

CURRENT DEVELOPMENT TRENDS OF MEDIA LITERACY IN EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT:

The study deals with an investigation into the processes and projects related to the development of media education and media literacy education in the countries of the European Union. The study assesses media education activities in individual EU Member States in terms of various initiatives and projects and their primary focus. The aim of the study is to identify areas of media education and literacy to which European countries devote most attention. The authors aim to summarise and compare projects that have significantly contributed to media education development through their activities towards media education of citizens and improving media literacy in the EU. The text also focuses on extracurricular, non-formal education concentrated around activities and projects outside of the formal education system; those are mainly implemented by companies and non-profit organisations in order to involve selected groups of the population. In the text, the authors analyse secondary data and results of published researches and theoretical studies on the given topic. The introduction provides a brief description of formal, non-formal and informal education in terms of their goals and differences. The authors then characterise the areas of media education by categorising individual types of literacy (including media literacy, literacy involving critical analysis of media content, digital and information literacy, film literacy, news and reading literacy, Internet literacy and online safety, digital game literacy and media communication literacy). Existing initiatives in the EU countries are provided as examples in the identified areas and literacies. The given information is used to create a summary of the current media education activities and the dominant focal points of non-formal education initiatives in individual EU countries. The study thus offers an overview of the types of literacies and organisations actively contributing to the formation of a media literate EU population.

KEY WORDS:

areas of media education, European Union, film literacy, Internet literacy and online safety, media education, media literacy, news and reading literacy, non-formal education, digital game literacy and media communication literacy

Introduction

Education at its essence has several established forms. A standard differentiation distinguishes formal education and non-formal education. Informal education is added to these two basic types. Media educa-

tion (or training in the field of media education) may also be categorised using these forms. Formal education is conducted by educational institutions (mostly schools) and is therefore institutionalised and systematic.¹ It is a deliberate process and its form, content, structure and evaluation methods are precisely specified in legislation. Just as in other areas, formal education in terms of media education is anchored in educational programmes that function as binding documents and guidelines. Petranová emphasises that the theoretical concept of formal media education anticipates that the pupils learn how to 'receive' a media product, critically assess its meaning and purpose, evaluate its content and formal aspects and recognise methods of manipulation used by the media producers.² According to the results of the European Media Literacy Education Study (EMEDUS), a majority of the European countries classify media education in schools as a cross-cutting theme within other subjects or teach it as a separate subject.³

Non-formal education, however, exists in the extracurricular environment. It is delivered by various companies and non-profit organisations and other institutions that focus on specific groups of the population and conduct projects and activities to develop the abilities and skills of educators in specific areas. These activities may include different courses, competitive projects, audio-visual materials, websites and others. According to Buckingham, the daily use of computer and the Internet is a source of informal media education.⁴ This idea is supported by the general belief that the continuous deployment of information technologies into education brings about improvement in the cognitive skills of educators.⁵

Informal education is often misrecognised as non-formal education but, at its core, informal education is about obtaining knowledge and mastering skills and attitudes via everyday experience based on social contacts. Everyday experience includes communication within family circles and social groups and gaining knowledge by using media. In this case, the media – intentionally as well as unintentionally – form people's personalities and their opinions and attitudes as well. As noted by Kačínová, current teaching practices tend to focus more on deliberate and targeted media education within both school-based (formal) and extracurricular (non-formal) frameworks.⁶

Research Objectives and Methodology of Analysis

The study reflects on media education implemented through practical activities and work of teachers as well as on media education conducted at the extracurricular level. Within the bounds of the Concept of Media Education in the Slovak Republic and the context of life-long education, such education is primarily viewed as activities aimed at specifically defined groups of the population, including children, young people, parents and seniors. Media education with this focus covers a variety of areas and is often specifically targeted at certain types of literacy that are closely related to the issues of media reception (digital literacy, film literacy, news and reading literacy, Internet literacy, visual literacy, etc.).

As we have mentioned above, the objective of the study is to summarise and compare the media education initiatives in the European Union countries. The study thus provides a summary overview of the areas and literacies that are dominant in the individual Member States. Important initiatives involving activities that contribute to the formation of media literacy among the EU population are presented for the identified areas with emphasis on the prioritised literacies developed in the investigated countries.

1 PETRANOVÁ, D., HOSSOVÁ, M.: Critical Thinking as a Key Competency. In CHEN, L. (ed.): *ICASSR 2015: 3rd International Conference on Applied Social Science Research*. Paris : Atlantis Press, 2016, p. 245. [online]. [2016-09-29]. Available at: <<http://www.atlantis-press.com/php/pub.php?publication=icassr-15>>.

2 PETRANOVÁ, D.: Rozvíja mediálna výchova v školách kritické kompetencie žiakov? In *Communication Today*, 2011, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 81.

