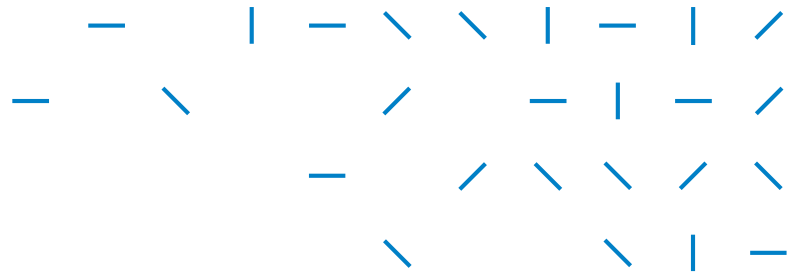




Baltic Centre for
Media Excellence



MEDIA LITERACY SECTOR MAPPING
IN GEORGIA, LATVIA, MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE

Moldova. Media and Information Literacy Policy and Action Proposal Paper

2021



Contents

Background information	3
Inter-Institutional and Cross-Sector Cooperation and Coordination	3
Media Literacy and Critical Thinking Through Formal Education System.....	5
Other Recommendations to Improve the Overall Media and Information Environment in Moldova	7

Background information

The Moldovan Independent Journalism Centre (IJC) in cooperation with Baltic Center for Media Excellence (BCME) undertaken in August-November 2021, the research "Comprehensive approach and advancement of media and information literacy in Moldova".

This Media Literacy policy and action proposal paper was drafted by the country research author Angela Vacaru, based on above mentioned research findings and recommendations and other media information literacy related events/discussions encountered during the research project. It is focused on two mutually inter-linked MIL sectors/aspects: inter-institutional and cross-sector cooperation and coordination of media literacy initiatives and actions and formal education system, but also other recommendations to improve the overall media and information environment in Republic of Moldova.

These recommendations are for institutions engaged in the media literacy activities in the country, mainly: government, relevant state and education institutions, non-governmental organizations and donor organisations.

Inter-Institutional and Cross-Sector Cooperation and Coordination

Addressed Problem/Challenge	Recommendations
Moldova doesn't have a national concept or strategy that would set the long-term priorities for increasing the media and information literacy of Moldovan citizens.	<p>A national media and Information literacy concept or strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to be created as a separate document or integrate it as part of a broader relevant national level document(s).• should be drafted in a participatory manner and in close consultation with relevant MIL stakeholders, based on evidence based national level data and identified priorities.• should identify the priority areas of intervention and cross-sectoral roles and responsibilities distribution among Government, Parliament, civil society, media sector and donor community.• should refer to specific mechanisms to identify hybrid threats – such as fake news, propaganda, and disinformation, and protection tools that respond to rapid technological changes.• should designate a governmental or state institution(s) that would be officially responsible for coordinating and monitoring the media literacy policy/strategy priorities and actions implementation and evaluate the improvement of media literacy abilities of Moldovan citizens. <p>Government should analyze international practices in MIL policies and initiate international cooperation and sharing experience with other countries governments from the Region, that already designed and implement national MIL policies or strategy.</p>

National level surveys and research on media literacy are required to be conducted based on rigorous and national representative methodology to evaluate the media literacy dynamics, existing threats and gaps that needs to be addressed on regular basis. The current shortage of such data is a significant challenge for developing evidence based strategies and policies, but also for measuring the overall impact of a potential MIL national strategy/policy and actions.

Gaps in communication and coordination among different governmental institutions, donor or civil society that work in the field of media literacy or countering disinformation, that lead sometimes to overlapping or desynchronization of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) efforts.

An institutionalized networking and cooperation multi-stakeholders' platform for coordination and cooperation in media and information literacy (MIL) area.

- to be created or integrated as part of a bigger media or disinformation area similar initiative/platform/structure.
- should have designated key contact persons and representative from all sectors major actors' institutions and organizations
- should have multiple levels of coordination and have representatives from different authorities as well as civil society - sectional and cross-sectional
- should initiate and host regular meetings and serve as a communication platform specially dedicated to MIL and related topics (disinformation, propaganda, fake news etc.), that would gather all relevant cross-sector actors.

