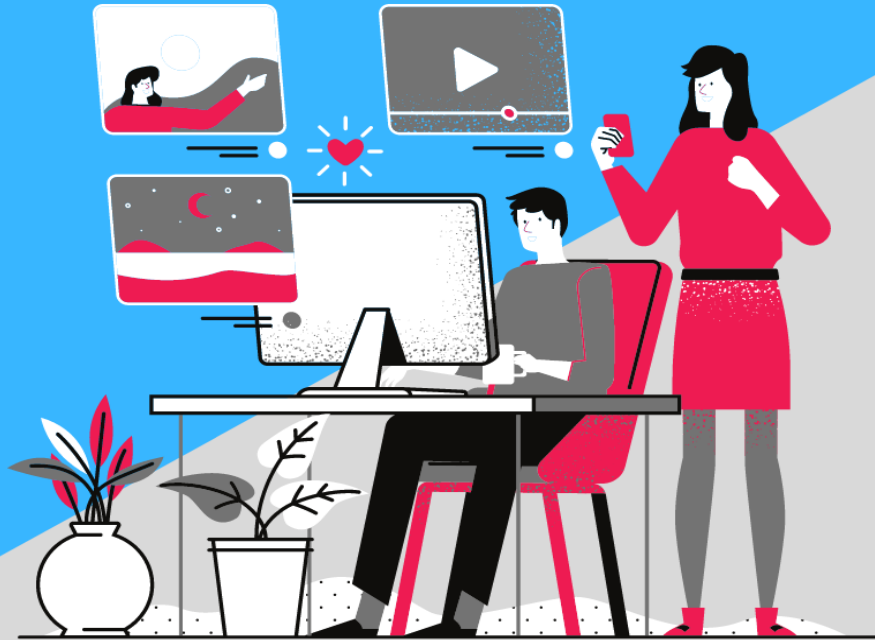




Find fake news and avoid them!

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
ON MEDIA LITERACY
EDUCATION**



REPORT

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1. Introduction – about the project & research

The 21st century is associated with the rise of information and communication technologies, which have gradually become part of our daily lives. We use digital tools daily at work, at school and in leisure activities. Today's era can be described as digital, and this got more intense especially during the COVID 19 pandemic, during which even less digitally skilled individuals had to move their activities to the online environment.

As the world around us is constantly changing and education, whether formal or informal, is a very dynamic field. Digital or even social, economic, or cultural changes indirectly affect the education system of all countries and thus force a reassessment of education methods and tools. The system must keep pace with the times and be open to new opportunities, and most importantly, youth workers should be constantly educated in this regard. Only in this way can they do their job well and pass the right knowledge and skills effectively and engagingly to young people.

Digital youth work is a fast-growing area, and the media are an integral part of it. The rise of the Internet and the widespread use of social networks have led to a significant shift in the sharing and dissemination of information. A lot of new media has emerged, and the average consumer cannot face the huge amount of information he/she is exposed to on a daily basis. Insufficient media literacy - the inability to evaluate relevant information then causes a tendency to believe in misinformation and conspiracy theories. This polarises society and ultimately threatens the foundations of democracy.

Media and digital literacy as well as the ability to critically evaluate information are key competencies of today. It is therefore important especially for teachers, youth workers and representatives of youth organisations involved in educating young people to improve in this area. The whole Erasmus + gaMEfy project is built on this goal.

GaMEfy's partners therefore worked together to create several educational outcomes of the project. The first is the Curriculum containing a useful tool for understanding the education on the topics of digital and media literacy, both for youth and for youth workers and educators. It will help you to

recognize the false news and different threats of the online world. In addition, you will find there many practical exercises of various levels of difficulty for young people.

The second output of the project is a great interactive educational game, which gives the target groups the opportunity to learn in an easy, accessible way, and improve their digital skills and their knowledge about media and fake news.

After testing and improving the game, partners were piloting it in 5 full cycles, while the universities in 10. This means that they had to find up to 200 young people to play the game, then complete a questionnaire and participate in a focus group, which aimed to evaluate the game itself but mostly the state of media literacy and educational opportunities in this area in their country. The results of both quantitative and qualitative research can be found on the following pages of the Guidelines.

The partners also looked individually at the state of media literacy in their home countries and produced a report referring to educational opportunities in the field of media digital literacy. You can find the result of their desk research in our Guidelines. Based on the information and data collected, the partners were able to propose policy recommendations for the national as well as European level - recommendations on how to improve media and digital literacy education.

2. Literature review

2.1. Media literacy learning opportunities in Slovakia

Even though level of media literacy in Slovakia is among the lowest in the EU (as shown in the Media Literacy Index 2021¹), there are improvements when it comes to the approach to formal education in this area. There are also numerous non-formal learning opportunities and results of research. In this context it's helpful that the obligation to inform about the state of media literacy was transposed into

¹ <https://osis.bg/?p=3750&lang=en>. Slovakia ranks 22nd place in 2021 (45 points on a 0-100 scale)). In 2019, it was also in 22nd place with 44 points: <https://osis.bg/?p=3356&lang=en>. Media Literacy Index is published by the Open Society Institute – Sofia (<https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/MediaLiteracyIndex2019 -ENG.pdf>).

the [Act no. 308/2000](#) on Broadcasting and Retransmission and on the amendment of Act No. 195/2000 on Telecommunications. According to its § 5, art. 2, point j), the [Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission](#) is obliged to “provide the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic with supporting materials for a report analysing the state and level of media literacy”².

The Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission entrusted this task to the [Faculty of Mass Media Communication](#) of the University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. Document “[Conception of Media Literacy Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning](#)”, approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic in 2009, foresaw creation of the Centre for media literacy education. Such a centre was established at this Faculty. Besides that, the document defines the position of media literacy education in lifelong learning and public institutions that should be involved in its development. It provides insights into the then situation in this field and besides some recommendations and description of the Centre it doesn’t provide concrete goals.

Importance of public access to objective and pluralistic sources of information and strengthening of the independence of public service media is one of the goals set by the [Vision and development strategy of Slovakia until 2030](#).

One of the goals of the [Slovak Audiovisual Fund](#) is the development of education and professional research in the field of audiovisual culture and film arts. Therefore it’s also an important stakeholder in the field of media literacy education in Slovakia.

One indicator of the state of the media environment – level of trust in media – is also not favourable in Slovakia. Results of the study called [Trustworthiness of news media worldwide 2021](#) was published on Statista. It includes a graph showing the share of adults who trust news media most of the time in selected countries worldwide as of February 2021. According to that, 30% of adults in Slovakia trust news media, which is one of the lowest results compared to 65% in Finland, which scores the best in this study. This result is quite corresponding with data from [the Atlas of European Values](#). It shows that 39.75% of Slovaks have confidence in the press and 27.22% of them have confidence in social media (data are from 2017 and also young people were interviewed). Looking only at the young people, 33.24% of them have confidence in the press and 33.96% have confidence in social media. [2021 World Press Freedom Index](#) ranks Slovakia 35 place (with score 23.02).

It’s important to also mention the connection between media ethics, social responsibility, and media literacy, because it’s understanding provides more insights into the world of media and its mechanisms. Media ethics and social responsibility is not a mainstream topic in Slovakia, however

² <http://www.slovakproducers.com/images/Act-on-Broadcasting-and-Retransmission.pdf>

there are recurrent issues and concrete topics that gain expert and public attention. It happens often that the media publish stories without verifying all the information and thus confuse the public. Instead of tackling misinformation, they are actually contributing to it. This happens very often in tabloid media, but the reputable ones (including public service) are prone to that bad habit as well, making it an even more serious issue, because the public puts bigger trust in them. However, it can be positively noted that professional media correct the mistakes and often apologise for the serious ones.

Current state of the art of the media literacy education

Media literacy education (Mediálna výchova) is included in Framework curricula for [elementary](#) as well as [lower-secondary](#) education as a so-called cross-sectoral topic. Critical thinking, mainly in relation to mass-media, is also mentioned under the topic “Art and Culture”. More attention to media is paid in Framework curricula for [grammar schools](#) (both with 4 or 5 and 8 years educational programmes), whose graduates are able to think critically about and assess information, including those provided by the mass-media. Reference to critical thinking and use of media can be found also under topic “Art and Culture” or “Slovak language and literature” within Framework curricula for grammar schools. Competences related to information society (e.g. copyright, risks related to information technologies) are included under topic “Informatics”. Various information about media can be also received in civic education (80%), ethical education (60%), and informatics (60%)³. When learning about Slovak language and literature, pupils and students are exploring topics such as genres, newspapers, or articles.

Cross-sectoral topic “[Media education](#)” contains the following areas: media in the contemporary world, types of media products, media and its effects on people, media ethics (tabloidization of media), creation of media products.

The key points in the [introduction into state of media literacy education in Slovakia](#) published by the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava are:

- The effectiveness of media literacy education in the form of cross-sectoral subjects (i.e. in connection with another subject) is, within the educational content of those subjects, relatively low.
- Schools can include the subject of media literacy education in their own curricula as a stand-alone subject, which, however, is only optional. It therefore depends on the decision of the management of

³ <https://www.prohuman.sk/pedagogika/medialna-vychova-na-druhom-stupni-zs-na-slovensku>

the school whether it will offer such an opportunity to its pupils or students. The willingness of teachers and their ability to teach this subject often plays a role in decision-making. According to research into the state of integration of media education into the schools' curricula, 283 primary schools, which represents 23% of the research sample of primary schools⁴, and 153 secondary schools, which represents 29% of the total number of 631 grammar schools and secondary vocational schools that participated in the research, have media literacy as a stand-alone subject⁵. According to the database of the Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information, there were 753 secondary schools in Slovakia in total at the time of the survey⁶.