3 ŠUPŠÁKOVÁ, B.: Media Education of Children and Youth as a Path to Media Literacy. In *Communication Today*, 2016, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 43.

4 BUCKINGHAM, D.: *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture*. Cambridge : Polity Press, 2003, p. 97.

5 For more information, see: GÁLIK, S., GÁLIKOVÁ TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: Influence of the Internet on the Cognitive Abilities of Man. Phenomenological and Hermeneutical Approach. In *Communication Today*, 2015, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 4-15.

6 KAČINOVÁ, V.: Terminologické problémy mediálnej výchovy. In *Communication Today*, 2012, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 28.

During this study, we worked with available secondary sources and already published results of researches and analyses dealing with similar topics. This set of information was used to create a summary of the dominant focal points of media education initiatives and projects in the individual countries of the EU. We then identified specific areas of media education and provided examples of existing initiatives in the Member States. The process of creating this analysis was as follows:

1. study of published surveys, researches and other relevant scholarly sources,
2. identification of the individual areas of media education in the EU countries,
3. summary and comparison of existing media education initiatives in the EU countries based on the identified areas of media education.

Areas of Media Education in Individual European Union Countries

Most European countries include media education in their formal education systems as a separate subject or as a part of other subjects with corresponding content. Media education is also a part of non-formal education in many countries. The focus of formal and non-formal media education initiatives and projects is always based on historical, social and cultural contexts of the specific country. Using the available secondary sources and the research data offered by studies focused on media literacy development principles in Europe, we identified the areas of media education that receive priority attention in the EU.

As noted in the introductory chapter, there are three basic types of education in general and three types of media education as well; specifically formal, non-formal and informal education. Several dominant areas emerge within these types of education (and the literacies that unfold from them); one of their most important shared goals is to offer a set of competences, abilities and skills necessary for assessing media content (e.g. its trustworthiness, overall quality, etc.). It is necessary to point out that development of other, more specific types of literacies is an integral part of the process of media education. According to the results of the *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Europe (2014)* study, which included contributions by more than 60 media and information literacy specialists from 28 European countries, it is clear that in most European countries the discussion regarding media literacy (and related information or digital literacy) has gone – at least – through its initial phases.⁷ The study takes into consideration all dimensions of media and information literacy and their development, as well as historical context of literacy in the country, legislative framework, teaching and education materials, financing, evaluation and related factors. Within the group of related factors, the survey includes civic associations, media institutions, private companies and specific events that contribute to development of media literacy. It is these initiatives that are responsible for media education in the given countries on the extracurricular level; moreover, their activities are focused on development of media literacy and other – similar and specific – literacies as well. Our study identifies two basic spheres of media education in the EU countries, as follows:

- academic media education,
- extracurricular media education activities and initiatives.

Media education in the school-based education group is taught as a comprehensive subject; the content of this subject covers the most important areas and topics. Extracurricular activities and initiatives focus on defined groups of teachers and on particular topics and areas. Specific types of literacies that are subject to the highest developmental emphasis in the individual EU countries are derived from these areas and topics. All the following specific types of literacies are considered parts of media education in the investigated countries:

- media literacy,

7 FRAU-MEIGS, D. et al.: *MIL Policies in Europe*. [online]. [2016-12-10]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/lib/exe/fetch.php/colloque140528/presentation_unesco_session_6.pdf>.

- literacy involving critical analysis of media content,
- digital and information literacy,
- film literacy,
- news and reading literacy,
- Internet literacy and online safety,
- digital game literacy,
- media communication literacy.

We approach media literacy in the same way as the outcome of media education, i.e. the acquisition of media-related abilities, knowledge and skills. These abilities include user skills, communication skills and the ability to critically assess and analyse media content. Different understandings and focal points of media literacy education may be encountered in the EU. For instance, media education in Bulgaria is primarily focused on higher education and activities in these areas. The same trend is dominant in Spain, where discussions regarding media education primarily take place in the academic community. University-level education is even offered in Slovakia (the academic study programme “Applied Media Studies” at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava). In general, however, attention of European media education specialists is more focused on lower levels of education, where media education is a part of school curriculum. Media education is usually treated as a cross-cutting or a mandatory cross-cutting topic incorporated into the contents of other subjects. Such inclusion in the formal education process may be observed in Austria, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

