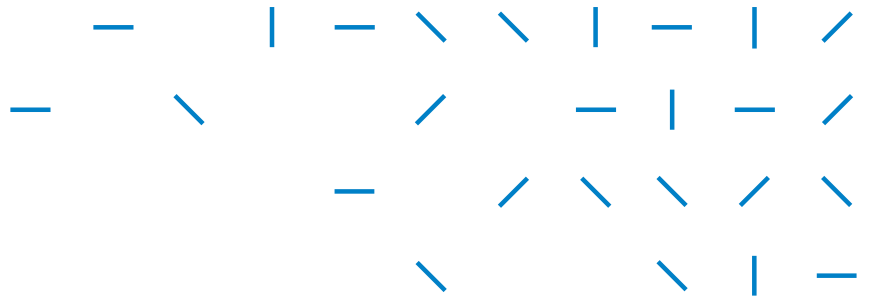




Baltic Centre for
Media Excellence



MEDIA LITERACY SECTOR MAPPING

Lithuania Country Report

2022



Contents

1. General Context	3
1.1. Policy documents defining media literacy policy	4
1.2. Actors	8
1.3. Target groups	12
1.4. Mapping activities	13
1.5. Funding	15
1.6. Lithuania in Indexes	16
2. Country Findings and Recommendations.....	16
2.1. Cross-sectoral cooperation and networking.....	16
2.2 Evaluation of media literacy activities.....	19
2.3. Sustainability and funding	21
2.4. The Role of Media in Increasing Media Literacy	22
Conclusions	24
References.....	27

1. General Context

Over the past three years, Lithuania has started bridging the gap between conceptual superiority in some media and information literacy (media literacy/ML) subjects, such as counter-disinformation capability, and the comprehensive integration of media and information literacy into all aspects of policymaking.

A major positive development, this reconciliation has finally culminated in newly-launched media literacy programs in all three key areas: education – the unveiling of a new general curriculum; culture – a mandate for libraries network to undertake ML training for the public, and the culture sector for to tackle ML issues in art and media; and national security - strengthening societal resilience and participation in civic defence.

This paper offers an overview of the media literacy situation in Lithuania over the past three years, indicating the possible gaps and synergies, as well as tendencies of media literacy education of the Lithuanian public. The paper does not aim to count and archive the media literacy activities which took or have been taking place over the past three years in Lithuania.

Historically, media literacy and information literacy have always been on Lithuania's strategic agenda, though its prioritisation has been volatile, depending on the ever-shifting national and foreign affairs situation. Back in 2012, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania approved the Strategy of Progress of Lithuania - "Lithuania 2030" (Lietuvos pažangos strategija „Lietuva 2030“, 2012)¹, which projected the formation of a vibrant public information space by promoting civically responsible mass media and developing the public's ability to critically assess, analyse and evaluate the information in the public space, respect the free press, promote self-regulation in the media, and to implement media and information literacy education programs.

Even before Russia annexed Crimea, Lithuania's defence and security community, and its wider society acknowledged the importance of the non-kinetic elements of defence. Discussions about the role of the media and information literacy accompanied the discussion about civic mobilisation, and for a while, media and information literacy education were predominantly focused on national security issues, society's ability to counter disinformation, and debunking fake news. With the growing geopolitical tensions, a total defence doctrine has been activated and the whole of society approach has triggered the demand for comprehensive media literacy education for the public.

Currently, the media and literacy skills in Lithuania are defined as a competitive statecraft advantage, significantly contributing to economic competitiveness, national digital infrastructure development and sustainability, cultural growth, and a resilient society as an integral part of the whole-of-society approach (Visuomenės informacijos politikos strateginės kryptys 2019–2022 metams, 2019)².

Term – Media and Information Literacy

How is the term media and information literacy defined in Lithuania? Recognising the close relationship between media literacy and information literacy, Lithuania uses the UNESCO definition of media and information literacy - the necessary competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) that enable citizens to use media (print, radio, TV, film, advertising, internet, etc.) and other information sources (including libraries, archives,

¹ The Strategy for Progress of Lithuania "Lithuania 2030" (hereafter referred to as the Strategy) is the vision and development priorities of the state and the directions for their implementation until 2030. Available at: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.425517>

² Lietuvos Respublikos Kultūros Ministerijos Visuomenės informavimo politikos strateginės kryptys 2019–2022 Strategic Directions of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania Public Information Policy 2019–2022, Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/95c-4cf60344211e99595d005d42b863e>

museums) effectively, regardless of the technology used. Hereinafter, the term “media literacy” will be used to refer to media and information literacy. Media literacy (ML) competencies also refer to critical thinking and lifelong learning skills which are necessary for socialisation and active participation in civil society.

When discussing the ML definition, interviewed experts noted that media literacy also includes active citizenship competencies: civic activism, and active, critically thinking citizens. Additionally, emotional intellect should be in the right balance with digital skills and knowledge. Media literacy competencies are groomed from kindergarten and that is a life-long process.

State institutions developing and implementing media literacy policy

Media literacy policy development and implementation are led by the Ministry of Culture (which forms information policy) and Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (responsible for media literacy competencies in education, including general education and life-long learning), and the Ministry of National Défense (responsible for the citizens' civic resilience and resistance competencies). Interviewed experts and state institution representatives noted the multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral character of media literacy and underlined the need for consolidated media literacy policy implementation.

1.1. Policy documents defining media literacy policy

The following key policy documents define media literacy development and implementation.

*Law on Public Information*³ | Article 45(2)(4) (Lietuvos Respublikos visuomenės informavimo įstatymas, 1996) states that the Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with organisations of producers and disseminators of public information, regulatory and self-regulatory bodies of producers and disseminators of public information, other institutions and organisations active in the field of public information "shall promote measures to develop the public's ability to use public information media, undertake the implementation of these measures and periodic evaluation of their impact on the public".

National Security Strategy (Nacionalinio saugumo strategija, 2021) addresses the intensive digitisation of all sectors of state life that requires more attention to cyber and information threats as well as the resilience of society to cyber threats and disinformation (among other aspects, of course)⁴.

National Progress Plan 2021-2030; the strategic goal Nr.3 (Nacionalinis pažangos planas 2021-2030, 2020)⁵ is about increasing the inclusiveness and effectiveness of education to meet the needs of individuals and society. The National Progress Plan Lithuania 2050 is under development; hence it will be important to see whether and how media literacy is positioned in this document.

The 18th Programme of Government (XVIII Vyriausybės programa, 2020)⁶. Media literacy is addressed under the

³ Lietuvos Respublikos visuomenės informavimo įstatymas | 45 str. 2 d. 4 p.1996 (Law on Public Information | Article 45(2)(4) Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.065AB8483E1E/asr>

⁴ Task 37.6. Strengthen society's resilience to disinformation and other information threats by improving the education system, developing cultural services, fostering critical thinking, and coordinated media and information literacy programmes and strategic communication campaigns, and by strengthening cooperation between the public, private, academic, and non-governmental sectors. Available at: Nacionaline saugumo Strategija <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/10625df0623a11ecb2fe9975f8a9e52e?positionInSearchResults=0&searchModelUUID=0ad4b921-9a5c-40e4-a16e-a753cfa94425>

⁵ National Progress Plan 2021-2030, Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/d492e050f7dd11eaa12ad7c04a383ca0/asr>

⁶ The 18th Programme of Government (XVIII Vyriausybės programa) Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/ed22bb703bc311eb8d-9fe110e148c770>

tasks in the field of education - project “Lifelong Learning Opportunities for Everyone in Lithuania” (leading: Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport) and culture - project “Information Threat Resilient Society, Free Media, Safe Internet Space” (leading: Ministry of Culture).