- Schools can also include a short-term course or a project aimed at developing media literacy in their school curriculum. This practical form of development of media literacy of children and youth is most widespread in the Slovak school environment and has a relatively rich tradition⁷.

- A problematic aspect of media literacy education at the primary schools is the lack of suitable methodological materials and tools that would take into account the specifics of relevant age groups.

- Media literacy – either as part of a cross-sectoral or a stand-alone subject – is also taught at secondary vocational schools, although it is not explicitly included as a compulsory part of the relevant state educational programs. However, in binding pedagogical documents for this type of school, elements of media education are present, for example, in the subjects of informatics, Slovak language, social studies, and in some professional subjects.

- One of the problems of media literacy in Slovakia is insufficient capacity for education and professional development of future teachers of this subject. In practice, this means that none of the pedagogical faculties offers the possibility of bachelor's or master's studies focusing on this subject. In the case of some pedagogical faculties, media literacy is present in their study programs (e.g. the Faculty of Education of the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra), but only as an optional subject.

⁴ Kačinová, V., Kolčáková, V., TINKA, J. Súčasný stav začlenenia mediálnej výchovy do obsahu vzdelávania na základných školách na Slovensku. Trnava. IMEC – Centrum mediálnej gramotnosti, FMK UCM Trnava, 2013. p. 18.

⁵ KAČINOVÁ, V., KOLČÁKOVÁ, V. Súčasný stav začlenenia mediálnej výchovy do obsahu vzdelávania na stredných školách na Slovensku. Trnava. IMEC – Centrum mediálnej gramotnosti, FMK UCM Trnava, 2013. p. 22.

⁶ <https://medialnavychova.sk/slovensko-2/>, [https://www.cvtisr.sk/cvti-sr-vedecka-
kniznica/informacie-o-skolstve/statistiky/statisticka-rocenka-publikacia.html?page_id=9580](https://www.cvtisr.sk/cvti-sr-vedecka-
kniznica/informacie-o-skolstve/statistiky/statisticka-rocenka-publikacia.html?page_id=9580)

⁷ VRABEC, N. Mediálna výchova: teoretické východiská a trendy. Trnava. Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda v Trnave, 2013. p. 39 – 40.

Learning opportunities for teachers

The National Institute for Education in the Slovak Republic is paying attention to the education of teachers in the field of media literacy, so that they are able to pass on their knowledge, skills, and abilities on pupils and students. A few examples are available under links below:

- [Workshop for teachers on media literacy and prevention of hate-speech online](#)
- [Webinar for kindergarten teachers](#)
- [Website with various resources](#), such as [10 media literacy competences](#)
- Documents related to “[Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#)” (created by Council of Europe).

Non-formal initiatives

A lot of useful information in the form of articles, videos, and documents are provided by popular websites [zodpovedne.sk](#) (responsibly.sk) and [Rodina a médiá](#) (Family and media). [Salesian Media School](#) provides a media literacy education programme, which has been accredited by the Ministry of Education. Growing number of Erasmus+ training or youth exchanges is providing opportunities for youth to grow as media literate persons. JA Slovakia also organised a “[Media Cup](#)” with a purpose to raise media literacy. In 2010, Slovak Television created a series called “[Media Spies](#)”, which had 40 episodes and focused on media literacy education for young people with their direct participation.

NGO Žabky published three educational materials: [What I know about the media](#) (for pupils), [Media Literacy Education through Game for Teachers](#), and [Media Education through Game for Parents](#).

Other non-formal initiatives or materials are provided for example by: [IMEC](#), [IUVENTA](#), [mediahub.sk](#), [Zvolsti.info](#), [DigiQ](#), [IPčko](#), [Checkbot](#), [nehejtuj.sk](#), [Youth for Equality](#), or [European Dialogue](#).

Media literacy and media or journalists

It's also important for journalists and other media makers to gain new competences in fields such as newest technologies and approaches, data journalism, solution journalism, new business models, citizen engagement, or social responsibility of media. Universities provide such opportunities to their students (alone or in cooperation with profit or non-profit organisations), media houses sometimes as well. However, in the case of the latter, they are reluctant to give more days-off to their employees to attend professional training. In Slovakia, European Dialogue is continuously organising this kind of

training, mainly international ones, and provides also other opportunities for professional development of media makers (especially youth), e.g. networking and mentoring. [Open Society Foundation](#) organises Academy of Investigative Journalism and runs Investigative Journalism Fund. Journalistic and media awards and grant schemes have also an effect of encouraging professionals to further develop themselves.

Media and journalists themselves are also raising public awareness of topics such as disinformation, hoaxes, critical thinking, or how the media work. Newspaper Dennik N created a webpage [Media education](#) containing various articles, documents, and videos on these topics. On YouTube, there is also a video "[Journalists are telling the truth about their job](#)". This practice is not widespread and it's also very rare that media representatives would be openly talking about unprofessional or even manipulative practices used by traditional media themselves.

Are there any strides in the field of media literacy education in Slovakia?

The old [Strategy for the youth sector in the Slovak Republic](#) (2014 – 2020) only mentioned "critical reflection of media" as one of the key competences under topic "Youth and the world". However, the new [Strategy for the youth sector](#) (2021 – 2028) is explicitly mentioning media literacy as one of the fields, where new programmes should be created, developed, and implemented (measure number 6. 1. 5).

Existing research on the state of media literacy

The most complex and continuous research on this topic in Slovakia is carried out by the [Faculty of Mass Media Communication](#) of the University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. They run the [Centre of Media Literacy](#) and publish [Media Literacy and Academic Research](#), which is a scientific journal focused on the academic reflection of media and information literacy issues, media education, critical thinking, digital media and new trends in related areas of media and communication studies. At the end of their research on [Media literacy of adult population in Slovakia](#) (16 – 83 years old) they made many important findings, such as these below, in 2015:

- the most popular medium is TV (68,8 % of people watch TV every day), followed by radio. Printed newspapers and magazines are most popular among older generation – 43,7 % of people older than 65 years and only 19,5 % of people 16 – 24 years read print every or almost every day;

- more than two thirds of respondents are aware that different types of media present identical events or information from different perspectives. Inattention and indifference to various media coverage of the identical event are – most widespread in the youngest (42,4%) and oldest (53%) age category of respondents;
- the most trustworthy medium is radio (considered as reliable or quite reliable by 37 %), followed by newspapers (34,8 %) – despite the result showing small popularity of this medium. Television is trusted by only 30,4 % of respondents, while also as many as 30,4 % of them consider it as an unreliable or a little reliable source of information, which is the highest level of distrust in media indicated by the research;
- as many as 72,3% of respondents answered that they can recognize the basic content and formal aspects of advertising and publicity messages;
- young people aged 16-24 (30,4%) and 25-34 (25,3%) have the richest experience in creating information and media content;
- comments on current social or political issues are more commonly made by the male population (37,6%), while in the case of women this percentage is slightly lower (34,1%);
- as a first step when visiting the website, people mostly (as many as 61,2% of the adult population of Slovakia) check whether whether the information presented or other information sources correspond to their previous experience;
- out of the total number of respondents, only 38,4% also verify disputed information on other websites;
- out of the total number of research participants, 28,5% stated that it is easy for them to correctly evaluate conflicting information on the internet.

Another research was done by IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute. The results were published in the document [“Youth and media: Media literacy of young people in Slovakia”](#) in 2008. It for example mentions that:

- 18% of elementary school students, 21% of high school students and 25% of university students almost always check several types of media at the same time;
- more than 60% of elementary school students stated that they do not talk about their most popular medium – television – in a school environment at all;
- the internet is the most important source of information: 45 to 48% of elementary and high school students and 78% of university students use it for this purpose.

The Youth Council of Slovakia conducted [Survey on Youth and the Media](#) in October 2018. It involved young people aged 15 to 24. Results were published in 2019 and highlighted the need of validating information from a variety of sources, being able to identify unverified and misleading information, and fostering these competences among young people. It mentions that only 16% of young people always compare the information with other sources.

In 2001, there was also a research “Young person and television news”. It dealt with the attitudes of high school students to the content of television news. The research sample consisted of 875 high school students. The aim was to map the frequency of use of individual electronic news media as sources of relevant information about events in Slovakia and in the world⁸.

2.2. Media literacy learning opportunities in Bulgaria

The results of the new edition of the Media Literacy Index for 2021, prepared by the European Policies Initiative (EuPI) of the Open Society Institute Sofia, point out that Bulgaria ranks 30th in the classification of 35 European countries. The report recommends education as the optimal approach to tackling fake news and disinformation.⁹ At the moment there is no specific strategy or program that promotes media literacy among young people or one that imposes obligatory media education in Bulgaria. Yet, there are a few organisations and campaigns that deal with the topic of media literacy and aim at integrating media education in Bulgarian schools.

One such campaign is The Media Literacy Coalition which brings together many organisations whose activity is focused on education, journalism and civic participation, academics, and media literacy experts. The main objective of The Coalition is to integrate media literacy fully into the educational process and to increase media literacy in society. A popular campaign of The Coalition, that will be organised for the fourth year in a row now, is Media Literacy Days - in the form of video lessons, webinars, animation courses for online safety, disinformation and fact-checking initiatives; presentations, online trainings and courses for mentors, teachers, and students, as well as for the elderly in smaller towns and villages, MLC promotes the importance and the need for media literacy development of citizens of all ages. The Coalition designed, tested, and presented the first technique

⁸ https://www.iuventa.sk/files/documents/7_vyskummladeze/publikacie/media_mlade.pdf

⁹ Media Literacy Index 2021, <https://osis.bg/?p=3750&lang=en>

for assessing high school students' digital media skills in Bulgaria at the end of 2020, and the project "Media Literacy through Distance Learning" began development at the beginning of 2021. The campaign is supported by the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Science, the US Embassy's Small Grants Program, America for Bulgaria Foundation, and UNICEF Bulgaria.