Informal and extracurricular activities primarily focused on improving **media literacy** are diverse in Europe. In the Czech Republic, such activities focus on increasing media awareness and supporting efforts to take a critical approach to media content (the project titled *Media under the Magnifying Glass – Improving Media Literacy in the Czech Republic*). Critical thinking abilities and analytical skills are developed thanks to classes for children and young people organised by the *Salesian Media Centre (Media School and Media Clubs)*. The authors of the study *Media and Information Literacy Policies in the Czech Republic* also created various web portals such as *Media under the Magnifying Glass*, the project titled *Saferinternet.cz* and the project *medialnigramotnost.cz* of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University in Prague to support media education and literacy, i.e. as examples of good practices to develop media literacy in the country.⁸ Similar initiatives and projects have been noted in Slovakia as well, e.g. *Media School (MeŠ)*, which is implemented by the Salesian association *Laura, the Youth Association*. Like in the Czech Republic, media education for children and young people in Slovakia most often takes the form of courses to develop practical skills associated with using the media. Other projects in the European countries are focused on children and young adults as well. In many cases, such initiatives involve production of educational materials, guides and programmes for children, teachers and parents that can also be used in academic media education. Such materials are provided by the *Media Council for Children and Young People in Denmark*; the non-commercial Greek television station *EduTV*; the Romanian organisation *ActiveWatch*; the Hungarian organisation *Moped* and the Austrian institution *mediamanual.at*. The Netherlands is well-known in this area for their *Media Literacy Week*, which focuses on all groups of media audiences. The Slovak non-profit initiative *eSlovensko* and its projects *zodpovedne.sk*, *kybersikanovanie.sk*, *ovce.sk*, *Deti v sieti (Children Online)* and others have taken responsibility for production of additional media education materials and guides. Many European countries operate media literacy centres focused on conducting research inquiry into media education, creation of relevant educational materials, administration of web portals dealing with this specific issue, education of teachers and monitoring the level of media literacy in the country. These states include Slovakia (*IMEC – Media Literacy Centre, medialnavychova.sk*), the Czech Republic (*medialnivychova.org*), Greece (*Hellenic Audiovisual Institute IOM*), the Netherlands (*mediawijzer.net*), Hungary (*Centre for Media Literacy and Education Bűvösvölgy – Magic*

valley), Germany (*Media Smart, The Association for Media Education and Communication Culture GMK*) and Italy (*MEC – Media Education Centre, Zaffiria*).

An integral part of media literacy is the ability of an individual to think critically and analyse media content of all kinds, from motion pictures to journalistic content, television and radio news, information published online and others. We understand that employing critical analysis, i.e. looking critically at the media also means understanding the intentions of the content’s authors, the intentions of media owners and the potential ways in which images and words may be interpreted. The EU countries (and practically all types of education they prefer) pay increased attention towards supporting critical thinking which leads to the exposure of media stereotypes, disinformation, hoaxes and other misleading contents.

Improving **literacy through critical thinking and critical analysis of media content** is subject to attention in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Great Britain and Slovenia. The portal *Media under the Magnifying Glass* (in the Czech Republic) offers an electronic publication that helps people better understand the world of media, reveals manipulative techniques in advertising and on the Internet and supports critical thinking with regards to media consumption. There are also several Czech websites that focus on supporting an aware and critical approach to media, increasing public awareness of media education and encouraging children and young adults to create their own media contents: *www.skolamedii.cz*, *www.mediasetbox.cz*, *www.iskolka.info*, *www.radiodomino.cz*, *www.mediální-svet.cz* and others.⁹ *Safer Internet Centre* is a major initiative in Croatia. This centre helps further develop communication skills of Croatians in relation to the Internet and a critical approach to information disseminated by the media. Slovenia focuses on parents and teachers in the sphere of non-formal education. The project *Children’s Parliament* established by the *Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth* educates on critical thinking skills, forming opinions based on information obtained from the media and improving the ability to build arguments. Critical thinking is a building block of media education in schools and in extracurricular media education areas in Great Britain. One of British initiatives of this kind is called *Media Smart (UK)*, which focuses on critical thinking in relation to advertising. According to the study *Media and Literacy Policies in the United Kingdom*, *Media Smart (UK)* is an initiative with a major impact on the development and use of critical thinking during everyday life. The project also provides free-of-charge educational materials for primary education.¹⁰

Digital and information literacy represent major facets of media education in the EU. Digital literacy is understood as a set of technical abilities and skills related to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT). It is ICT, their introduction into the education system and their usage to achieve specific objectives that is the subject of modernisation in media education and in education in general. Information literacy is associated with competences related to the identification, collection, evaluation, processing and sharing of information using different sources, including the media. At their essence, information literacy and digital literacy are inseparable. ICT-related literacy, the development of digital competences and work with information in education are influentially improved by organisations providing such skills in Estonia (*HITSA – Information Technology Foundation for Education*) and in the Netherlands (*Kennisnet*). *Kennisnet* holds an important position in the field of ICT in primary, secondary and professional education. The same can be said about Ireland and Luxembourg. Latvia focuses primarily on increasing digital literacy among teachers via the project *Samsung, School for the Future*. There are several initiatives in Luxembourg with the goal of providing access for schools to new technologies and building the abilities of students and teachers to work with ICT (*BEE Creative, norTIC*). Non-formal educational organisations in Great Britain, Italy, Latvia and Malta focus their attention mostly on the development of digital competences and work with ICT. The Latvian project *My Friend Computer* is a part of a larger project supported by the *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation* that is focused on the development of computer and information literacy in the country. *My Friend Computer* provides methodology and instructional materials which aim to educate children on the topics of social networks, Inter-

8 ŠTASTNÁ, L., WOLÁK, R., JIRÁK, J.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Czech Republic (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-08]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/CZECH_2014.pdf>.