Strategic Guidelines of Lithuania’s Public Information Policy 2019–2022 (Visuomenės informavimo politikos strateginės kryptys 2019–2022 m., 2019)⁷ of the Ministry of Culture, the fifth guideline “Information threats resilience and an information literate society” is aimed at “developing media and information literacy as a strategic, inter-disciplinary coordinated priority, fostering critical thinking, empowering the public’s own ability to assess public information and to cope with unwanted information threats, and stimulating civic activism, participation, and creativity (expression)”. The document mandates state institutions to run a regular assessment of the media literacy competencies of the public.

Lithuanian Cultural Policy Strategy (Lietuvos kultūros politikos strategija, 2019)⁸. The first objective of the third goal of the Strategy is to strengthen the resilience of citizens and institutions to information threats, civic engagement, and knowledge.

Strategic Orientations for Library Development Policy 2016–2022 (Bibliotekų plėtros politikos strateginės kryptys 2016–2022 m., 2016)⁹. Strategic guideline I “Libraries for public learning”. The aim is to strengthen libraries’ cultural and information competencies, and literacy education among the public, promoting creativity, social and economic activity, and motivation of the members of the society to participate in a lifelong learning process.

Intellectual Property Protection Development Programme 2021–2030 (2021–2030 m. Intelektinės nuosavybės apsaugos plėtros programa, 2021)¹⁰ submitted for public discussion. The subject of intellectual property rights is introduced into education programs, (leading institutions: Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and Ministry of Culture).

General education programmes for primary, basic, and secondary education (Ugdymo programos, 2021)¹¹ for all subjects from grades 1 to 12 grade is based on the development of competencies. Three competencies (out of seven) – communication competence, citizenship competence, and digital competence directly relate to ML education (ML skills, knowledge, and attitudes). The updated general education programs will start in 2023.

Strategy for Preparing Citizens for Civil Resistance (Lietuvos Respublikos piliečių rengimo pilietiniam pasipriešinimui strategija, 2022)¹² was approved by the Lithuanian Government in January 2022 and submitted to the Seimas of Lithuania for its adoption, addresses the ML education as a required element for civil resistance skills¹³. The Strategy’s implementation will rest with the Ministry of National Defence.

⁷ Lietuvos Respublikos Kultūros Ministerijos Visuomenės informavimo politikos strateginės kryptys 2019–2022 (Strategic Directions of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania Public Information Policy 2019–2022), Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/95c-4cf60344211e99595d005d42b863e>

⁸ Lithuanian Cultural Policy Strategy, Available at: <https://www.e-ar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/6aa23a109d4d11e9878fc525390407ce>

⁹ Strategic Orientations for Library Development Policy 2016–2022 (Bibliotekų plėtros politikos strateginės kryptys 2016–2022 m., 2016) Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/5939be90103011e6acc9d34f3feceabc>

¹⁰ Intellectual Property Protection Development Programme 2021–2030 (2021–2030 m. Intelektinės nuosavybės apsaugos plėtros programa, 2021) Available at: https://tm.lrv.lt/uploads/tm/documents/files/2021%E2%80%932030%20M_%20INTELEKTIN%C4%96S%20NUOSAVYB%C4%96S%20APSAUGOS%20PP%20PROJEKTAS.pdf?msclid=679a3458b90011ecac1b528eac6bc455

¹¹ Ugdymo programos (Education programs), Available at: https://smsm.lrv.lt/web/lt/ugdymo_programos

¹² Lietuvos Respublikos piliečių rengimo pilietiniam pasipriešinimui strategija (Strategy for Preparing Citizens for Civil Resistance), Available at: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/3ac8fb30800311ecb2fe9975f8a9e52e>

¹³ LRT.lt <https://www.lrt.lt/mediateka/irasas/2000198896/atnaujinama-pilietinio-pasipriesinimo-strategija-ekspertu-teigimu-be-zmoniu-palaikymo-ji-neivyks>

The totality of these strategic documents – both binding and recommendation – offers a solid foundation for ML education and its coherent and comprehensive implementation. In essence, this abundance confirms the political pledges to the repeatedly stated importance of ML competence-building. However, it has taken some time to match the words with deeds. Even though the past couple of years saw a tangible push toward the comprehensive and consistent ML competence-building among the Lithuanian public, an overarching framework would be beneficial for the overall acceleration of ML-related programme implementation.

Media literacy in the realm of the general education system

Lithuania's general education system is currently undergoing reform - the new curriculum of national general education (grades 1 through 12) has been developed and the new *General education programmes (Bendrojo ugdymo programu projektai)*¹⁴ start in 2023. The new general education curriculum will be grounded in seven key competencies, three of which are related to media literacy: communication, citizenship, and digital skills. Furthermore, ML education will also be horizontally integrated into all subjects taught at school.

Also, it should be noted that in the new general education system, information literacy and media literacy are defined and addressed separately.

Information literacy refers to the person's ability to identify, retrieve, evaluate, select, and use information from a variety of information sources ethically and responsibly. This enables members of society to achieve their personal, social, employment, and educational goals, as well as acquire competencies empowering them to exercise the fundamental human rights (right to work, social security, freedom of opinion and expression, right to education, to democracy, to cultural life and art, etc.) in full, especially in a world dominated by digital instruments .

Media literacy is one of the most important societal competencies that must be achieved by equipping people with the necessary competencies - knowledge, skills, and attitudes to understand the role and function of the media in a democratic society; to understand the conditions under which the media can perform their functions; to critically evaluate media content; to cooperate with the media in the promotion of democracy and self-expression, and to be skilled in the creation of (and use of) IT for the production of content.

The other two media literacy-related competencies are *citizenship education* and *media art education*.

*Citizenship education in general education (Pilietinio ugdymo bendroji programa (9-10 klasė), 2016)*¹⁵ is based on subject-based teaching with a focus on the critical use of media¹⁶.

*The media art program in general education (Vidurinio ugdymo medijų meno programa, 2021)*¹⁷ aims at developing knowledge and skills to apply new media technologies, with a distinctive audio-visual art form.

The current general education programmes do not include the media literacy subject within the compulsory

¹⁴ General education – updated education programs, Available at: <https://www.emokykla.lt/bendrasis/bendruju-programu-projektai2>

¹⁵ Pilietinio ugdymo bendroji programa (9-10 klasė) (Citizenship education in general education), Available at: <https://sodas.ugdome.lt/metodiniai-dokumentai/perziura/4301>

¹⁶ Citizenship competences: analyse and critically evaluate the information of mass media, use media to gather information and express opinions on issues in public life, explain the positive and negative impact of the media on individuals or their groups; define the principles of democratic media and explain the role of independent media in a democracy; explain why information can be interpreted differently and the consequences of such interpretation; describe the information society, its problems and dangers.

¹⁷ Vidurinio ugdymo medijų meno programa, (The media art programme in general education) Available at: <https://www.emokykla.lt/upload/EMOKYKLA/BP/2021-11-03/BP/Medij%C5%B3%20meno%20BP%20projektas%202021-11-03.pdf>

school curriculum. Therefore, the education on subjects, such as media literacy, national security, or civic education depends upon the willingness of the teacher, her or his skills, and attitude towards the subject. If the teacher is active, engaged, and skilled, she or he integrates ML into subject teaching. When the teacher is less enthusiastic, the subject might be taught very formally. The current situation lacks the coordination of teaching initiatives and programmes, also it lacks the knowledge and assessment of their effectiveness. Questions arise about the reach and outcome of these teaching initiatives, and how the teaching programs are perceived by teachers and students.