The Media Literacy Coalition conducted surveys - for students¹⁰ and teachers¹¹ - in connection with remote learning in terms of the development of digital skills and media literacy during the end of May and the beginning of June 2020. The aims of the surveys include identifying:

- online learning aspects that require additional attention, with a focus on building digital skills and media literacy;
- good practices for developing critical thinking and teamwork abilities;
- the extent to which teachers are familiar with the teaching environment and educational hours process (online);
- the advantages and disadvantages of taking the learning process online from the students' point of view, the students' criteria for a good learning experience; their opinions on areas of the learning process that need to be improved;
- and more.¹²

Due to the reason that there is no separate class focused on media literacy and digital skill in Bulgaria schools, teachers try to integrate the topic in their classes - maths, biology, etc. The Media Literacy Coalition conducts training for teachers who are trying to weave media literacy into the subjects that they teach. The teachers claim that such various civil society initiatives as the Media Literacy Coalition give some hope for tackling the problem. However, it is not enough and there is still more work to be done.¹³

¹⁰ Full text of the survey available here <http://gramoten.li/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/%D0%94%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5-%D0%B4%D0%BE-%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B8-%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B4.pdf>

¹¹ Full text of the survey available here <http://gramoten.li/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/%D0%94%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5-%D0%B4%D0%BE-%D1%83%D1%87%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B8-%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B4.pdf>

¹² Official website of The Media Literacy Coalition, <https://gramoten.li/>

¹³ Елми, Й., Как се учим на медийна грамотност, 17.07.2021, <https://toest.bg/kak-se-uchim-na-mediyna-gramotnost/>

Another organisation that realises the digital skills and media literacy deficit in Bulgaria and strives for tackling it is The SafeNet Center. It has been in operation since 2005, with partial funding from the European initiatives "Safe Internet" and since 2014. - "Better Internet for Children". In short, the main activities of the Center include:

- processing of signals for child pornography and computer attacks against children and minors;
- counselling of children, minors, parents, and teachers via phone and online channels in case of children's online accidents;
- creating and delivering a variety of trainings for children, teenagers, parents, teachers, and other professionals;
- development of a variety of resources to raise public awareness of the dangers that children face when using the Internet, social media, and mobile devices, as well as ways to prevent and seek help.

The Center also conducts a great number of training events, educational webinars and programs for students, teachers and parents. Resources and materials on the topic, created by the Center, are also accessible for the stakeholders.¹⁴

The need for the consciousness of the importance of media literacy and digital skills is also mentioned in the newly approved document "Digital Bulgaria 2025". In the document it is stated that the educational system is undergoing reforms, and while the measures do not yet match the scope of the digital transformation, the emphasis on strengthening digital skills has increased. An example for that is the revised school curriculum and from the 2018-2019 school year Computer Modelling is being introduced in the third grade. In the upper stage of secondary education there are already more ICT-focused classes. In addition, extracurricular activities are offered in secondary schools (such as The National IT Career Training Program). In terms of higher education reform, steps have been taken in order to increase collaboration between educational institutions and businesses; the European Social Fund is supporting a project to adapt university courses to meet labour market needs. The government assists with training in some areas where good achievements have been achieved, as well as according to labour market needs (including STEM and ICT faculties).

¹⁴ Official website of the SafeNet Center, www.safenet.bg

One of the main priorities present in the document is namely increasing digital competencies and skills. The main measures considered in regard to goal №6 of the strategy: Modernization of school and higher education in the field of information and communication technologies, are the following:

- providing suitable infrastructure in the sphere of information and communication technology (ICT) in schools;
- assessment of students' digital skills at the end of the first year of high school (X grade);
- updating the curriculum and the teaching methods;
- introduction of a new subject in elementary school - Computer Modelling and introduction of training in the profile "Software and Hardware Sciences";
- improving teachers' skills;
- strengthening the cooperation between education, industry and non-governmental sector;
- establishing a coordinated approach to effective digital skills and employability measures.¹⁵

Given the digital environment in which we live and from which we cannot escape, education centred on media and digital abilities must be a top priority today. People need to be well-equipped with knowledge and skills in order to live a normal life and successfully adjust to the changes as the digital transformation accelerates. The safety of our children is the first and most important reason for fostering media and digital literacy in all areas of our lives. It is true that when there is no other choice than adapting to the fast-changing situation, people will adapt, but self-adaptation, especially of children, may be risky and put them in great danger. To prevent such incidents and ensure the well-being of our society, media education must be introduced into school curricula, not only through citizen initiatives but also with the support of official bodies and national institutions.

2.3. Media literacy learning opportunities in Slovenia

¹⁵ Digital Bulgaria 2025, full text accessible here:
https://www.mtc.government.bg/sites/default/files/uploads/it/cifrova_bulgariya_2025.pdf

Slovenia has no coherent document or strategy for youth in the field of media literacy and safe use of new media. In the initial strategy for media development up to 2024 (Strategija razvoja medijev v Republiki Sloveniji do leta 2024), there is a topic 'Media literacy and provision' stating that 'media and digital literacy are part of compulsory curriculum in basic school'. The initial strategy was a predecessor of the draft media strategy for 2017-2025 (Osnutek strategije na področju medijev za obdobje 2017 – 2025). A time frame for implementation has yet to be adopted. The strategy does not mention new media in any way. The strategy foresees the following measures:

- analysis of the situation of media literacy,
- introduction of the programmes media literacy or integration of media content literacy in other school subjects. Media literacy in connection with digital literacy is shaped as an essential learning content, possibly as part of another compulsory subject (e.g., civic education) instead of as an optional subject and
- ongoing monitoring of the media literacy situation with research every other year.

The indicators are:

- comparison of the analysis of the state of media literacy from 2017 with the past analyses,
- the level of integration of content from the field of media literacy into school programmes and
- the extent of adult involvement in media literacy programmes.

The strategy 'Digital Slovenia - Information Society Development Strategy until 2020' (Digitalna Slovenija - Strategija razvoja informacijske družbe do leta 2020) addresses media literacy, yet not exclusively in the context of youth. It mentions youth in a context of a following measure:

- guiding youth to choose ICT professions and connect youth with the private sector and its needs and training for new digital jobs.

According to the Ministry of Public Administration, the new strategy 'Digital Slovenia 2030' is under preparation. One of the priority areas of the new strategy will be digital inclusion.

Media literacy and online safety through formal education

In Slovenia, the provision of media education is currently limited to basic schools, where pupils have the opportunity to choose a separate subject of media education (Vzgoja za medije). Simultaneously, media education is included in other subjects in basic schools. Critical media education is most intensely present in the Slovene language (Slovenščina), while media education is actively pursued in the subject of Homeland and civic education and ethics (Domovinska in državljska vzgoja ter etika). They address the topics of print media, radio, television etc.

In high school education, sociology (Sociologija) is an exception, as there is a special learning topic regarding mass media and communication. In higher education, there are specific study programmes held at the Faculty of Social Sciences, named Communication Studies: Media and Communication Studies (Katedra za medijske in komunikacijske študije).

All major projects are in accordance with all the relevant activities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. Online communities are established within the Slovenian educational network. The ministry funds the programme known as Safe Online (Varni na internetu) through Arnes (Academic and research network Slovenia). The programme is intended mainly for adult users and smaller companies, but it also involves meetings for basic school headmasters with wider context of information on security and online abuse. The Slovenian Centre for Mediation in Network Incidents (SI-CERT), which operates under the auspices of the Arnes, is a national focal point of a public awareness campaign on information security. The project was financed entirely by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport's Directorate for Information Society. The Directorate was later moved under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Administration.

Slovenia was the first country in Central and Eastern Europe to introduce media education in primary schools. The project consists of two parts: the subject of media education in nine-year primary school and the media education content included in the different subjects (civic and patriotic education, ethics and subject of mother (Slovenian) language). According to the Ministry of Education, media education has been provided in recent years by ten to twenty per cent of all primary schools (depending on the school year), in the grades seven, eight and nine. Pupils can choose it as an optional subject in all three years, only one or none. Media education comprises three thematic sets, each of which is covered throughout the school year. Students focus on the press within the first theme, radio in the second, and television and the internet in the third.

Most of the education done on media literacy in Slovenia is done in high school curriculum. The most comprehensive education for students on media literacy is available in gymnasiums. In the subject of English as a foreign language, there is a recommended topic/theme of Modern Communication and the Media. Within the elective subject European Studies there is an elective topic of Media Studies. The

subject of Philosophy is within the cross-curricular themes, integrated into media education. Within the subject of Informatics, the students learn how to use different media, how to search for sources in different media, how to evaluate data, and how to process information. In the subject of Italian as a foreign language the cross-curricular themes include media education, in particular working with the media and developing critical attitudes towards the media and safe use of the computer. In the subject of German as a foreign language the recommended topics are science, technology, or mass media. In particular, in the context of cross-curricular links - the circular theme is media education.