Approval of the 2020 drafted Government Decision on the Creation of the Coordination Council for ensuring the information security, that designates multi sectors representatives of all relevant institutions, from the governmental, media, private and civil society sectors.

Donor organizations, but also state and government institutions should encourage and finances more cross-sector partnership ML projects,

Government and state institutions should initiate more frequent and regular public meetings and discussions are needed, on specific narrow ML topics and areas, with the participation of the relevant actors from all sectors for that specific topic.

Limited human resources, expertise or will of governmental or state institutions, that make them less capable of taking the lead or actively engaging in the relevant for their area Media Literacy or fighting disinformation activities and initiatives.

The state should offer education programs, guidelines for relevant government, state and public authorities staff on relevant for their activity MIL topics: media and digital literacy skills, tools; media content analysis. online media and social network behavior and risks; rights and obligation regarding media access to public information, but also protection of personal data, communication crisis management and rapid reaction to combating citizens disinformation, including through cooperation with media organizations etc.

Donor and international organizations are recommended to offer assistance and consultation for developing internal procedures for state institutions on:

- organizational external communication, including crisis management and rapid reaction to combating citizens disinformation
- efficient practices to provide transparency and access to public interest information

The relevant state institutions should start to gradually take over the responsibility and even lead relevant media literacy initiatives for their area, not only as official partners of CSOs, but also as initiators, implementers and institutions that allocate budgets for this state level priority.

There are cases of overlapping of similar MIL initiatives implemented by CSOs with donor community support

Donor organizations are recommended to:

- include as part of project proposal process the requirements for applicant organizations, submitting information if and what similar activities were already done, when for what audience and in what format
 - to encourage follow-up ideas of own or other organization projects and partnerships with other organization(s)
 - to encourage involvement in proposed for funding projects, of already trained and experienced in ML staff, such as trained in Media Education/Media Literacy teachers, librarians, experts from civil society and media organizations.
 - have discussions on specific media literacy challenges and priorities, targeted audiences, as part of the regular Media Donor Meetings, that would make more disaggregated information available regarding the allocated support of donors on specific MIL areas, geographic distribution mapping and information on audiences already covered and those that are neglected.
-

Media Literacy and Critical Thinking Through Formal Education System

Addressed Problem/Challenge

The Media Education course is an optional one, so current formal education system format doesn't guarantee access for all pupils and students to develop MIL skills through formal education.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and Research in coordination and partnership with other ML relevant actors from civil society, media, and even IT sector, should:

- explore the opportunities and integrate media education into the curricula of other school subjects and support transdisciplinary approaches to media and information literacy education.
-

- promote and invest in increasing the critical thinking, information analysis and freedom of expression capacities of both teachers and students, through offering information, training, and resources on innovative learning, tools and evaluation techniques that encourage information analysis
- Explore the cooperation opportunities with Romania Ministries of Education or government regarding transdisciplinary integration of MIL and critical thinking through infusion approach, Romania initiated already this action and educational resources are created in Romanian. A similar initiative is performed in the second neighbor country, Ukraine.

Reduced cross-sector and multi-stakeholders' cooperation in promoting and implementing media literacy education in schools

The Ministry of Education and Research in coordination and partnership with other ML relevant actors from civil society, media, and even IT sector, should:

- initiate a platform for dialogue with civil society, experts, teachers, as well as other actors interested in developing and implementing educational policies to promote media education to increase the rational use of media by children, adolescents, young people, and parents.
- strengthen the cooperation between the education system and parents' community for a joint effort to increase the media and digital skills, critical thinking abilities, and online security of the youth.

Technical and Vocational Schools and Colleges don't have access to the ML optional course and Universities don't teach media literacy/education courses.

The Ministry of Education and Research should find solutions to promote media education in all formal education institutions, that currently have no MIL related education and:

- give access to Technical and Vocational Schools and Colleges students to select Media Education optional course
- support the development and introduction of an optional media education course in pre-university and university education

The rate of schools teaching in Russian that adopted Media Education courses is much lower, since they have less or even no available hours for optional disciplines.