9 For more information, see: VRABEC, N.: *Stratégie rozvoja mediálnej gramotnosti v európskych krajinách*. Trnava: FMK UCM in Trnava, 2014, p. 46-49.

10 McDOUGALL, J. et al.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in the United Kingdom (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-08]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/UNITED-KINGDOM_2014.pdf>.

net sources, etc.¹¹ There are numerous initiatives in Germany that support digital literacy and introduce new ways of using digital media in education: *D21 e.V.*, *BITCOM*, *Google Financing the Humboldt Internet Institute Berlin*, *Bündnis für Bildung e.V.*, *Intel*.¹²

Media education involving **film literacy** is also relatively widespread in the EU countries. It is a part of media education in the academic environment; however, it is also associated with the activities of non-formal (extracurricular) education organisations. In Slovakia, film literacy education back in the 1960s is considered as one of the milestones in the history of media education. Countries that focus attention on such education conduct numerous projects that include practical filmmaking, critical analyses of audio-visual works, knowledge-based film education and competitive projects combining the actual creative processes and practices. Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland and Lithuania put great emphasis on film literacy within media education. Film education in Belgium focuses primarily on secondary school students. One example is the non-profit organisation *Imagica* and its projects *It's possible* and *It's allowed* focusing on short film screenwriting, cinematography, post-production activities and sound editing. The project *Jekino* also focuses on film production and organisation of workshops for children and young audiences. The *Danish Film Institute* plays a major role in Denmark and aims to educate children, young people and teachers. It provides guidance and methodology materials suitable for media and film education. The Institute conducts special counselling activities for production of films for children and educational or rather training activities for teachers.¹³ The *Film-X* project has a similar purpose and gives children and young people the opportunity to create their own film right in the studio. In Finland, film literacy within media education is covered by *KAVI – The Finnish National Audiovisual Institute*. Amateur film festivals, competitions and discussions with professionals working in the field have a long tradition in Europe (Austria, France, Greece and Ireland). The study *Media and Information Literacy Policies in France* identifies the *Education-médias (education-medias.csa.fr)*, which provides audio-visual literacy education, as an important initiative.¹⁴ Ireland is carrying out the interesting *Fis (Film in Schools)* project focused on using digital media in education.¹⁵ Film literacy plays a major role in Greece and Croatia, especially in the area of methodology and research activities (*Hellenic Audiovisual Institute – Greece*) and in training teachers towards critical analysis of films (*Dr. Ante Peterlica School of Media Culture – Croatia*). *KARPOS* holds an important position in Greece and its primary objective is to introduce film literacy education into schools through workshops and educational materials. Workshops for teachers and students are organised by the *PAME CINEMA* initiative (including *International Olympia Film Festival for Children and Young People*, *Camera Zizanio* and *Lessons in the Dark*).¹⁶ Film education in Lithuania and Great Britain is focused on film as a part of education (e.g. *Film in My School* in Lithuania, the *MediaEd* organisation in Great Britain and *Filmpedagogerna* in Sweden). These initiatives focus on developing critical analysis of audio-visual content, looking for new opportunities to use films in education and supporting visual literacy and creativity among students in this field. The *VIZAMEDIA* project in Romania is another interesting contribution to the given area of expertise and focuses on audio-visual works created by secondary school students.¹⁷ Television literacy and parent education, which have a strong tradition in Germany, are closely associated with film literacy. The *FLIMMO* project is an important activity aimed at media education of parents and children in relation to television production. The programme includes individual counselling, children's broadcasting, short articles on media education, and deals with children's age-based abilities to process spe-

cific television content. A similar initiative exists in the Netherlands. The *Kijkwijzer* project of the *Netherlands Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media (NICAM)* has produced a rating system for television programmes and films. *Kijkwijzer* serves parents and labels programmes by age categories with icons symbolising inappropriate content, including occurrence of violence, sex, fear, drugs and more.¹⁸