Media literacy in the realm of culture

Ministry of Culture aims to proactively mainstream media literacy into national cultural services, to enhance media literacy competencies of the Lithuanian public through cultural services or activities, especially through libraries, cinema, and museums. It also monitors the mass media and information environment. The Ministry of Culture is successfully active in the following media literacy areas.

- Media literacy level assessment. Since 2017 the Ministry of Culture monitors the level of *society's (mass) media literacy competencies* (*Žiniasklaidos priemonių naudojimo raštingumo lygio pokyčio tyrimas, 2021*). The second periodic survey was carried out in 2021¹⁸ and revealed that the overall level of media literacy of the Lithuanian population has increased by up to 48.7% (compare to 37.9% in 2017).
- Media literacy education program. This year the *Media education program in the libraries' network* starts with the aim to exploit the libraries' information infrastructure for lifelong learning.
- Media literacy initiatives. Since 2017, media and information literacy activities are organized for a network of cultural institutions, aimed at the capacity-building of cultural workers' media literacy (including countering disinformation).
- Media literacy projects in the mass media. These projects are supported and implemented through the Press, Radio, and Television Support Fund¹⁹.
- Media literacy awareness building among the public. Since 2017, the Ministry of Culture and the Media Council²⁰ organises a "Media Forum" and "Between the Lines" discussion series to increase public awareness about media literacy.

Media literacy in the realm of national security

Over the last couple of years, the public debate on the ways and forms of social engagement in the country's defence has intensified. The underlying idea is the following: capable armed forces and the support of international allies are essential but not sufficient to contain and defeat the aggressor. To accomplish this task, it is crucial to involve and empower all of society, making the country's defence their matter of concern as well. In other words, the defence of the country should be based on a whole-of-society approach.

The National Security Strategy (Nacionalinio saugumo strategija, 2021) of Lithuania clearly defines the role of education and culture as well as strategic communication in the national security of Lithuania. Article 37.6.

¹⁸ Žiniasklaidos priemonių naudojimo raštingumo lygio pokyčio tyrimas by Ministry of Culture. Available at <https://lrkm.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/tyrimas-atskleide-lietuvos-gyventoju-informacinio-rastingumo-ir-kritinio-mastymo-gerejima>

¹⁹ Spaudos, radijo ir televizijos rėmimo fondas <https://srtfondas.lt/apie-mus>

²⁰ Media Council <https://lrkm.lrv.lt/lt/struktura-ir-kontaktai/tarybos-ir-komisijos/tarybos-prie-ministerijos/mediju-taryba>

says “Strengthen the resilience of society to disinformation and other information threats by improving the education system, developing cultural services, fostering critical thinking and coordinated media and information literacy programs, and strategic communication campaigns, and by strengthening cooperation between the public, private, academic and non-governmental sectors.”²¹

The education about national security (in its broad sense) is multidimensional and requires ML competencies, namely, history and citizenship education, education on national security, and media and information literacy, and is not limited only to these topics, considering Lithuania's national and EU and trans-Atlantic policy priorities.

There is more than one state institution engaged in national security education - the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, the Ministry of Culture, and defence agencies.

Experts underlined that the implementation of the Strategy for Preparing Citizens for Civil Resistance currently debated in the Seimas (Parliament) of Lithuania, should not be narrowed down to paramilitary patriotic training, as it will not be sustainable. The policing and monitoring of the information space as well as countering disinformation is only half the job. Experts note that the diversity and hybridity of threats, and potential risks, require a comprehensive engagement from our society. Civic activism and civic resistance encompass a broad scope of competencies and an active, critically thinking citizen should be groomed from an early age.

In conclusion, the design and implementation of the national ML policy mostly lie within the mandate of three ministries: Culture; Education, Science, and Sport; and National Defence. While these government bodies are mostly responsible for the policy direction expressed in many strategic documents, a consolidated framework would enable more effective policy coordination, implementation, and consistent prioritisation within the top-tier government agenda.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and the National Education Agency have finalised the new general education program to start in 2023. Currently, media literacy education in schools is not compulsory and media literacy competence building depends upon the competencies and enthusiasm of teachers.

International donors (e.g., DW Akademie, IREX, British Council, Internews) have been contributing to the media literacy competence building both by training trainers and teachers as well ML knowledge and skills teaching among social groups.

The Ministry of Culture actively employs its public libraries and cultural services' (art, films) network for enhancing media literacy competencies among the public at large as well as contributing to the state's policy of lifelong learning. The Ministry is also active in the formation of the media policy and information environment.

The national defence of Lithuania relies on the concept of civic-based defence. The Ministry of National Defence and other defence and security agencies are proactive in the enhancement of society's media literacy competencies as they are crucial to a resilient society, although their main focus is (but is not limited to) monitoring and assessing the risks of hostile strategic communication, in the physical and electronic environment.

1.2. Actors

The main actors in the media literacy policy design and implementation are: 1. State institutions (ministries) and organisations under these institutions; 2. Public and commercial mass media; 3. NGOs and NGO associ-

²¹ Nacionalinio saugumo strategija, 2021 (National Security Strategy). Available at: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.167925/asr>

ations, advocacy groups; 4. Academia, education, think tanks, and research institutions; 5. Supporters and donors (international donors).

1. State institutions. National level

State institutions – Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and Ministry of National Defence are responsible for the media literacy policy formation within the realm of their responsibilities. Organisations under these ministries are tasked with implementing media literacy programmes. The National Education Agency under the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport is responsible for the design of media literacy education programs. Within total defence policy in Lithuania, media skills are addressed by the Department of Mobilisation and Civil Resistance, the National Cyber Security Centre; the StratComm Department of the Armed Forces of Lithuania. The Ministry of Culture implements media literacy policies via networks of libraries, cultural institutions (performing arts organisations, museums, etc.), also the Media Council, the Press, Radio, and TV Support Fund (Spaudos, radio ir televizijos rėmimo fondas²²).

2. Public and commercial mass media (national and regional)

Quality independent media is the best educator of the public in media literacy competencies. Popular media in Lithuania (Lrt.lt, Delfi, 15min, lrytas.lt, LaisvesTV, Verslo žinios, just to mention a few) publish quality information, also carry out investigative journalism activities contributing to quality reporting and meet public demand for quality information. Many popular media outlets run fact-checking and countering disinformation initiatives, most of which are financed by international donors, such as Facebook, and Google. Donors such as the Internews project have been building mass media (regional in particular) capacities for nearly five years in Lithuania. On a smaller scale, the national fund Spaudos, radio ir televizijos rėmimo fondas (Press, Radio and TV Support Fund) also supports media literacy initiatives.

The most visible media literacy projects are the ones that focus on fact-checking and countering disinformation. To mention a few, Delfi.lt, the largest news portal in Lithuania, has been running the Demaskuok.lt project aimed at countering disinformation; 15min.lt, the second-largest news portal has a special section *Patikrinta.15min* devoted to fact-checking and countering disinformation.

The interviewed experts discussed the widely presumed mandate of mass media to run fact-checking initiatives – sometimes, even at the expense of the quality of the reporting itself. Quite often the media outlet, prior to debunking the fake facts, repeat them and in this way, they contribute to spreading the disinformation.