The subject of Sociology has probably the biggest emphasis on media education in the whole curriculum. One of the main topics of sociology, which is also included in the final examination part of the course, is mass media and communications (the chapter deals with the contradictory role of mass media in the formation and transmission of information and interpretations from the point of view of society and the individual, the possibility of autonomy and control in relation to politics and ownership, analyses the impact of the process of news creation, the different interpretations of the impact of the media and the multifaceted role of new communication technologies in contemporary society and in the process of globalisation). Active citizenship is a compulsory subject under the category of other forms of educational work. The fundamental objective is to promote active, informed and responsible democratic citizenship. Within the framework of active citizenship, students develop a critical understanding of contemporary media, form views on the opportunities and limitations of media reporting and analyse the role of the media in contemporary society. In the context of the compulsory elective subjects there is an elective subject called - Library Information Skills - in this subject, the students learn to understand the changing nature of knowledge and technology and to use the media critically.

Besides gymnasiums there is also some media literacy content in various subjects in vocational secondary education. As in gymnasiums there is the subject of Active citizenship. All programmes of vocational secondary education have a module in the secondary foreign language in which, among other things, they learn to use a variety of media and modern technology for project-based research in a foreign language, communication and critical evaluation of information, and to use the World Wide Web as an information and communication medium (searching for information, using encyclopaedias, participating in inter-networking projects). Some vocational secondary education programmes can choose the subject of Psychology or Sociology. In Sociology, they can choose the elective topic of Multimedia, where they learn how to understand mass media and how communication works, theories of media influence and the representations of different social groups.

Besides gymnasiums and vocational secondary education there is also vocational technical education, where students have the same options as in vocational secondary education with the omission of the subject of Active citizenship.

Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning

Under the banner of SAFE.SI, established in 2005, a national programme to raise awareness among children and teenagers on the safe use of the Internet and mobile devices. Activities target four groups:

- children,
- adolescents,
- parents and
- professional workers (teachers, social workers, youth workers).

SAFE.SI is operated by the Safer Internet Centre Slovenia, the national project promoting and ensuring a better internet for kids. The project is co-financed by the European Union's Connecting Europe Facility, in Slovenia financial support also comes from the Ministry of Public Administration. The project is run by a consortium of partners coordinated by Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana, Academic and Research Network of Slovenia (Arnes), Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth (ZPMS) and Youth Information and Counselling Centre of Slovenia (MISSS).

Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media

The project Safer Internet Centre (Center za varnejši internet) is implemented by the: University of Ljubljana (Faculty of Social Sciences), Arnes, Association of Friends of Youth of Slovenia and MISSS Institute (Youth Information Advisory Center of Slovenia).

It is financed by the INEA Agency at the European Commission (through the Connecting Europe instrument) and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

The Safer Internet Centre offers three main services:

- Awareness about the safe use of the Internet and new technologies aimed at children, teenagers, parents, teachers and social workers through various online and offline activities,

training, workshops, materials, promotional campaigns and media campaigns on how to safely and responsibly use the internet and mobile devices.

- Advice Line for Online Problems – Tom Phone 166 111. Consultants answer questions, resolve dilemmas and solve problems related to using the Internet between 12 am and 8 pm each day. As of February 2013, the TOM chat room (TOM telefon za otroke in mladostnike) started to function, where children, adolescents and their parents can receive advice and help through online chat.
- Anonymous online reporting of illegal online content. This includes videos of child sexual abuse (child pornography) and hate speech. If a person encounters such content on the Internet, he/she can report it on the Web Eye (Spletno oko). Similar programmes throughout Europe have proven to be an effective measure in the fight to reduce illegal content on the Internet.

Source: Youthwiki, accessible here:

<https://nationalpolicies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/slovenia/68-media-literacy-and-safe-use-of-new-media>

2.4. Media literacy learning opportunities in Kosovo

Kosovo does not have a concrete plan or strategy regarding Media Literacy Education; however, there has been much work from different institutions, agencies, and organisations that have contributed towards increasing awareness and education among the citizens regarding media literacy. The current state of media literacy education in Kosovo is best explained by Dren Gërguri¹⁶¹⁷, where he

¹⁶ Dren Gërguri is a lecturer at the Department of Journalism, University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” in Kosovo. He also works as a journalist since 2009 and now, he is the editor at Paper Radio and author of podcast “Log me Dren Gërgurin”. He has held several media literacy training, disinformation training, in Kosovo, Western Balkans, and other European countries. He has lectured as a guest lecturer in some European universities, including Marburg University and the University of Wrocław. His recent publications are “Political Communication in Social Media Age” (a book published by KAS) and “Kosovo: Political Crisis, One More Challenge Alongside COVID-19”, a chapter on “Political Communication and COVID-19”, a book published by Routledge. His personal blog is: www.drenerguri.com

¹⁷ <https://drenerguri.com/the-three-necessary-actions-of-the-ministry-of-education-for-media-literacy-in-kosovo/>

explains that subjects related to media literacy are integrated into some schools across Kosovo as elective subjects. However, he says that three factors are challenging this practice:

- The lack of qualification of teachers regarding media literacy,
- No standardised curricula (each school is designing theirs),
- Classifying media literacy subjects as elective.

Furthermore, Gentiana Paçarizi¹⁸¹⁹ argues that non-formal education is becoming a flourishing environment for media and information literacy; however, she emphasises that following a project-based activity approach at generating MIL skills is not a sustainable solution.

Initiatives and Projects

Some of the most popular initiatives in Kosovo that focus on media literacy education are:

- Ponder
- Learn to Discern (L2D) – Kosovo
- Position paper on Media and Information Literacy in Kosovo

Ponder

Ponder²⁰ is a UNICEF Innovations Lab Kosovo project, implemented in cooperation with NGO PEN. Ponder was a three-day workshop that aimed to foster media literacy and critical approaches to information among adolescents and youth. Ponder curriculum is delivered through a three-day workshop that aims to foster media literacy and critical approaches to information.

Through Ponder, the Innovations Lab so far has reached and empowered more than 80 adolescents and young people from all areas of Kosovo to approach information critically, to identify and examine bias, and to judge the value, authenticity, and authority of the information they encounter.

¹⁸ Gentiana Paçarizi is a consultant for media and information education, assistant in the Department of Journalism at the University of Prishtina, manager of the creative agency 'Taktika' and project manager of the platform 'New Perspective'. Gentiana also served as editor-in-chief of Kosovo's first media and information education magazine, 'INTRO', which was prepared by the department's students.

¹⁹ <https://seenpm.org/kosovo-needs-strategic-approach-to-mil-development/>

²⁰ <http://www.ponder-ks.org/about/what-is-ponder/>

Learn to Discern (L2D) – Kosovo

KosovaLive and IREX are currently implementing the Learn to Discern (L2D) – Kosovo²¹ project to address Kosovo's media and information consumption challenges by equipping more than 1,100 young adults with media and information literacy skills through the development of Very Verified (VV), a massive open online course (MOOC) that focuses on critical and analytic thinking skills.

KosovaLive and IREX have developed a cadre of trainers, called Very Verified Facilitators (VFFs), who will be holding training throughout December and January through the VV course for a minimum of 20 students and young adults each.

Position paper on Media and Information Literacy in Kosovo

In 2018, INDEP²² published a position paper on media and information literacy in Kosovo, which aimed to serve as a background document for the national policy development to create legislative and strategic frameworks to develop media and information skills for all people. Based on their publication, "all stakeholders hold the position that a harmonised MIL policy and strategic framework is crucial to the interests of the public and institutions. Stakeholders were also held that a formal actor must carry the torch throughout the harmonisation and strategy development process ensuring that the work would be comprehensive, intergenerational due to sustained institutional memory, and ultimately accountable and transparent to all."

2.5. Media literacy learning opportunities in Greece

The Ministry of Education and Religions is responsible for policy-making in the field of education in Greece. In recent years, although the need for training in media literacy has become imperative, no formal strategy has been developed on the subject. The curricula that are implemented at all levels of

²¹ <https://www.irex.org/project/learn-discern-l2d-media-literacy-training>

²² https://seenpm.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/INDEP_Position_paper_on-MIL.pdf

education provide students with education only in digital literacy issues. Reference to media literacy can only be found in some skills programs approved by the Ministry authorities, such as STEAM programs. We have to highlight that in these programs media literacy is not an end in itself.

Nevertheless, teachers have the opportunity to incorporate practices aimed at enhancing the skills of young people in media literacy during the Flexible Zone in primary education. The " Flexible Zone of Cross-thematic and Creative Activities ", which is part of the weekly program lasting at least two hours, seeks with its free theme and active methodology to fulfil a dual purpose: first, to compensate for inelasticity, one-sidedness and school fragmentation; second, to slowly infuse the everyday teaching practice with its principles and practices. As regards the secondary or higher education, it is relied on the teachers to introduce educational tools that will enhance the skills related to media literacy.

During the pandemic, the Ministry of Education developed MOOC programs addressed to teachers of all levels of education. The aim of these programs was to enhance the skills of teachers in digital literacy in order to be able to cope with the needs that arose after the advent of the coronavirus. The training programs focused on the four basic skills that are called 4Cs (based on the initials of their name in English); these are Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking and Creativity, which, together, help both teachers and students to manage these challenges.

Regarding the training in media literacy issues, the Ministry has created an online platform, Educational Television. Teachers, students and citizens have access to open educational audiovisual resources for Primary, Secondary, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning.

The material that can be retrieved from the platform and is available to everyone has the following topics:

- Internet security in simple words.
- Security in social networks
- Cyberbullying in simple words
- Cyberbullying
- I learn about personal data
- Excessive internet usage
- Rules of good internet behaviour
- Internet Seduction - grooming
- Cyber addiction

- Rules of good behaviour online
- Fake news

The following seminars are also provided in video format:

- Online seminar on cyberbullying
- Online seminar on cyber addiction
- SafeLine Web Tutorial - Illegal Content
- SafeLine webinar - useful tips
- SafeLine Web-Tutorial for Illegal Content Complaints

In addition, Educational Television has established the "Media Literacy" award which rewards a school's systematic presence in the creative production and critical approach of the Audiovisual Media.