News and reading literacy is considered very important in certain EU countries. News literacy education focuses on providing knowledge regarding creation of news content, legal aspects of journalism and practical skills in the field, etc. Reading literacy is closely related to the creation of news content as well. Increased attention has been paid recently to this topic, which may be associated with constantly decreasing interest in the press, especially among younger age groups. Along with low general interest in the press, competition of the new media and the Internet era as such has resulted in decline in reading comprehension skills. Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Malta and Slovakia devote a lot of attention to supporting general interest in news content. Projects worth noting include academic and student journalistic competitions, for instance in Belgium, Estonia and Slovakia. The *Estonian Youth Media Club* strives to support print media created and published by students. The *News Agency of the Slovak Republic (TASR)* plays a major role in Slovakia. It provides free news service for registered primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities through the *TASR in Every School* programme. The programme also includes a content management system, photo-editing and blogging system that schools may use to create online school magazines – *školské noviny.sk*. Journalism education is also provided by the Maltese organisation *Fundazzjoni Tumas Fenech għall Edukazzjoni fil Gurnalizmu* and the Hungarian *Public Media Academy Foundation* that provides post-graduate journalism education. Activities and workshops such as journalists visiting schools and discussing their profession with students and other professionals are commonplace in Belgium. The Croatian initiatives *LiDraNo*, *Šibenik Children Festival*, *Novigrad Spring* and *Communication School* are focused on the creation of news content, school periodicals and other school media.¹⁹ Reading literacy is addressed by projects in the Czech Republic, Italy and Sweden. Sweden and Italy are involved in a joint project that aims to popularise reading newspapers in schools, to show students how to critically analyse newspaper content and help them understand journalism genres. However, the key objective here is to motivate students to read print media. In Sweden, this programme is known as *Media Compass* while in Italy it is the *Newspapers in Every School* project, in which up to two million secondary school students participate in it on an annual basis. Teachers responsible for this project should, in accordance with this initiative's philosophy, devote at least one hour per week to discussing published information and may participate in a course to improve their own media literacy.²⁰ In the Czech Republic, reading literacy is supported by the civic association *Abeceda* and their *Reading Literacy and Project-Based Teaching* project. This initiative focuses more on teachers and thus looks for ways of effectively improving this type of literacy among pupils.

A major part of media education in Europe and around the world is education involving **Internet literacy and online safety**. Most interesting are projects and initiatives in Austria, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Spain, Slovakia and Sweden. Media education in Finland has a long tradition and it is very well developed. *MEKU – Centre for Media Education and Audiovisual Media* stresses out importance of the safety of children and young people, aiming to protect them from inappropriate media content in the country. The same role in Greece is performed by the *Hellenic Audiovisual Institute IOM*. The *Safer Internet* project is of note in Lithuania, Poland and Austria. This project is also focused on protecting children from risky behaviour online and on prevention and education of parents and teachers in this specific area. The project includes operating websites to report inappropriate content on the Internet, counselling for parents who encounter risks on the Internet in relation to their children, showing how to protect one's privacy online (*Watch Your Face – Poland*) and providing materials for parents involved in their children's virtual lives (*Friending Your Child – Poland*), teaching materials depicting victims of cyber bullying, the bullies and witnesses (*Stop Cyber Bullying – Poland*) and more. In Latvia, Internet

11 BRIKŠE, I., FREIBERGS, V., SPURAVA, G.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Latvia (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-09]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/LATVIA_2014.pdf>.

12 KAMMERL, R., HASEBRINK, U.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Germany (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-09]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/GERMANY_2014.pdf>.

13 DROTNER, K.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Denmark (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-09]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/DENMARK_2014.pdf>.

14 FRAU-MEIGS, D., LOICQ, M., BOUTIN, P.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in France (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-09]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/FRANCE_2014.pdf>.

15 O'NEILL, B.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Ireland (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-09]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/IRELAND_2014.pdf>.

16 ANDRIOPOULOU, I., PAPADIMITRIOU, S., KOURTI, E.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Greece (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-09]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/GREECE_2014.pdf>.

17 STANILA, C., FOTIADE, N.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Romania (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-09]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/ROMANIA_2014.pdf>.

18 McGONAGLE, T., SCHUMACHER, N.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Netherlands (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-09]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/NETHERLANDS_2014.pdf>.

19 KANIŽAJ, I., CAR, V., KRALJ, L.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Croatia (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-09]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/CROATIA_2014.pdf>.

20 AROLDI, P., MURUU, M. F.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Italy (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-09]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/ITALY_2014.pdf>.