It should be noted that many other initiatives run by national and regional media, although not labelled as media literacy projects, contribute significantly to bolstering media literacy. For instance, the Young Journalists Academy (Story Telling project financed by Internews) by LaisvesTV contributes to developing broad media literacy competencies among the youth.

The Lithuanian public broadcaster - Lithuanian Radio and Television (LRT)²³ as stated in its mission, serves the public by providing objective, reliable information to Lithuanian audiences at home and abroad, producing and broadcasting educational, cultural and entertainment programs, thus directly contributing to ML edu-

²² Spaudos, radijo ir televizijos rėmimo fondas (Press, Radio and TV Support Fund) supports the ML initiatives. Available at: <https://srtfondas.lt/news/139/84/Skelbiami-konkurso-rezultatai>

²³ Lietuvos Radijas ir Televizija. Available at: <https://apie.lrt.lt/>

cation. In addition, LRT successfully runs media literacy projects such as *LRT faktai*²⁴, and the investigative journalism project *LRT tyrimai*, also projects such as (podcasts) *Polski meet* in Polish, aimed to reach out to Polish speakers and those in information-poor regions of Lithuania. The start of the project has been financed by the international organisation Internews and proved to be very successful. It gave the idea for the other recently launched podcast for Russian speakers *Доверяй но проверяй*²⁵ aimed at reaching out to information poor regions. During the parliamentary election period, the public service broadcaster had a program *X-Ray of New/ Rinkimu rentgenas* analysing elections.

International donors contribute to building media capacity. For instance, IREX is developing a *Journalism in the Era of Disinformation* study course for future journalists at six Baltic universities. The inter-sectoral initiative *Baltic Research Foundation for Digital Resilience – Digires*²⁶, partially financed by the EU, the co-founder of which is the media outlet Delfi.lt, has been recently launched in Lithuania. It is a common initiative between academia, media organisations, and independent journalists with an overarching goal to detect, analyse, prevent, and curb disinformation activities in Lithuania and beyond.²⁷

Lithuanian Union of Journalists²⁸, a professional association, takes an active part in defining the media's role in enhancing public media literacy skills (e.g., projects Digital Media Training for Journalists, Experts Media Training), and also runs media education projects for the public.

The local ML landscape is buzzing with initiatives and media organisations (such as the Lithuanian Journalism Centre, Media4Change, etc.), which are directly engaged in the professional capacity building of media institutions as well as individual journalists. All of the interviewed experts underscored the crucial role that quality media and highly professional journalists play in strengthening the media literacy competencies of the public.

3. CSOs, NGOs and NGO associations, professional networking organizations

The civil society sector has long-standing experience in media literacy activities. NGOs are active both individually and in associations in the following areas: i) their own media literacy capacity building; ii) media literacy education of their target audiences; iii) engagement in media literacy policy design, research, and resource creation. Just to name a few cases, the Knowledge Economy Foundation²⁹ has a long record in media literacy training and research, as well as capacity building. The National Network of Education NGOs³⁰ is a professional association, a strong advocacy body that actively participates in the development and implementation of education, including lifelong learning, programmes in Lithuania. With the NGO umbrella organisation National NGOs Coalition³¹, it has been engaged in the Strategy for Preparing Citizens for Civil Resistance. The well-established political watchdog initiative for youth *Žinau Ką Renku*³² enhances active citizenship and media literacy competencies among the youth and other groups. The LijOT non-governmental organisation uniting national youth organisations and municipality youth councils is also active in media skills enhancing

²⁴ <https://www.lrt.lt/tema/lrt-faktai>

²⁵ <https://www.lrt.lt/mediateka/irasas/2000206254/doveriai-no-proveriai-belorusskii-politolog-dmitrii-bolkunets-o-perspektivakh-voennoi-agressii>

²⁶ Digires. Available at: <https://digires.lt/>

²⁷ About Digires. Available at: <https://digires.lt/en/post-3/>

²⁸ Lietuvos žurnalistų sąjunga http://www.lzs.lt/lt/titulinis_puslapis.html

²⁹ Knowledge Economy Foundation, <https://www.zef.lt/>

³⁰ National Network of Education NGOs <https://svietimotinklas.lt/apie-mus/>

³¹ National NGOs Coalition <http://3sektorius.lt/nisc/nacionaline-nvo-koalicija/>

³² Žinau Ką Renku <https://www.zinaukarenku.lt/>

activities. *Media and Information Literacy Network (MIRT)* is another initiative offering a platform for communication and exchange of media literacy know-how. Lietuvos Žurnalistikos centras³³ enhances quality journalism and boost the media literacy competencies among journalists and other communities. Skaitmeninės etikos centras³⁴ and Skeptic Youth addresses their target audiences' media literacy skills in a virtual environment. Open Society Fund (ALF) runs media literacy capacity building activities and manages grants for other NGO projects which address media literacy.

Non-governmental organisations in Lithuania are growing, are well self-organised and are active in policy advocacy. According to the interviewed experts, to implement media literacy policies effectively, the state institutions should treat the NGO sector as a strong asset and partner in media literacy education. In addition, the international donors noted the need to have strong NGOs as partners in implementing long-term ML projects, thus ensuring the sustainability of ML initiatives.

4. Academia, education, think tanks, research institutions

Media literacy and information literacy studies and research have always received attention among academia, research, and education circles. Vytautas Magnus University is UNESCO Chair on Media and Information Literacy for Knowledge Inclusive Societies and the co-founder of the *Digires* (Baltic Research Foundation for Digital Resilience) initiative. Vilnius University is active in media and information literacy studies and research, information and communication, social media, and journalism programs, just to name a few. In addition, colleges and universities address media literacy competencies in their tutors' training programs.

Many non-profit and non-governmental organizations are also active in ML education and research – Knowledge Economic Forum and think tanks Eastern European Study Centre (EESC) and Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis (VIPA, Europos namai, Pilietinės visuomenės institutas – Civil Society Institute) are engaged in media literacy assessment among their target audiences, running research and monitoring of public attitudes. (A few years ago, VIPA initiated the Investigative Journalism Awards, aiming to enhance the quality of journalism.)

Libraries are active contributors to media literacy education and meeting the demand for lifelong learning, serving as a platform to reach out to regional communities and identify the media literacy needs on the ground. Martynas Mažvydas National Library runs the *Media Makerspace* project. This year the network of libraries launched the initiative on developing and implementing a media education program. This includes the design of media literacy activities for the public, teaching and learning materials, as well as training of library professionals and developing of their media literacy competencies.

5. Supporters and Donors (international donors)

Lithuania is fortunate to have international donors devoted to media literacy education in the country. Media literacy activities are financed either by the state or by foreign donors. As practice shows, national donors – state institutions (ministries and agencies) finance short-term, and small-scope media literacy projects. Long term ML projects are for the most part financed by international donors: *DW Akademie, British Council, International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), Internews*, and their projects address both capacity building of ML teachers and trainers as well reaching the public, with a special focus on youth. Additionally, international donors – *Nordic Council, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the U.S., UK, and the EU member state embassies* contribute significantly to financing short-term projects, filling gaps between the need to address a topical issue and

³³ Lietuvos Žurnalistikos centras <https://lzc.lt/>

³⁴ Skaitmeninės etikos centras <https://e-etika.lt/>

access to finance. However, as many interviewed experts -including international donors' representatives - note, the presence of a national ML action plan would allow to better plan activities and resources, and ensure sustainability.