An organisation that belongs to the wider public sector and is actively involved in issues related to media literacy is the National Centre of Audiovisual Media and Communication (EKOME). EKOME launched a new partnership with UNESCO and the educational network of GAPMIL-Global Alliance for Partnerships in Media and Information Literacy on Thursday, aiming to promote media literacy skills in Southern Europe.

EKOME was the Greek partner in a project that created the European tool called "EduMediaTest". The tool, which is now open and available for use by the school community, is described as the first combined tool to assess knowledge and skills in media and digital literacy for pupils aged 14-18. EduMediaTest is approved by the Ministry of Education, for application and implementation to the school community of Secondary Education of Greece.

Peace Journalism Laboratory (PJL), which is part of the Department of Journalism and Mass Media of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, has been engaging at a large scale with digital media literacy issues. Every year PJL organises Media Literacy Week, during which public address speeches and workshops are held in Athens and various cities in northern Greece aiming to raise awareness on the subject. The workshops are addressed to librarians, journalists, educators and trainers who want to enrich their knowledge and get acquainted with new practices on issues related to digital and media literacy. Also, PJL conducts academic research in the field.

As regards digital safety, the “Greek Awareness Centre - Saferinternet.gr” was established in 2004. It is implementing various activities, such as informative seminars, train-the-trainers workshops for educators, and online and offline campaigns. The main goal of the Centre is the provision of a safer online environment. The homonymous Internet safety campaign has been implemented since 2004 and according to Saferinternet.gr the main goal of their campaigns is to:

- *Protect minors from illegal and harmful content, contact and conduct in respect to the Internet and other online technologies.*
- *Create awareness and educate parents about the ways they can protect themselves and they can protect their children from the potential dangers lying in the improper use of online technologies, like the Internet and the mobile phone.*
- *Promote the positive aspects of the online technologies as valuable tools for enhancing the quality of our daily life.*
- *Educate teachers about the safe use of the Internet, ensuring that they are aware of both benefits and risks, with the scope to create multiplier-effect actions within the classroom.*
- *Encourage dialogue between minors and parents on proper online technologies use and safety issues, promote online safety and critical thinking.*
- *Support (grand-) parents, educators as well as minors with appropriate awareness and informative material.*

3. Methodology

To create the gaMEfy Guidelines, the partnership undertook a series of research activities in their respective countries, with the goal to understand the state of media literacy and the needs of youngsters.

The research methodology included several sequential steps:

1. Partners conducted **desk research** on the state of the art of media literacy in the partner countries; partners searched for existing legislation, and conducted research into the following two questions:
 - a. What is the current state of the art for media literacy education? (Are there any formal classes, curriculums, courses, etc. available? Are there many non-formal initiatives? Are they popular? Have they made any strides for media literacy education in your country?)
 - b. Is there any existing research on the state of media literacy in your country? If there is any only in your language, you can refer to it and also translate the key points, make summaries and conclusions on them.

The resulting research is presented within the Literature review of the current Guidelines.

2. **Piloting** of the gaMEfy game: after finalising the gaMEfy educational game and testing it, the partners decided on optimal minimal number for group size, appropriate for piloting, related to data collection for the gaMEfy Guidelines. As was planned, all partners conducted at least 5 rounds of piloting, in which either online or in person, they invited the minimal group of 5 youngsters to play the gaMEfy game. The collected data through the play-throughs is used to analyse the real level of media literacy among young people in the partner countries and is described in the next part of the gaMEfy Guidelines.
3. **Questionnaires** for feedback and **focus groups** with young people on the topic of media literacy education: In the end of each piloting session of the gaMEfy game, participants were asked to fill in a Google Form Questionnaire, related to media literacy overall. While touching on the topic of the game as an educational tool, most questions in this survey focus on how the youngsters have experienced media literacy education; their reality and needs. The results from the questionnaire are analysed in the next part of the gaMEfy Guidelines as well.
4. **Creation of policy recommendations** based on the entire body of work of the gaMEfy project. Partners of the gaMEfy project have worked on the topic of media literacy actively not

for the duration and aim of the project only, but on other initiatives, interacting with experts on the topic, policy makers, thought leaders in the partner countries. Based on all conducted research throughout the project; all informal meetings with stakeholders; the gaMEfy game piloting; multiplier events in different countries, the gaMEfy partnership proposes country-specific and EU-wide policy recommendations for improving the level of media literacy and creating viable, useful mechanisms for development in this sphere. The created policy recommendations can be found later on in this document.

Limitations

Even though the partnership of gaMEfy has tried to research the topic and present it with the utmost integrity and diligence, like every study, it has some limitations:

- **Sample size:** Even with all partners conducting the piloting for gaMEfy, as compared with the youth population in the partner countries, the sample size is not representative for the countries. However, the data is not insignificant, as it interrogates the questions of media literacy and media literacy education in depth and includes a “safety” mechanism in reading real results by players of the gaMEfy game.
- **Game limitations:** It is important to acknowledge that the game may be not fully equal in difficulty between levels. When playing the gaMEfy game, a player might have a much easier time with some topics as compared to others. This stems from the overall nature of the different topics, but it is also due to how discussed different topics related to media literacy are in society on a daily basis. Themes such as “E-Safety” have an “advantage” in terms of higher accuracy rates of answers, at least in part because the questions, related to the topic, are highlighted often and from many different sources, whereas with other topics, the material may be more distant and unfamiliar to young people.
- **Questionnaire:** As mentioned, after piloting the gaMEfy game, the partnership used as a research method a Google Forms survey. The survey had both qualitative and quantitative questions. All questions were left optional to answer, therefore the sample size used later on in the document for the visualisation of data and the findings vary depending on the number of answers. Nevertheless, in all questions the responses collected are always more than 50 and therefore statistically significant.

4. Research findings and Analysis

Starting from the game that is hosted on gaMEfy website, the total amount of players as of the day of writing is 567. The website keeps track of players that are recurring and that have an account. The total sum of players that played a part of a the game **at least** twice is 254. This indicates that almost half of all players have returned to play, possibly so that they can reach the castle and/or earn more badges by completing successfully a category.

Below is the table that is generated by the game itself as metrics and statistics. On a first glance, one notices that the most played category (by number of players) is Digital Media Literacy, whilst the most successful one (in terms of accuracy) is Information Verification and Critical Thinking.

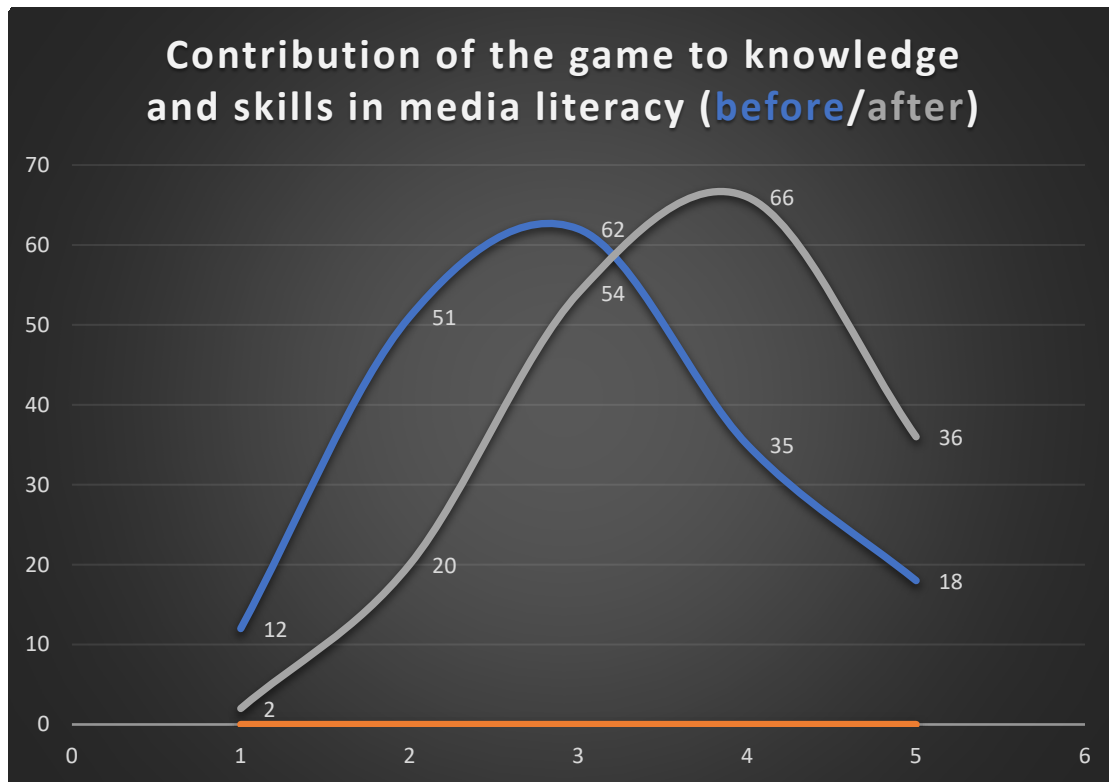
What is more, the bronze badges are given when the success rate of the category is at least 30% . For silver the success rate needed is from 30% until 70% and finally any success rate about 70% will award a gold badge to the player. This mix of success rates and awards was chosen in order to have a balanced reward system between difficulties. It is worth mentioning that badges are not given to the Castle level. Successful completion of the castle level results in the award of the certificate.