Comparison of Existing Media Education Initiatives in EU Countries

literacy is dealt with by the *Latvian Internet Association* together with numerous partners. The activities of these initiatives have produced the web portal *www.drossinternets.lv*, which provides information and educational materials for children, young people, parents and teachers.²¹ A good example of an initiative related to improving Internet safety literacy in Croatia is the *Centre for Missing and Exploited Children* in Osijek. The centre provides non-stop counselling for Internet safety-related matters and plays an important role in prevention and protecting children from child pornography, violence, harassment and bullying online.²² In Germany, the main telecommunications operator is involved in media education as well. The project is called *Schau Hin! (What Your Children Are Doing with Media)* and provides a guide for parents and teachers on the latest developments in the media production and related risks (data breaches, cyber bullying and violence). In Romania, the *Save the Children Romania* organisation has developed an interesting project named *Sigur.Info*. The project promotes the advantages of using new media technologies and warns of the hazards of online communication. In Slovakia, online safety and responsible use of the Internet are publicly discussed via projects of the non-profit organisation *eSlovensko*; the projects are named *ovce.sk*, *kybersikanovanie.sk* and *zodpovedne.sk*. The *Family and Media* portal (*Catholic University in Ružomberok*) provides information on the Internet risks and the principles of safe use of the online communication; it is accessible to parents. Cyber bullying and the Internet safety are also main areas of interest in case of the Swedish projects *Friends* and *Surf Lugnt*, the Dutch project *Digibewust (Digitally Aware)*, the British public television initiative *BBC Learning Resources* and the *Media Smart (UK)* portal.

Discussion on **digital games**, their application in education and educational functions has begun to gather importance in recent years. While digital games are primarily regarded as sources of entertainment, it is still necessary to recognise opportunities for their use in education (including media education), since these opportunities continue to grow. In Slovakia, this issue is publicly addressed by the *Mladý pes* organisation and its project *Vlčatá.sk*. The purpose of the initiative is to demonstrate the positive aspects of digital games and opportunities for their use in the education process. *Vlčatá.sk* is primarily focused on parents who are informed about interesting digital games with aesthetic and educational functions. The issues of appropriateness of individual digital games for different age categories are also of concern. The *Deti v sieti (Children Online)* publication for parents has a similar focus and its substantial parts are dedicated to gambling or risks associated with playing games online. The *pedagojeux.fr* portal is an interesting project in France which has an ambition to raise general awareness of the positive and negative aspects of digital games. Bulgaria has joined the *Interactive Online Games for Media Literacy* project. Game production is also included in the Portuguese *EDUScratch* programme. Media education is the main purpose of the successful digital game *DataDealer* produced by Austrian game developers. The game has been recognised as a good example of non-formal media education. It is designed to get players to understand the need to protect their personal data and the dangers posed by the Internet in modern society. According to the *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Austria* study, attention in Austria has turned towards the use of digital games in education.

Media communication literacy is closely related to media literacy itself. The abilities of persons involved in the media education processes to independently create and present media contents in various formats are closely intertwined with media competences. Numerous initiatives in many countries (including Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Great Britain and Portugal) pay attention to strengthening and building communication skills among their populations. The *Society for Communication and Media*, which aims to improve the communication culture of the Croatian population, is especially interested in the creative abilities of the local people. Similar objectives are shared by Germany's *The Association for Media Education and Communication Culture (GMK)* that strengthens participation of the population in the creation of media content and improves the communication skills of all societal groups. *GMK* annually awards the Dieter Baack prize for extraordinary success in projects related to media education. *EDUScratch* is well-known in Portugal and focuses on the development of mathematical, logical and creative skills of pupils. It also arranges activities related to the creation of animation and interactive programmes using visual programming.

The position and status of media education in the individual countries of the European Union and elsewhere in the world naturally reflect the historical, social and cultural contexts of each country. Differences can be found in the legislative definitions of this type of education; the foundations built for media education – in both formal and extracurricular forms – within different educational systems are not identical, either.

Great Britain is known for having a long tradition of media education in the school system. However, according to media and information literacy status reports, the country (despite its relatively favourable life conditions, good legislative framework and high level of education) encounters problems of insufficient qualification and interest of teachers and graduates concerning media education as a dedicated subject. This leads to a 'failure' to develop a sufficiently media literate population.²³ Similarly, the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Finland and Sweden all have a strong media education tradition. Despite its long-term media education tradition, Finland has to deal with many associated problems; media education is taught as a cross-cutting topic and not as a separate subject, which can be seen in differences between individual schools. The fact that many teachers, despite being highly educated, never complete a basic media education course is also seen as a serious problem.²⁴ Media education is maintained as a cross-cutting topic in general curriculum in Belgium, Denmark and Sweden as well. The discipline of media education is also highly developed in the Netherlands. While it may be officially missing in school curricula, media education training is provided to teachers and others who work with children so that they are able to further disseminate the given knowledge as trainers. These trainers are then responsible for building the media competences of pupils and raising the level of media literacy. Media education is similarly well-developed in Hungary and Germany, even though the implementation of such education is dependent on legislation of the individual federal states in Germany. We consider Austria, the Czech Republic, Italy, Slovakia and Slovenia to be among the countries with a relatively high level of media education. On the contrary, countries that lack tradition in this area of education or encounter more problematic implementation of media education include Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal and Romania. Surprisingly, even France's highly developed educational system has much to improve in relation to media education – Vrabec says that media education in French schools is not sufficiently developed and as a subject it is marginalised and underestimated.²⁵