Interim conclusion: the local ML ecosystem is in effect a diverse and vibrant community, motivated to improve media literacy education in Lithuania and offering a broad spectrum of best practices to do so. The state actors, engaged in ML policy formulation, understand the diverse character of ML competencies, and thus recognise the need for closer cross-sectoral cooperation. A definitive majority of the interviewed experts underscore the importance of formulating an overall national ML program and/or an action plan, which would serve as a cross-sectoral framework for all ML initiatives. The plan would also help to mobilise actors from different ML sectors and coordinate media literacy activities at the national level. It is seen as instrumental for actors to plan their activities and finance more effectively. It would also help reduce fragmentation and opportunism, while not impeding the consistency in competence-building among the public.

1.3. Target groups

Media literacy competence building is a lifelong learning exercise. It is important that all groups of society are reached and have easy access to media literacy education (competencies building), the interviewed experts said.

As the survey shows, the schooling community is the main target group for media literacy training. School students (high school - 68.2%, and middle school - 63.6%), followed by teachers, school psychologists, social pedagogues, school educators, and parents are the target groups that most often receive media literacy training. Junior students (45,5%) receive less training, while the preschool children group is the smallest group (18.2%) reached by media literacy training.

The survey also shows that the majority of target groups addressed were in regions or geographically remote areas, as well as areas with ethnic or linguistic minorities.

Journalists, especially regional media representatives, make the second largest group targeted by media literacy activities, according to the survey data. Librarians, information specialists, NGO staff, social workers, performing arts and museum specialists are a minority target group, although they are important as media literacy skills and knowledge disseminators and educators.

In a word, based on the analysis of interviews and survey data, the following groups were identified as target audiences of media literacy projects:

- School children and students
- Professionals - teachers/educators
- Professionals - journalists and media practitioners in general
- Professionals - librarians
- Professionals – culture workers.
- General public/all citizens
- Senior /retired people
- Ethnic and linguistic minorities

The survey respondents rated target groups according to age as follows – teenagers, youth and middle-aged adults would be among those most often receiving media literacy training, while senior citizens and young adults received training less by at least half. The interviews with experts confirmed a similar tendency; that the main emphasis is on youth ML training.

According to the survey and interviewed experts, the key vulnerability in the society is the imbalance among various groups of the society of their media literacy skills and knowledge. Experts underlined the urgency of starting proactive media literacy education for the wider society (not only youth), as other very important groups of society are currently neglected. No single group in society should be left out of media literacy education. Otherwise, there is a high risk of growing social exclusion, societal fragmentation, and even polarisation.

Another important issue is the quality of media literacy teaching methodology, material, and manuals. Experts stressed the importance of knowing the target audience, as well as good command of the teaching and training methodologies.

1. 4. Mapping activities

The survey, interviews, and desk research show the abundance of media literacy activities in Lithuania. Actors are most often engaged in education (training), media literacy, and capacity building, followed by advocacy actions, media content development, and media monitoring. The survey showed that actors usually combine two or three media literacy activities, such as creating resources for ML and training trainers, while at the same time raising awareness about media literacy skills. Independently of whether actors are state or non-state, their activities are often of a similar genre. At school, media literacy skills training is offered in computer science and citizenship classes. In the new general education curriculum, media literacy competencies are integrated into existing curriculum subjects.

State institutions and professional associations are active in media literacy policy formation, also in advocacy and implementation. The non-state actors, such as NGOs and their coalitions and platforms are active partners in policy formation.

Most frequent ML activities are training and education

According to the survey, the most frequent ML activities are training and creating resources for media literacy training (75%): training materials, such as games, books, podcasts, etc. Respondents pointed out that they are also engaged in training media literacy trainers (50%) as well as raising awareness (45%). In recent years, international institutions DW Akademie, IREX, Media Literacy Accelerator (MLA), and the British Council have been running cycles of media literacy training both for trainers and for the public.

Also, interviewed experts noted that every media literacy activity includes the ML awareness-raising component. Also, they note that media literacy education activities in Lithuania are predominantly at the awareness-raising level.

Key skills addressed during media literacy training

Respondents rated the key skills addressed during media literacy training as follows: critical thinking (85% of respondents), increasing the trainees' awareness of cognitive biases in decision-making processes, followed by discussions and analysis of media use, its functioning, and the increasing media landscape complexity (75%). Digital inclusion, online safety, digital rights, and hate speech online topics all came at 65%. Counter-

ing disinformation and propaganda (50%) was described as a medium priority. The least addressed skills of media literacy activities were creativity and creative media, intercultural dialogue skills and civic activities, and participation in the democratic process. Interviews confirmed the urgent need for enhancing citizenship skills and teaching democracy.

During the interviews experts pointed out the limited choice of models in media literacy training, lack of target audience tailored training, and insufficient targeting of vulnerable groups like young adults, senior citizens, and ethnic minorities. Experts also noted the importance of media literacy education for Ukrainian, Belarus, and Russian refugees who have come to Lithuania over the past three years.

Media literacy skills required in the nearest future

The survey identified the most urgently required skills for the near future and thus the priority areas for media literacy education: 1. Critical thinking and cognitive flexibility; 2. Digital literacy and access to new technologies skills. Here experts also point to the importance of emotional and empathy competencies in the high-tech age. 3. Awareness of media ethics, emerging new social media platforms, and analysis and evaluation of media content. Media content production and education were named as medium priority skills. However, interviews underlined the urgent and high importance of education of media literacy competencies, noting, too, that preparation of teachers, educators, and trainers' is a time and effort-intensive process.

Capacities of organisations active in media literacy education

The self-assessment of the capacity of organisations active in media literacy education showed that actors have strong education and training credentials. They are experienced, have a good command of media literacy competencies, and are familiar with the national media literacy sector. They form a strong network of media literacy professionals and have strong or adequate managerial capacity. Also, respondents noted their experience in grant and project writing.

The respondents of the survey self-assessed their own ability to monitor and evaluate the impact of projects as very high. However, interviews with experts and the desk research disclosed the absence of and need effectiveness measurement methodologies and data for media literacy education. The self-assessment questionnaire filled in by participants at the end of each training is too biased and does not reflect the skills gained. Only the Ministry of Culture regularly monitors society's mass media literacy competencies.

The survey showed that actors are much more critical about their capacity for securing funding and thus ensuring the sustainability of activities, and this feature is conditioned also by scarce funding resources in the national market.

Organisations see themselves as strong in evaluating the impact of projects as well as their ability to communicate with and advocate the media literacy issues to domestic and international stakeholders. They know their target groups well. But the security and cyber security of their organisations, as well as the cyber and digital skills, are assessed in a much more cautious way so at a lower level.

Media literacy initiatives outside the formal education system

The interviews and the desk research show that most media literacy activities discussed earlier are taking place either as non-formal education, or initiatives of mass media. The non-formal education sector offers a broad scope of activities enhancing media literacy via culture, arts, active citizenship, research, analysis,

support of educational institutions (including curriculum development), networking and popularisation of media literacy, online learning, just to name a few. Non-formal education is carried out by state and municipal organisations, such as libraries, film and culture centres, and the NGO sector. Experts in their interviews repeatedly stress that ML activities carried out by the non-governmental sector are in large part conditioned by the availability of funding, therefore, they are short-term, and their scope is limited.