Category name	Participants	Number of questions	Accuracy	Gold badges	Silver badges	Bronze badges
Public service and commercial media in the digital era	115	25	32.01%	7	51	48
Social Responsibility of digital media	109	15	30.66%	12	40	49
Information verification and critical thinking	98	28	61.57%	41	41	10
Digital Media	136	22	36.72%	12	73	37

Digital Media Literacy	225	35	37.30%	18	107	50
E-safety	102	23	48.47%	21	66	10
Castle	61	14	14.32%	N/A	N/A	N/A

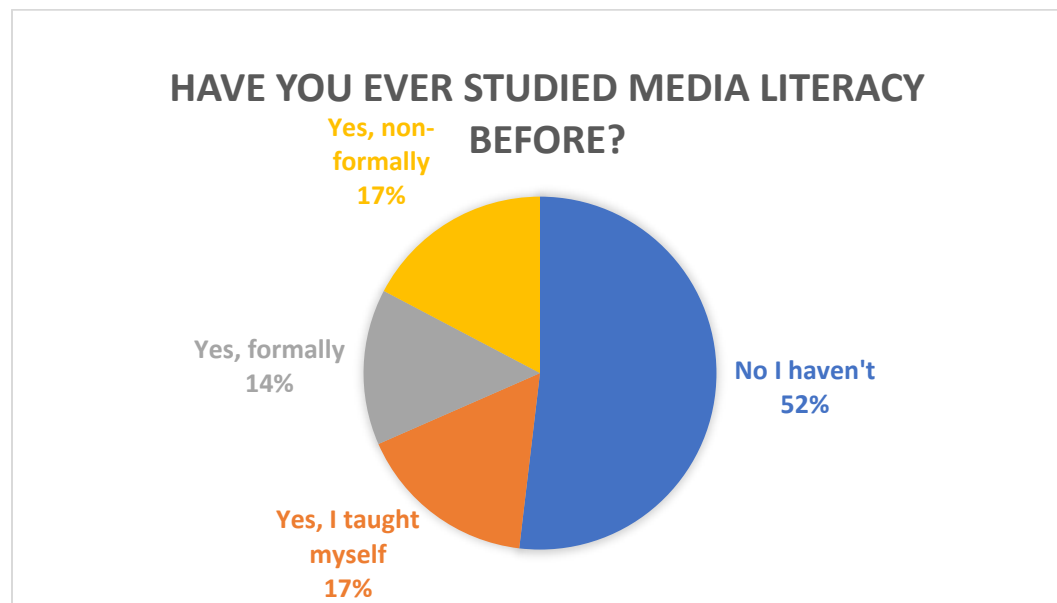
The table above provides an initial overview on how the game contributes to the educational aspect of media literacy. The results from the game alone do not provide the entire “picture”. Participants that took part in the multiplier events were asked to fill in a questionnaire online in order to gather feedback based on the questions as well as gather some information regarding their overall knowledge on media literacy.

The figures in the chart below represent the individual responses given. On the horizontal axis 1 is **Poor**, 2 **Fair**, 3 **Satisfactory**, 4 **Very Good**, 5 **Excellent**. This was used by the participants as a self-assessment to indicate the level of knowledge and skills on media literacy before and after the game. It is important to note that the participants answered both questions at the end of the game and not before and after playing the game.

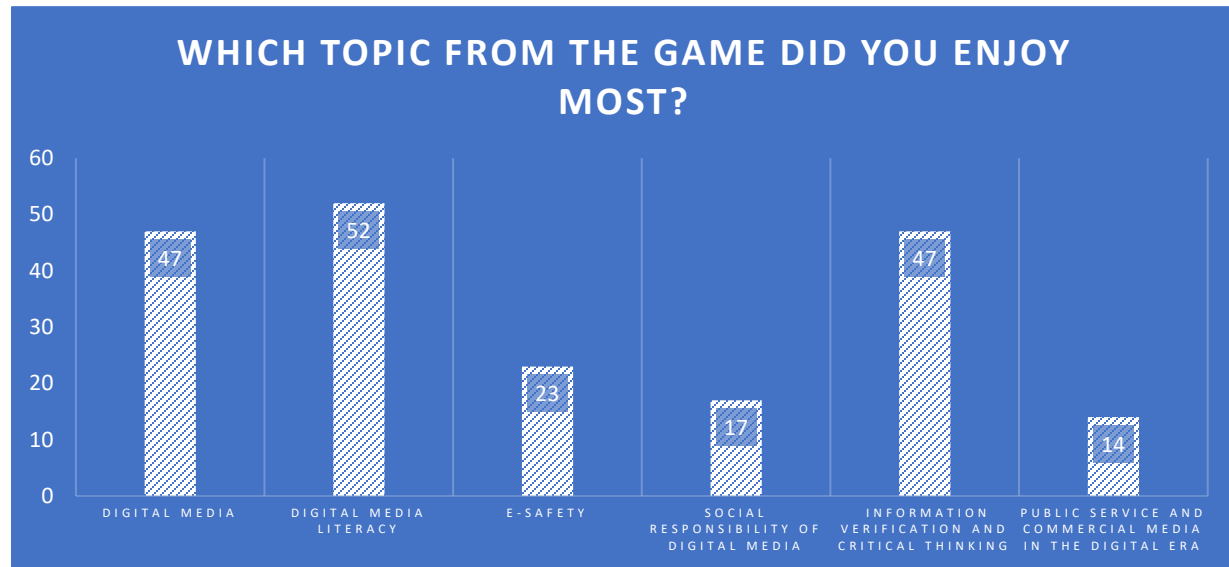


As seen from the scatter plot and the trendline, there seems to be a noticeable shift in knowledge and skills on media literacy. The data shows that participants playing the game, self-assessed, that they feel **more** knowledgeable **after** playing the game. Notably, those who answered *Very Good* (4) before playing the game almost doubled after playing the game. What is more, the number of participants that ranked their level of knowledge as *Fair* (2) before playing the game, decreased by more than half; with even less voting *Poor* (1); and even more participants voting *Very Good*.

Moreover, when asked if they have studied Media Literacy before playing the game or attending the piloting, out of 133 responses, more than half of the participants said they did not. In addition, the other half of the participants had studied media literacy either through Formal learning such as high school and university courses; through self-teaching with online courses and material that they had found on their own; lastly through non-formal learning such as extracurricular classes and Non-formal Education (NFE)

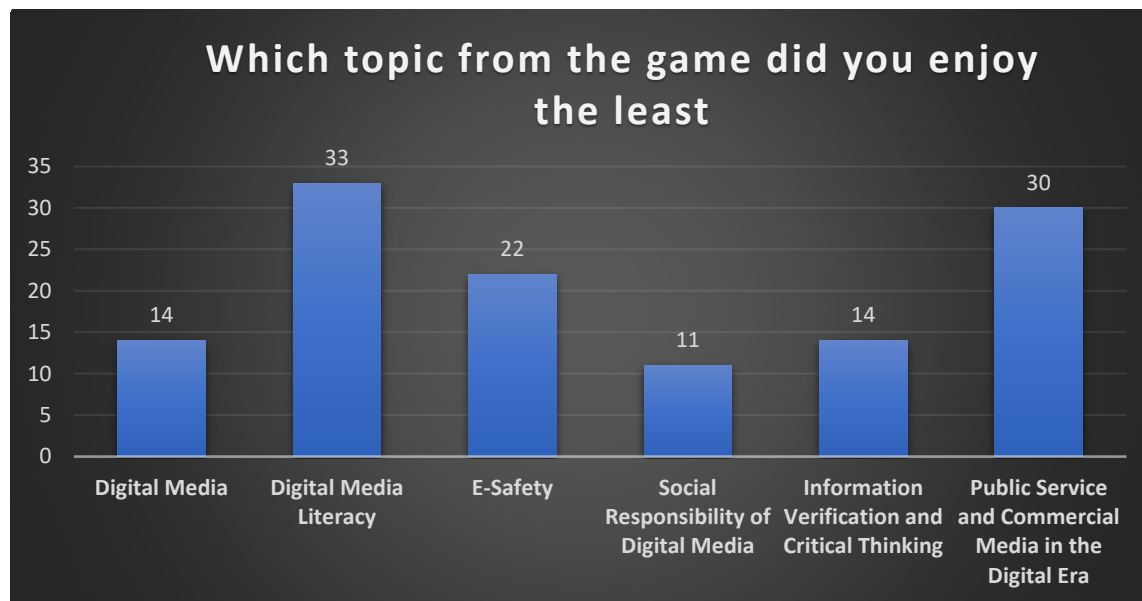


What is more, the participants were asked to vote on which topic(s) they like the most and the least. They had the option of choosing more than one topic and the results were the following.



The findings show that the **Digital Media Literacy** was voted as the topic they enjoyed the most with second and third placed tied among **Digital Media** and **Information Verification and critical thinking**. Linking the data from the statistics of the game, the reason for Digital Media Literacy being voted the most enjoyable could be attributed to the fact that it had the most players as well. For Digital Media, it was the second most played and Information Verification and critical thinking has currently the highest accuracy score (most correct answers) and thus may lead participants to vote as enjoyable.

The consortium also wanted feedback on which topic was enjoyed the *least*. This information is useful because it provided insight on what could be improved.



What is interesting is that **Digital Media Literacy** despite being the most enjoyed (as seen above) was also voted the least enjoyable. This could be explained also due to the high number of players of this category. Additionally, this ranking could possibly also be explained by the higher number of questions that participants had to answer, coupled with a low accuracy rate that meant participants had to go through all the questions possibly more than once.