The Ministry of Education and Research representative should find a solution to revise the maximum number of compulsory disciplines hours distribution and make the official adjustments to allow all schools teaching in Russian and all level classes the opportunity to select at least one optional discipline (from a maximum of two allowed), including the Media Education course. To be noted that Russian speaking population is the most vulnerable to media propaganda audience category.

Weak media literacy and digital /online skills of teachers.

The Ministry of Education and Research in partnership with other ML relevant actors from civil society, media, and even IT sector, should invest and offer a variety of practical and efficient trainings on general MIL and digital literacy related skills, online security, use of e-learning platforms organized for teachers, through:

-
-
- Promotion of including these learning objectives in the portfolio of Centers and Excellence Centers courses that offer professional development courses for teachers
 - Internal peer-to-peer coaching and mentorship programs in schools
 - Trainings and education programs, video tutorials, visual manuals and other practical resources etc.

Educational system is facing a qualitative and quantitative deficit of teachers.

Investment in education should be among the most important governmental priorities and need to guarantee decent salaries and favorable working environment. The Ministry of Education and Research need to continue implementing initiatives, including with donors and CSOs support, to create better working condition, professional development opportunities, favorable infrastructure, technical equipment and internet access for all schools, including the rural ones.

Other Recommendations to Improve the Overall Media and Information Environment in Moldova

Review, update and complete the legislative and normative frameworks to ensure:

- clear definitions of propaganda, disinformation, and fake news that designates them as both domestic and foreign security threats. The definitions should draw from internationally recognized and respected definitions.

The government and parliament should improve the working environment for national and local independent media, to increase accordingly citizens access to unbiased and multi-source information and news, by reviewing, completing and adopting the necessary changes of legislative and normative framework to:

- ensure more transparency regarding both media ownership and their financial sources, that are required to increase trust in the media sector
- remove the artificial impediments and facilitate access to public interest information for representatives of media outlets (amend and supplement the Law on Access to Information, Law on Freedom of Expression, Law on Private Data Protection, Civil Code, Contravention Code, Law on State Secrecy, Administrative Code, Law on Real Estate, etc.);
- Examine, finalize and approval of the draft law on establishing the national system to support the development of independent media outlets of public benefit, including those in the regions of the Republic of Moldova;
- Improve the legislative and normative frameworks in the fields of advertising and competition on the media market, by adopting the new draft law on advertising and the draft law to complete the Law on Competition.

-
- Complete the percentage designation mechanism (“2% Law”) by including media outlets as potential beneficiaries of the 2% designation from the personal income tax;
 - Reopen databases for journalists accessing public interest information.

Restructure the Broadcasting Council (BC) activity and offer organizational capacity and expertise assistance to ensure a proactive and efficient activity in sanctioning disinformation, manipulation and fake news and increase their openness and (re)actions to the respective media CSOs and experts’ reports and declarations.

In-depth reform and assistance for the Public Broadcaster “Teleradio-Moldova” Company to ensure independent and qualitative broadcasting, quality media content production, for becoming an active national level MIL actor and media partner for MIL initiatives initiated by other actors.

Donor community should continue the capacity building, technical and financial support offered to independent media outlets, to offer increasing access to national and regional high-quality content and news available for Moldovan citizens, including ethnic minorities through a variety of media formats: online, TV, Radio, and print.



Baltic Centre for
Media Excellence

Author of the Policy Paper

Angela Vacaru

Project Team

Gunta Sloga, Executive Director, BCME

Martins Murnieks, Head of the EaP Programme, BCME

Sandra Zilberta, Project Coordinator, BCME

Joanna Storie, Copy Editor

Ilva Paidere, Layout Designer

This publication was produced with the financial support of the Black Sea Trust, a Project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States; the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia and the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the BCME and do not necessarily reflect the views of the supporting institutions or their partners.

B | S | T The Black Sea Trust
for Regional Cooperation
A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office



Ministry of
Foreign Affairs
Republic of Latvia



Co-funded by
the European Union