Countering disinformation and fact-checking are carried out by civic initiatives such as Lithuanian Elves, and mass media initiatives (e.g., *Demaskuok delfi.lt*; *Dekonstruok delfi.lt*; *Patikrinta 15min*, etc.), and civil resistance training by the National Riflemen's Union; Lock'n Loaded and Civic Resilience Initiative³⁵, just to name a few.

Among the non-formal media literacy education initiatives is "Big Small Screens"³⁶, a media literacy project organized by the media education and research centre "*Meno Avilys*", and supported by the British Council Lithuania since 2016. The activities focus on the audio-visual media and media products that are especially relevant to students (movies, advertisements, computer games, social networks, TV shows, series, and multimedia journalism).

Responsible journalism initiatives by NARA³⁷ are another field boosting society's media literacy also reaching out to the information poor areas: a team of journalists teaches the basics of media literacy and journalism, photography, and audio-visual fundamentals.

1.5. Funding

ML initiative funding is mostly dependent on national and international donors. The interviews and survey results indicate that the main national funders in promoting media literacy are state institutions and funds (e.g., Press, Radio and TV Support Fund (Spaudos, radio ir televizijos rėmimo fondas)), Lithuanian Culture Council, Lithuanian Film Centre); foreign governments and their embassies in Vilnius; EU and U.S. initiatives and other foreign donors such as foreign state cultural institutions and funds (e.g., British Council, The Nordic Council, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, NED); as well as foreign media and technology companies (e.g., DW Akademie, Facebook, Google). Two forms of funding prevail; grants for projects and state financing via annual budget allocations.

Interviewed experts and the survey repeatedly revealed that financial sustainability remains a critical challenge for non-governmental organisations active in media literacy development, with significant dependence on international donors. The national funding is available, but on a small scale and short term. The interviews pointed to the risk of fragmentation of media literacy initiatives as NGOs compete for the same funding and thus, see each other as competitors rather than partners in media literacy implementation. This leads to an opportunistic approach toward media literacy project implementation, and it risks reducing the quality of such projects.

The longer-term media literacy projects usually come with state funding and are allocated to the agencies and institutions under ministries. Interviewed experts suggested that state institutions should consider granting funding for long-term projects to non-governmental organisations, not only the state-owned ones.

³⁵ Civic Resilience Initiative (CRI) <https://cri.lt/#about>

³⁶ Medijų raštingumo projektas | Dideli maži ekranai (didelimaziekranai.lt) <https://www.didelimaziekranai.lt/>

³⁷ NARA is a space for responsible journalism in which fundamental aspects of society are examined. NARA is produced by a collective of journalists and media professionals whose work relies on the principles of ethical journalism, research, and respect for our interviewees. [15](https://nara.lt/en/about>About | NARA</p></div><div data-bbox=)

The survey shows that almost all projects in media literacy are financed by one donor, and a mix of two donors and more than two donors is rare. Asked about the future of non-governmental organisations in media literacy, 82% of respondents said that they had to give up a project because they were not able to attract donors. Other obstacles in project implementation - the shortage of personnel with required qualifications and the overlap of projects were a significantly lesser challenge.

Also undermining the sustainability of media literacy projects is the absence or weak coordination of media literacy activities at the national level, according to the interviewed experts. Experts noted the urgent need for a consolidated national media literacy action plan that would provide a framework for the implementation of media literacy projects and would better allocate the available finance and actors in the media literacy field. International donors would welcome a comprehensive media literacy program, as currently they often act as inter-institutional and cross-sectoral brokers of ML activities. International donors also noted that national coordination of media literacy activities would help them plan their activities and funding, hence helping them to better contribute to the national efforts of ML competence building.

1.6. Lithuania in Indexes

	2019	2020	2021
World Press Freedom Index	30/180	28/180	28/180
Global Innovation Index	38/131	40/131	28/132
Global Peace Index	35/163	31/163	37/163

2. Country Findings and Recommendations

2.1. Cross-sectoral cooperation and networking

The complexity and comprehensiveness of media literacy competencies are well perceived by key actors in Lithuania, and they underline the importance of cross-sectoral cooperation, networking, and coordination in media literacy education. Moreover, media literacy education should be a life-long learning activity, experts noted.

The current cross-sectoral cooperation is evaluated by local actors as generally satisfactory or good, depending on the field of activities. Also, they have noted overall improved communication among representatives of different sectors, increased exchange of information, and best practices, although professional or sectoral bubbles remain.

Civic society is active in media literacy competencies building. However, experts note that many NGOs rival each other for financial support, thus they are not willing to share information about their best practices. As also noted in the previous section, the interviewed experts identify limited financial resources as the key reason determining the fragmentation and an overall opportunistic approach towards media literacy projects, the negative externality of which is impeding cooperation.

The interviews have also disclosed that experts from different fields of media literacy do not have a comprehensive overview of the media literacy policies and programs in Lithuania. The information on ML exists but it is not easily accessed. Experts discussed the need to improve communication among media literacy actors

- NGOs, national and international donors and ministries and their agencies, departments. Experts suggest that media literacy education requires either establishing an institution that would lead the ML activities at the national level, or an existing institution should be mandated to coordinate the media literacy policies and programs. International donors support the idea pointing out that media literacy policies coordination would allow better planning, consolidate efforts, and finance on the donors' side too.

Although cooperation and networking between the governmental institutions (ministries and agencies) and other actors in designing and implementing media literacy activities have been improving, they are not yet sustainable. There are many cases of successful cooperation, but they are often a result of situational cooperation rather than systematic and institutionalised approaches.

Strengths

- The benefits of a cross-sectoral approach to media literacy is well understood, which therefore pushes organisations towards cooperation. State institutions – ministries and affiliated agencies – engage representatives of other sectors in media literacy programming. For instance, the national working group, assembled to draft the strategy to prepare citizens for civil resistance, was notably cross-sectoral. As a result, key stakeholders now understand that to strengthen long-lasting societal resilience, the strategy's implementation will require a comprehensive media literacy competence-building, as opposed to a narrowly focused induction in civic patriotism.
- A successful track record of cooperation between the Ministry of Culture and the Department of Mobilisation and Civil Resistance under the Ministry of National Defence where libraries and cultural networks are used to reach out to the public in regions. New patterns of cooperation between NGOs and state institutions.
- A strong and proactive civic society, self-organised networks and NGO associations have a coordinated approach to enhancing their media literacy competencies. The National NGO coalition and the Network of National Education NGOs both organise training and workshops to boost the media literacy competence of the NGO sector.
- Cross-sectoral cooperation by academia, media organisations, and independent journalists is strengthened. A notable example of interdisciplinary cooperation is the DIGIRES project on digital resilience building. The think tank has launched the Media Literacy Network initiative – a platform for communication and exchange of experience, and best practices among state institutions, media, research institutions, and NGOs.
- International donors like the British Council, DW Akademie, and NED, as well as diplomatic embassies remain active actors in the media literacy field, helping to ensure the sustainability of media literacy activities' and further cross-sectoral cooperation and communication. Notably, international projects like IREX stimulate cooperation among academia, media literacy experts, and target audiences.

Weaknesses

- The coordination among different governmental agencies is uneven. The reorganisation of agencies under the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport interrupted the communication with other state organisations and requires time to be re-established.
- Although cross-sectoral cooperation exists, it lacks institutionalised mechanisms and sustainability. The leadership coming from the NGO sector requires long-term funding.