Non-formal extracurricular education, which is most often conducted by non-profit organisations and civic associations, is developed in the EU countries independently on the level of formal education. Non-formal education activities and initiatives often provide assistance that can be used to train parents and teachers. As we have noted above, these projects and initiatives are often aimed at media education or the development of specific types of literacies. Resulting from a comparison of existing non-formal education initiatives in the EU, the following table presents a summary of the areas of media education and the dominant focus of non-formal education initiatives in the individual countries.

Table 1: Areas of media education and the dominant focus of non-formal education initiatives in individual EU countries

Austria	Development of media competences and literacies, digital games literacy, filmmaking, safety on the Internet
Belgium	Practical filmmaking, film literacy, journalism
Bulgaria	Media literacy, development of creativity, work with information and multimedia
Croatia	Practical filmmaking, critical analysis of films and other media products, improvement of communication skills
Cyprus	Development of critical analysis of media content, communication skills
Czech Republic	Media literacy, development of critical thinking skills, reading literacy

21 BRIKŠE, I., FREIBERGS, V., SPURAVA, G.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Latvia (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-09]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/LATVIA_2014.pdf>.

22 KANIŽAJ, I., CAR, V., KRALJ, L.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Croatia (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-09]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/CROATIA_2014.pdf>.

23 McDOUGALL, J., et al.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in the United Kingdom (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-09]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/UNITED-KINGDOM_2014.pdf>.

24 KOTILAINEN, S., KUPIAINEN, R.: *Media and Information Literacy Policies in Finland (2013)*. [online]. [2017-01-09]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/FINLAND_2014.pdf>.

25 VRABEC, N.: *Stratégie rozvoja mediálneho gramotnosti v európskych krajinách*. Trnava: FMK UCM in Trnava, 2014, p. 65.

Denmark	Film literacy, practical filmmaking, media literacy
Estonia	Journalism, development of digital competences
Finland	Development of research regarding media education, safety in the media environment
France	Positive and negative aspects of digital games, film literacy
Germany	Safety on the Internet, media literacy, communication skills, education of parents regarding television broadcasting
Great Britain	Internet safety, digital media, film literacy, critical thinking, communication through advertising
Greece	Film literacy, media literacy, protection of children and young people in all areas of media consumption
Hungary	Media literacy, safe use of the Internet
Ireland	Practical filmmaking, technical skills necessary for working with digital media
Italy	Theoretical and practical training of teachers and professionals in the sphere of media education, development of media literacy in relation to children and young people, digital literacy and competences, reading literacy
Latvia	Training of teachers, digital skills
Lithuania	Protecting children from negative influences of the Internet, film literacy, support for visual literacy and creativity, critical content analysis
Luxembourg	Digital literacy, work with ICT, technical skills
Malta	Media and information literacy, news literacy, technical ICT skills
Netherlands	Media literacy of all age groups, information and communication technologies and technical skills
Poland	Safety of children and young people on the Internet, education of parents in terms of protecting children and young people
Portugal	Logical and creative skills of pupils
Romania	Dangers of online communication, development of media literacy
Slovakia	Media literacy and media competences, practical creation of media content, protection of children and young people, safe use of the Internet, media education for parents
Slovenia	Critical thinking, analysis of media content, parental discussions regarding media-related issues
Spain	Materials for media education, Internet risks
Sweden	Reading literacy, safety on the Internet and protection of the rights of children

Source: own processing

It is important to note that each of these literacies contributes to the development of media literacy and they may be considered as a single unit. These literacies merge in order to form the sphere of media education (they are parts of media education) in the investigated countries of the European Union. We consider the focus of individual countries on specific areas and literacies a reflection of the countries' different history, culture and particular development tendencies of their media environment.

Conclusion

The study offers a thorough analysis of the areas of media education in the countries of the European Union. The inquiry includes a summary of non-formal media education initiatives and projects in these countries with respect to the identified areas of education. Details of the existing initiatives of the Member States supporting the development of media literacy and media education are provided through information on projects that strive to further develop and improve the individual types of literacies.