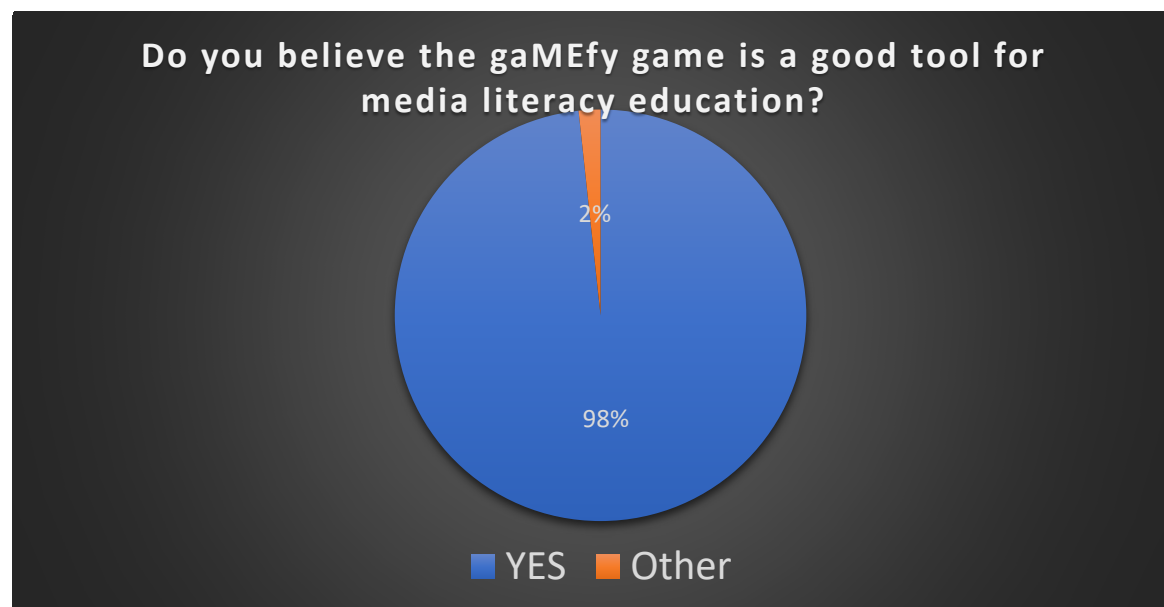
Also, **Public Service and Commercial Media in the Digital Era** may not have been enjoyable because of the low accuracy and the lowest number of Gold Badges.

Regarding the topics of the game, when asked which is the most important topic from the game to learn about, the participants voted for **Digital Media Literacy** (which was also voted the *most* and *least* enjoyable). This could be explained by the analysis given previously but also by the proximity of the target group to Digital Media and the hazards of it. Youngsters are constantly reminded to access and critically evaluate the media which they consume; most of it being digital; due to the perils of misinformation and fake news. What is more, this would explain why **Digital Media** is voted as the least important due to the fact that the target group is already well versed in digital media and do not feel that they need to be educated more about it.

Despite the difficulties on some topics and stages like the Castle, most participants reported that they did not have any difficulty understanding the content of the questions. In fact, 89% said that they had no issues understanding.



Finally, regarding the concept of the gaMEfy game overall, the following statistic show that a game such the one created is an effective and engaging tool to educate youth on media literacy.



Among the replies, “other” was representative of answers pointing to potential and space for improvement, but no answer completely dismissed the game’s usefulness.

As was described in the methodology above, partners conducted research not only through the questionnaire, the results of which were discussed until now, but also within smaller focus groups, based on which all partners created narrative reports.

Regarding the **current state of media literacy education in both formal and non-formal learning environments**, the findings from the narrative reports suggest that despite the diverse demographics of the target group (regarding educational level), most people have had learning opportunities in non-formal activities. Some of the participants said that Erasmus+ projects and youth exchanges were their first experience with media literacy and misinformation. Another means of media literacy education for some of the focus groups was by self-teaching through online courses, seminars, and videos. In the case of Kosovo however, in both of their events, the participants of the focus groups had a strong background in media literacy through formal education. They noted that media literacy was part of their academic syllabus. They did however agree that a more practical way of teaching media literacy would be very beneficial, instead on relying on theory only.

When asked **if the state of media literacy education is sufficient**; in terms of content, availability, impact; in the each of the partner countries or abroad, almost all focus groups said that it was insufficient. Many seem to agree that there isn’t a particular focus from formal learning institutions to promote media literacy education, rather a reliance on non-formal learning organization to pick up the task. In addition, some argue that if there is an initiative to promote media literacy education, it stems from the recent development on the importance of social media.

Common points of the most **useful ways of learning for media literacy** for most groups was the format of learning. In most cases, participants argued that an interactive and engaging

method would be most useful. Others note that references to pop culture and making short educational videos would match the format of media that most youngsters consume already. The general consensus is that a subject such as media literacy can be and, in some cases, should be taught formally in classrooms where pupils and students can learn the basics in identifying fake news, however, it should also be more engaging and expanding so that many others (outside the school environment) can join too. A point raised by the focus group of European Dialogue is that media literacy education whilst should be taught from a younger age in the formal educational system, there are many people that have completed their education and thus are exposed to fewer learning opportunities; at least formally; and thus, there is a need for non-formal education in the field as well.

In addition, when asked what can make **media literacy education useful and appealing**, most agreed that the format that the gaMEfy game has is already quite appealing since it gamifies the process of learning. It inspires healthy competition and motivates them to learn more either through the glossary and the additional resources, or through own research. What is more, in some focus groups it was mentioned that the usefulness of media literacy can be better demonstrated by showing the outcome of *low* media literacy. By drawing examples on the impact on low media literacy index on democracy, personal and public health, cyber-bullying, people will be more convinced to learn about media literacy.

Moreover, participants of the focus groups were asked about occasions that **media literacy made them see a situation differently**. In most cases, the participants referred to the current global pandemic and the effects of hoaxes and misinformation on public health. Many said that the current initiative and trend of fact-checking motivates them to uncover also false truths and myths that they were exposed to from a young age either in old school textbooks or knowledge passed along from their peers. In addition, once they started critically evaluating some of the media they consume, they couldn't help but evaluate slowly all the media they consume, searching for sources, fact checking and finding the reason behind why some articles are written the way they are (with emotional manipulation, exaggerated vocabulary, etc).

What is more, participants were asked about **underestimated media literacy tools and what they would advise their younger selves on what to pay attention to**. Answers varied depending on the demographic of the focus groups. Some mentioned that comments and discussions on social media can be one sided and that one should pay attention on what form of bias people have and what bias does the media have. However, most agree on a common point that they would advise themselves to be very careful on what they post on social media. It has become even more important - the notion that we are creators of media in many occasions without being aware or mindful of it. May it be a comment in a forum or Facebook post, or a picture posted on Instagram or Pinterest. As such creators of media, they hold responsibility for what they post or comment on. Also, the fact that media posted online “will always be online” made them more conscious on what they want associated to them. There was and is a trend of “travelling” back in time and reviewing older post of celebrities or people of interest, many times “uncovering” content that one might regret at the present state. People change, and sometimes their opinions as well and that maybe old opinions or online posts can be used against someone in the future. Common examples given were old email names that people kept or posts/tweets on social media. Other examples were given about the 2016 United States election and the waves of misinformation that led to many protests and the compromise of democratic processes

Furthermore, they were asked if the **gaMEfy game has made them rethink any topics** that were discussed during the game and the piloting. Whilst most noted that they had been aware of these topics from their own research, they praised that the game touched on these topics and what helped them even more are the multiple examples used in the questions of the game. Some notable responses and comments were given on the social responsibility that they have as content consumers and creators. Especially, now we have a potential big audience when creating media, when resharing news, or phrasing opinions as facts, etc. online. What is more, another topic that was discussed in this question was the amount of information that is available and linked to an individual and in many occasions unaware of how many websites have access to this information, which suggest E-Safety and data collection is very important.

Last but not least, as experts, youth workers, active citizens, and overall active youth, the participants of the focus groups were asked to give any **advice (if they could) to policy makers and decision makers for the future of media literacy education**. One suggestion is regarding implementing media literacy education from a primary school level since current studies show that even more youth are consuming media at younger age than the current generation. University students also suggest that they would appreciate if they had an elective course on media literacy available to them. In addition, many suggested that the government and state officials and representatives should be more vocal and transparent regarding misinformation, fake news, and propaganda. Either by supporting projects that help combat that or by leading by example and raising awareness themselves. An example was given for the Slovakian President Zuzana Čaputová and her publicity team that often creates content on educating about media literacy and the perils of online space. They go on to suggest that introducing alternative and interactive ways of teaching media literacy is needed and that even state-funded fact-checking platforms should exist. However, some participants of the focus groups also mentioned that they cannot rely completely on state projects and initiatives because in their home countries there is a lack of trust from people towards the state and this causes a dichotomy among people.

The major **conclusion** from the game statistics, the post-game survey and the focus groups, there seems to be an interest and need regarding the topics of Digital Media Literacy and E-Safety. As youngsters begin consuming (digital) media at a even younger age compared to the previous generations, there is a need to protect them and provide them the necessary tools to critically evaluate and discuss about the media they consume. In addition, we have seen also a major shift from traditional media to digital media from governments and other officials. In fact, those who opt to use digital media in order to run campaigns and start initiatives, have seen a better positive response from their audience/target group.

Therefore, people need to better identify when digital media is manipulated or biased. What is more, the topic of E-Safety is becoming even more prominent due to how many websites and online platforms store and use personal information that is given. Overall, most would

agree that the most effective way of teaching media literacy would be with an interactive engaging method that does not have to resemble the structure or form of the formal educational system.

5. Policy recommendations

Taking into account the current policies, needs, and landscape in the countries of focus and the whole EU, the actions and measures described on the following pages are proposed by the Gamefy consortium to be taken to improve media and information literacy in their countries and in the European Union as a whole.