-
- Lack of human resources and the need for long-term funding both for Lithuanian and ethnic and linguistic Polish and Russian minorities media literacy training.
 - Media literacy education policies lack a holistic approach at the national level. Three ministries implementing media literacy policies focus on their own sector goals, rather than inter-institutional synergies.
 - High competition for funding among NGOs often hinders coordination and stronger synergy among actors. Media literacy initiatives are fragmented and opportunistic.

Threats

- Lack of coordination and cooperation among different governmental agencies and absence of mandated leadership (or an institution/body) responsible for the overall media literacy policy implementation might create gaps in media literacy education within society, undermining the coherence of media literacy education. Media literacy education will remain reactive and opportunistic, with weak, interrupted sustainability.
- Lack or poor funding of media literacy initiatives will fail to address the problem of fragmentation of media literacy education, and it will impede the setting and reaching of mid-and long-term ML education goals.
- Lack of finance will slow down the cooperation and experience sharing among media literacy actors.
- Not-yet-built-up resilience. This means lack of effective critical thinking when exposed to information operations undertaken by hostile Russian and Belarussian media, intending to subvert the Lithuanian society. The influx of refugees over the last three years – from Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia – stresses the importance of effective integration into society, to prevent them from becoming the target of malign and hostile information operations.
- ML cross-sectoral long-term projects are largely supported by the donors and might be affected by the change in donors' priorities.
- Weak inter-institutional coordination impedes the efforts of ML actors and weakens the synergy of their activities.

Opportunities/Recommendations

- The institutional capacity of government agencies working in the media literacy field should be strengthened. The institutional know-how and continuity should be preserved when the institutions undergo reorganisation.
- There is a need for mandated leadership at the national level to implement sustainable media literacy policies. Media literacy competencies are cross-sectoral, and their acquisition is a lifelong learning exercise, therefore ML implementation should focus on long-term goals. It should ensure that intersectoral gaps are filled and should address all groups of society. ML implementation should be backed with long-term budget allocations.
- More attention and resources should be allocated to projects targeting Russian and Polish-speaking adult and senior populations in regions and rural areas.

-
- Experience exchange between experts of different sectors is an effective way to raise awareness, share best practices and achieve comprehensiveness in ML education.
 - The new general education program to start in the new academic year should be presented to media literacy actors in all sectors to build synergies in ML implementation.
 - The libraries' initiative for ML education of the public (Ministry of Culture) and the National Education Agency (Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport) should seek cooperation in media literacy addressing the lifelong learning programs.
 - Cooperation between civil society and business will be beneficial for both parties and contribute to the sustainability of media literacy initiatives.
 - Networking and cooperation with regional and local organizations in media literacy projects design and implementation will strengthen regional organizations and will ensure better ML education reach out.

2.2 Evaluation of media literacy activities

The survey showed that actors carry out on average two to three types of media literacy activities. Some experts expressed concern about overlapping of activities but in general, experts trust the professionalism of target audiences and trainers, who would oversee the risk of activities overlapping. Most frequent media literacy activities are education at the awareness-raising level, information (including digital) literacy, (mass) media literacy and capacity building, followed by advocacy, media content development, and media monitoring.

Experts underscore the challenge of ensuring the sustainability of media literacy activities. Most projects financed by national institutions are short-term and address a narrowly defined topic. Short-term activities do not yield long-lasting effects and are limited in scope. They do not build professional networks or cooperation.

Countering disinformation and fact-checking is an important media literacy activity but, as surveys and interviews pointed out, no longer dominate ML education. It was also noted that for countering disinformation to be effective other media literacy skills and knowledge are required. Those are primarily critical thinking competencies which are acquired as a result of the accumulation of ML competencies.

According to the survey, the least addressed skills of media literacy were creativity and creative media, intercultural dialogue skills and civic activities, and participation in the democratic process.

Noting that in future critical thinking and cognitive flexibility skills will be the most required skills, experts advise introducing advanced level media literacy training. Current media literacy training is mainly at the starting, i.e., awareness-building level.

Also, experts note the need for educating teachers and trainers on ML skills and teaching methods. as well as encouraging media literacy trainers to self-organise into a media literacy trainers' and teachers' community.

Another urgent task is the design of a methodology for the assessment of society's media literacy competencies and their regular monitoring.

Strength

- Media literacy education remains high on the political agenda and there's an understanding that the comprehensive cross-sectoral approach toward media literacy education should be applied.

-
- The diversity of media literacy activities of a cross-sectoral character and the high demand for media literacy training does not pose a risk of overlapping activities. There is high demand for media literacy competence training among all ages of adult groups in society, including ethnic and linguistic minorities, and senior groups.
 - The new general education programs focus on three media literacy competencies: communication, citizenship, and digital competencies.
 - The public demand for media literacy competencies and understanding of the importance of lifelong learning is growing.

Weakness

- Lack of structured cross-sectoral implementation of media literacy activities. Each state institution focuses on its sector; inter-institutional cooperation is situation-driven or rests on individual initiatives.
- Most of the existing initiatives focus on ML awareness building, basic skill training, and knowledge development, broadening the gap between a basic level and a more advanced media literacy education, therefore impeding the gradual and comprehensive ML education of all of society.
- Short term ML activities do not yield long-lasting effects.
- The life-long learning program will only be developed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport. Adult groups of society do not receive media literacy education or training. Media literacy education for different age groups of adults and senior citizens is carried out under individual initiatives of NGOs – lifelong learning universities, Lietuvos žurnalistų sąjunga (Union of Lithuanian Journalists), National Network of Education NGOs.
- Lack of effectiveness in evaluating the methodology of media literacy capacity building undermines the quality of media literacy activities programming and their implementation.
- Interviewed experts noted that the current media literacy activities are “basic”, so at the awareness-raising level. It is important to move to a more advanced level of media literacy competence building.

Threats

- Lack of coordination and willingness, or absence, of practice to cooperate between the ministries and agencies responsible for media literacy.
- A growing number of media literacy trainers, freelance or NGO, and media literacy training without ensuring media literacy trainers’ qualifications might lead to a waste of funds and time, and risk compromising the media literacy subject.
- Lack of a structured approach by the governmental institutions, such as the absence of a person(s) tasked with ML education, ML inter-institutional, and cross-sectoral cooperation. Also, the absence of a mandated institution to coordinate the implementation of the government’s media literacy policies slows down and undermines the comprehensive media literacy education in society.

Opportunities/recommendations

- State institutions responsible for media literacy policy formation understand the need for a comprehensive approach to media literacy education, seek cross-sectoral cooperation, and support long-term projects backed by long-term financing.
- Long term funding would create opportunities for long-term media literacy projects and ensure sustainability and effectiveness.
- State institutions should support cross-sectoral cooperation with international donors and develop coordinated, jointly financed, long-term ML projects.
- More efforts and resources put into measurement and evaluation would result in better media literacy programming and higher quality of projects.
- In the interviews, experts recommended starting media literacy competence building for the following groups:
 - Politicians and civil servants both at national and local levels. Special attention should be given to ML training of politicians at national and local levels. Some experts noted the need for training judges in ML competencies too.
 - Senior citizens. Retired citizens form an extremely active part of society, for instance, their turnout during elections is high. The national life-long learning (third age) Universities network is well developed in Lithuania and could serve as a well-structured basis for media literacy education of senior citizens. Special efforts should be made to reach out and engage with the seniors of ethnic and linguistic minorities.
 - Adult ethnic and linguistic minorities groups should also be reached to enhance their media literacy competencies and help them become more engaged in Lithuanian social life.
 - The business sector is another cross-sectoral group, and its media literacy has a direct impact on their decision making.
 - University and college students of all subjects, including science; this should not be limited to social and humanitarian science students.
 - Journalists and media staff. Experts note the need for training journalists (students of journalism and professionals) to ensure quality media content and quality journalism.