Media literacy is the basic type of literacy that the Member States pay most attention to; it often combines all other identified types of literacies. The following countries focus directly on the development of media literacies: Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and others. Media education and media literacy centres play a key role in training teachers and educating parents, children and young people in these countries. Their activities include monitoring the status and level of media literacy, publishing status reports associated with latest developments in the sphere of media education in the given countries and preparing methodology materials and practical utilities for formal, non-formal and informal (family) education in this area. These centres have an irreplaceable role in the process of developing

media literacy in the Member States including Slovakia (*IMEC – Media Literacy Centre*), the Czech Republic (*Media Education Centre*), Greece (*Hellenic Audiovisual Institute IOM*), the Netherlands (*Mediawijzer.net*), Hungary (*Centre for Media Literacy and Education Búvösvölgy – Magic Valley*), Germany (*The Association for Media Education and Communication Culture GfK*) and Italy (*MEC – Media Education Centre, Zaffiria*).

Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Great Britain, Slovakia and Slovenia are particularly interested in the development of abilities and skills related to critical thinking and media content analyses. In this context, various websites and print materials have been published for children and young people who are the most frequent target group of such initiatives. These publications help parents and teachers in their efforts to teach children how to look critically at published information and avoid dangers of the Internet (manipulative techniques, gambling, grooming, cyber bullying, and other). The initiative *Safer Internet Centre* fulfils this role in Croatia with *Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth* in Slovenia and the *Media Under the Magnifying Glass* portal and a series of other websites doing the same in the Czech Republic. The safety of children and young people on the Internet is a major and timely topic and thus influences strategies and methods of non-formal education in nearly all the Member States. Initiatives are also largely focused on parents; they help them become responsible media users as parents should raise their children to recognise the positives and negatives of the media world. Examples of such initiatives include the German project *Schau Hin!* and *FLIMMO, Safer Internet* in more countries and the *Swedish Media Council*. Slovakia excels in this area with *eSlovensko, Vľatá.sk, Family and Media* and other initiatives. Within this context, parental media education and the development of information and digital literacy among parents must not be underestimated. In most cases, the parents themselves are digital migrants who first need to learn how to work with the media; they have to know about all benefits and risks related to media reception in order to protect, understand and educate their children.

Estonia and Latvia are examples of countries that focus on the digital and information literacy of children and young people. Project focused on teachers can be identified in Latvia (*Samsung, School for the Future*) and in Luxembourg (securing access to ICT for schools and improving teacher skills – *noTIC, BEE Creative*). Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy and Malta all focus on this issue. Malta also further develops this specific area of media education in case of rather problematic societal groups, e.g. convicted criminals. Improving their media and information literacy is an attempt to help them smoothly return to everyday civil life.

The most serious findings of this study include the fact that film education (or improving film literacy) is highly developed in the EU along with practical skills associated with filmmaking. Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland and Lithuania all pay special attention to film literacy and filmmaking. Within the development of film literacy, the individual organisations conducting film festivals and competitions even provide the target groups with opportunities to create films in professionally equipped studios. Film literacy includes technical skills such as editing, sound editing and post-production processing of materials. Various activities in Germany and the Netherlands involve television literacy. The German *FLIMMO* project provides counselling for parents related to television programmes. The Dutch *Kijkwijzer* initiative serves parents by providing a system for labelling programmes and films in accordance with age categories and icons indicating inappropriate content.

News education, i.e. building competences associated with the press and the development of reading literacy is also highly developed. Media education systems in Estonia, Italy, Malta, Slovakia and Sweden all excel in this area. Perhaps the most interesting initiatives are the Swedish *Media Compass* and Italian *Newspapers in Every School*. These projects are focused on reading literacy and the development of critical reading competences. Significant support within practical efforts related to journalism is provided by the *News Agency of the Slovak Republic* and the project *školské noviny.sk*, which gives pupils the opportunity to create their own periodicals.

It seems that digital games are given much less attention. However, certain activities in Austria, Bulgaria, Greece and Slovakia remain noteworthy. The initiative *Vľatá.sk* in Slovakia is one of them and is therefore an important project that deals with education through digital games and providing information about games. The Bulgarian project *mGames in YW* and Greek initiative *EduTV* also focus on digital and mobile games and their use in terms of working with young people. Issues concerning digital games literacy are currently discussed in Austria and Portugal.

We may also conclude that media education is not (either in its formal or non-formal spheres) sufficiently developed in certain countries. These include France, Lithuania, Latvia and Portugal. Many EU countries simply focus on a single type of literacy or prefer practical activities and skills rather than actual learning about media. We can therefore assume that there is a persistent need to pay increased attention to media education and to expand the understanding of the risks associated with media environment; despite the numerous initiatives that collectively exist in the EU Member States. Media education and the development of media literacy (both formal and non-formal) play crucial roles in the processes of shaping a critically-thinking, conscious population able to effectively deal with the media.²⁶

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²⁶ For more information, see: PETRANOVÁ, D., BURIANOVÁ, L.: Potential of Digital Technologies Use In the Formal Pre-Primary Education. In *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 2014, Vol. 10, Supplement 1, p. 263-276.

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