-literacy-the-role-of-regulators-additional-reference-paper>

⁷ <https://www.epra.org/attachements/vienna-wg-iii-the-changing-relationship-between-citizens-regulators-summary-of-the-working-group>

⁸ <https://www.epra.org/attachments/vienna-wg-i-media-literacy-the-role-of-regulators-by-emilija-janevska-aaams-mk-additional-reference-paper>

Silvia Grundmann from the Council of Europe suggested anchoring ML into a human rights action plan with a view to the long-term promotion of ML and also highlighted the availability of the European Wergeland Centre⁹ (EWC) in Norway to individual member states for teacher training.

There was overall agreement that one size does not fit all when it comes to delivering media literacy however there was also broad agreement that it would be useful to explore whether a platform for sharing best practice amongst regulators could be developed.

As a first step in exploring the potential of this idea, we have proposed drafting a FAQ or ‘how to’ document on how to set up a media literacy network, based on the experiences on regulators who have done this – such as the BAI and the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services in FYR Macedonia.

It was suggested that the Board could reflect on mechanisms that might be used to facilitate this and Johanna E. Fell kindly offered to sponsor this at Board level.

If this trial is a success, the model could be used for a broad range of media literacy topics, such as working with stakeholders outside our regulatory remit as demonstrated by our colleagues from Catalonia and Norway.

⁹ The European Wergeland Centre (EWC) is a resource centre on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship, <http://www.theewc.org/>