Slovakia

1. Media literacy can be a stand-alone subject, or a part of a cross-sectoral subject. According to OECD's "Future of Education and Skills 2030 Conceptual learning framework", adding new subjects or learning areas can lead to curriculum overload, while embedding them within existing subjects can prove challenging, given the conceptual complexity of some of these competencies. Some evidence suggests that learning context-specific subjects in isolation may not be effective²³. Given the nature of media literacy and its connection with other topics – such as human rights – it's better to **embed this area in other subjects** (such as IT, history, civic education, etc.) **and put more emphasis on it**. Those subjects would then require more time in the schools' schedules.
2. It would be also helpful to include a set of various competences and relevant resources in documents created by public authorities in cooperation with organisations working in this field to give guidance to schools.

²³ OECD (2019). OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030: OECD Learning Compass 2030. OECD Publishing. Paris. Page 8. Retrieved from: http://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/teaching-and-learning/learning/core-foundations/Core_Foundations_for_2030_concept_note.pdf.

Bulgaria

1. Media education to be included in school curricula

Nowadays, media is highly pervasive and the integration of an obligatory subject related to digital media literacy in school curricula is crucial for the effective development of both youngsters and adults. Such policy will help students, on one hand, to be safe while surfing on the Internet and, on another hand, to be literate on something so important for their future development. It would be also very beneficial if such a subject is integrated into all different levels of school, even kindergartens, but it would be good to be taken into account some LLL alternatives.

2. An annual report commissioned by the government on Internet Safety and performance of popular online platforms

Since youngsters spend a lot of time on social media and other popular apps and websites, such report would be of great help for parents and teachers in the process of controlling what children and students do on their phones and of providing their internet safety. The report should include which platforms contain high risks for the users, as well as tips and guidelines for internet safety.

3. Creation of national organisation dealing with and promoting digital media literacy

Such national body should deal with: providing courses for teachers/educators/youth workers/parents on digital media literacy; conducting research on digital media literacy, easily accessible for everyone; helping with/leading the above mentioned annual report, as well as conducting and disseminating other studies of media literacy education; working in cooperation with other local or international organizations that deal with the topic; conducting media educational programs and initiatives as forms of non-formal learning; and more.

4. Bigger support from the government to different local organisations dealing with the promotion of digital media literacy

There are many local organizations, NGOs, associations (both in the field of youth and adult education), youth centers and etc. that work on projects and really bring a change and contribute to the promotion and teaching of digital media literacy. But if they are supported by the government, the outcome would be greater. For example, providing a budget for those local bodies to conduct additional activities aimed at promoting digital media literacy.

5. Respecting the freedom of expression as one of the main human rights

Digital media literacy is closely related to the freedom of expression, and all EU states should provide free media in order for people to be encouraged to speak and their voices to be heard. This way not only digital media literacy will be promoted, but also active citizenship.

Slovenia

1. As there is no concrete and standalone subject for media literacy in Slovenian schools the recommendation would be that media literacy is implemented into the formal education system as either a standalone subject or as a topic included in the existing subjects.
2. The second recommendation would be an option that by enhancing the combination between the formal and non-formal education the media literacy is a topic that is covered by the non-formal education with non-formal methods. However, still as part of the formal education, yet implemented by the outside non-formal educators. This would also lessen the burden for the formal educators.

Kosovo

1. As a result of the expressed commitment during the initial consultations, the Office of Good Governance of Kosovo should take the lead, in collaboration with key civil society organisations, in deciding the organisational structure of an initial working group. The initial working group will also be responsible for voluntarily assigning a representative stakeholder for each identified stakeholder group – from individual minority representatives, topic experts, industry representatives, etc.
2. The initial working group will be tasked with expanding on the strategic and specific objectives developed above and drawing an initial list of torchbearers and contributors in each chain of objectives. The initial working group should also ensure that all potential contributors to strategic objectives have been contacted prior to any working sessions and will participate in the process.
3. Under the supervision of the Office of Good Governance, the initial working group, in collaboration with strategic objective working groups, will also develop tracking mechanisms for the strategy, policy, and implementation process. These tracking mechanisms will serve to ensure that the process continues forward and track progress.

4. After the strategic objective working groups have been established and the strategic objective working group's leadership roles have been assigned, these groups will develop detailed work plans, including the development of baselines studies to achieve their respective objectives.
5. The process mentioned above should be inclusive of all critical stakeholders. In the case of unrepresented marginalised groups, an exhaustive effort should be made to find marginalised group representatives or experts should voluntary representation prove hard to secure. Inclusion must be ensured to address the needs of the most vulnerable throughout this process.
6. An extensive awareness campaign should be conducted prior to strategy work by the strategic objective working groups. The awareness campaign should educate the public at large about the initial concepts of MIL, the purpose of the initial working group, and the strategic working groups and provide options for the inclusion of feedback on the process for all citizens.
7. All groups should develop detailed strategic, legislative, and implementation plans after the initial working sessions that will supplement and / or replace this document as an initial position paper on MIL in Kosovo.

Greece

1. Media literacy should be included as part of the official school curricula at various levels (from kindergarten to high-school).
2. Media literacy should be part of the curricula at colleges, faculties, or departments providing education in the fields of pedagogy. It would help a lot in promoting and developing this field further.

EU-wide

1. In order to improve the quality of media literacy subjects at schools, it's important to provide quality formal and non-formal education to teachers first. It would be also beneficial to increase the number of librarians with the ability to teach MIL in primary, secondary, schools and in higher education institutions.
2. Both formal and non-formal education should also pay attention to and provide competences from less traditional fields of media literacy, such as film literacy.

In this context, training of trainers with a special emphasis on educators (teachers, etc.) on how to apply media literacy in classrooms should be developed and implemented. This is more than needed in order to have an effective application of the media and information literacy.

3. Implementation of training for adults or pensioners and those connecting generations should be encouraged and supported, as these activities are vital for development of media literate society, but relevant opportunities are lacking.
4. It's important to foster media and information literacy of media makers as well, since relevant competences help them in efforts to raise trust in media and prevent, respond, and tackle various forms of misinformation and distorted content. Topic of media ethics should be complemented with social responsibility at large.

All of this should be a mandatory part of curricula at colleges, faculties, or departments providing education in the fields of journalism, media, communication, or public relations. At elementary and high-schools, a voluntary subject could be introduced. Non-formal education should be provided by specialised NGO's, media houses, or in cooperation of both.

5. Citizens should have opportunities to participate in production of media output and to provide feedback to media producers, both positive and negative. Citizens should have opportunities to share their opinions about the media with those who can help to support a positive relationship between children and the media: parents, professionals including teachers and other adults and young people.
6. It's important to support research, seminars and conferences which aim at bringing together stakeholders across professions and sectors discussing media literacy.
7. Extended networking through schools and youth centres and cooperation with public authorities should be encouraged and supported.

Programmes through after school initiatives, community-based programmes: co-curricular opportunities; partnerships and links to formal education programmes, e.g., youth film festivals; youth-designed websites, zines, public private partnerships etc.

8. National or European MIL strategies should be created. The process should involve all critical stakeholders, including unrepresented marginalised groups, to address the needs of all groups throughout the process. If it's not already the case, media literacy should be included as part of the official school curricula at various levels (from kindergarten to high-school).

6. Conclusion

Based on the individual state of the art reports from the partner countries as well as the results of qualitative research carried out through focus groups among young people, it can be said that digital and media education is not sufficient. Although media literacy has gained more importance in an increasing number of countries and mainly in the cross-curricular form, problematic issues persist for its well-thought deployment and for the evaluation of its effectiveness.

Media and information literacy is already embedded in the formal curricula and general educational plans of many countries. Schools can implement corresponding subjects in different ways – provide just basic or advanced competences. However, the main problem is that media literacy subjects at schools are sometimes of a poor quality, with some exceptions, according to interviews with members of focus groups. In some countries like Kosovo or Bulgaria it is completely missing in school curriculum though.

Indispensable part of media literacy is critical thinking, thanks to which people double check or reflect on all media messages. Number of non-formal learning opportunities is increasing however it targets mostly young people. There is a demand for new learning opportunities and tools identified, however it will be important to raise awareness of those opportunities and importance of media and information literacy among more teachers, schools, youth centres, and other stakeholders. Bigger engagement of media in media literacy education at large and their cooperation with NGOs and formal education institutions would be also beneficial. Broader public understanding of media ethics and social responsibility raises media literacy, but it also makes media reflect more on their content.

Majority of media literacy activities and tools in the non-formal sector are focusing on safe use of internet and communication technologies, especially social media, hate-speech, disinformation, and critical thinking. Number of activities focusing on understanding the world of media and revealing misinformation is also increasing, but media literacy education of media makers and emphasis on unethical, manipulative, or unprofessional practices (notion that not only fake-news and disinformation are an issue) in media are still marginal topics.

A very effective tool for increasing medial digital literacy is the gaMEfy simulation game, which has been tested very positively. Despite minor issues with selected questions, 89% of people said they had no problem understanding the content. Respondents confirmed that their digital media literacy improved after the game.

The policy recommendations proposed by the project partners on the basis of previous research are also very valuable. It is a set of national recommendations that differed in some respects because they were based on different national realities. However, it was also possible to identify several similarities, which are formulated in the publication as EU-wide policy recommendations. One of the main conclusions and recommendations is - *"In order to improve the quality of media literacy subjects at schools, it's important to provide quality formal and non-formal education to teachers first."*

Results of the Gamefy project have a potential to be used as a basis for actions integrating and developing media literacy in the educational system. So get inspired and use our educational tools in your youth work or policy-changing in this area!