2.3. Sustainability and funding

Financial sustainability remains a critical challenge for non-governmental organisations working in the media literacy field. International donors are the key supporters of NGOs and media outlets (except the public service broadcaster LRT), according to the interviewed experts. National funding focuses on short-term activities. This reduces the scope of the projects and does not offer continuity for comprehensive ML competence-building across the entire society. In addition, the rivalry among non-state actors for project funding impedes cooperation, communication, and know-how sharing among organisations as well as media literacy trainers and, even, researchers.

Strengths

- The government entities understand the importance of funding to achieve the sustainability of ML education. They also acknowledge the shortcomings of short-term, narrowly scoped project funding. In response, the Ministry of Culture has for the first time launched a new libraries program to encourage ongoing public learning, with a significant budget allocated to multiple, longer-term activities.

Weakness

- National funding is available, but on a smaller scale and for a shorter term. International donors provide long-term funding, but their goals may not necessarily serve Lithuania's national ML programming. Moreover, in case of a change of priorities by the international donor, the continuity of ML initiatives is left at risk.

Threats

- Media literacy activity planning without adequate funding is counter-productive, potentially leading to sector fragmentation, lost focus and failed goals, increased rivalry among actors, wasted or even lost know-how, and the rising distrust of the leadership within key governmental institutions.

Opportunities

- There is a need for creating a system of consolidated and long-term ML project funding.
- National donors-state institutions should see the NGO sector as a long-term strategic partner and focus on developing ML mid-and long-term projects in partnership with the NGO sector. The government sector should not be only locked into state institution bubbles when implementing ML activities.

2.4. The Role of Media in Increasing Media Literacy

The state cannot jeopardise independent quality media as it is a vital element of a democratic society, and this is very well understood in Lithuania. Quality media and quality journalism have a direct impact on the media literacy competencies level of the public.

The Lithuanian media system seems pluralistic, but if we see mass media and journalism as partners in ML competence building among the public, certain issues require closer attention and informed analysis, such as the proximity of political-business interests, and ownership transparency of popular media outlets. Also requiring scrutiny are media business models and activities as well as journalistic professionalism.

Over the last three years, Lithuania's national and regional media has launched a series of media literacy initiatives devoted to fact-checking and deconstruction of disinformation. These initiatives can be divided into: self-financed initiatives, using media resources; initiatives financed by international donors, such as Facebook, Google, Internews; and projects financed by national entities - the Fund for the Support of the Press, Radio and Television (*Spaudos, radijo ir televizijos rėmimo fondas*). In addition, there are a few initiatives for financing media start-ups through crowd-funding actions.

The 2021 survey assessing the media literacy skills of the public pointed out that the number of those recognising fake news increased by 21 % compared with 2017 and the increase is very much related to mass media initiatives of debunking and countering disinformation.

Another factor directly contributing to the media's impact on media literacy skills enhancement among the public was growing public demand for quality information and quality journalism. In recent years, several investigative journalism initiatives in national media and regional media outlets have developed and grown.

Strength

- Quality journalism and quality reporting together with fact-checking, media literacy, data analysis, and data reporting have become of primary significance in all news media.
- Media groups (Delfi. It, 15min.lt) and citizen initiatives like Lithuanian Elves have started playing an important role in regular and coordinated actions geared toward countering disinformation.
- Several independent media outlets are actively implementing projects in fact-checking, resilience to Russian disinformation and propaganda, and educating the public about the media sphere.
- Institutional media ownership monitoring is undertaken by a few non-governmental initiatives, such as S.T.I.R.N.A by Transparency International Lithuania; state initiatives (e.g. VIRSIS by Ministry of Culture,); the Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania; as well as regular public opinion polls on the public trust in media, which contribute to keeping the quality of journalism and quality of reporting high on the policy agenda.
- National media outlets adopt and adhere to a professional code of conduct.
- There are numerous training activities for journalists and teachers of journalism that address ML competencies (critical thinking, spotting fake news and manipulation, and fact-checking).

Weakness

- Experts underlined the existing imbalance of media financial capacities, for instance, the public service broadcaster and commercial media; national media outlets, and regional media outlets. This ultimately has an impact on the media performance quality.
- Interviewed experts note that the Fund for the Support of the Press, Radio, and Television does not provide sufficient funding for ML activities for media. The Fund, in its turn, notes the poor quality of ML projects proposed by media outlets.
- Ownership has an impact on the content and quality of information. Only a handful of the top news media organisations publicly declare their ownership on their websites.
- The current mechanisms do not ensure media ownership transparency and thus leads to media ownership concentration.
- Regional media tend to be marginalised and this impacts the professionalisation of journalists.

Threats

- Close integration of politics and business interests has a direct impact on the media's institutional standing as well as professional functioning.
- Structural decline in some media sectors, especially in regional media and newspapers weakens media literacy in regions.

-
- Until 2021 media literacy activities focused on information literacy, while media's role and function of the media in a democratic society were discussed only among professionals but not among the public.

Opportunities/recommendations

- More structured efforts are required to focus on developing partnerships with academic, media, and civic groups/NGOs for 'news media resilience' initiatives.
- More attention should be paid to media literacy - understanding the role and function of the mass media. During the past few years, major attention was paid to information literacy.
- The expansion of governmental support for media literacy projects for media outlets through the Fund for the Support of the Press, Radio, and Television. A system of grants can strengthen media outlets, regional media in particular, and, as a result, serve larger audiences. The quality of media literacy projects should be addressed together with the media outlets and the state institutions.
- There is an identified need to further enhance the recognition of the key role that the media community plays in ML competence-building.

Conclusions

- Media literacy has always been on Lithuania's strategic agenda and attracted attention from many local actors. Media literacy competencies can be perceived as a competitive advantage for Lithuania's state crafting efforts. It has become an integral part of the whole-of-society approach, significantly contributing to economic competitiveness, the development of national digital infrastructure, cultural growth, and the strengthening of societal resilience.
- The design and implementation of the national media literacy policy mostly lie within the realm of three ministries – Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and Ministry of National Defence. This indicates that a comprehensive national policy on media literacy is still under development. Stakeholder interviews confirm the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to media literacy implementation at the national level. Two options are possible: establishing a new institution to coordinate and overlook the design and implementation of a consolidated media literacy program; or mandating one of the existing institutions to centralise all efforts instead.
- The overview of policy papers and regulations shows that media literacy policies are regularly updated following the strategic planning process and responding to the current needs and challenges. On the other hand, although the scope and diversity of documents underline the topicality of media literacy issues, they also point to the fragmented approach toward the media literacy implementation. This leaves the media literacy policy development and its implementation within a sectoral approach.
- The financing strategy for media literacy programs should be updated, prioritising mid-and long-term sustainability. Currently, national funding remains focused on the short term, reducing the scope of the projects and taking away from a comprehensive competence-building across the entire society. Lithuania is fortunate to receive most of ML funding from international donors, who run long-term projects and provide direct funding for local actors.
- However, the current financing model creates additional risks. First, the short-term national focus might

also create an unexpected negative externality for civil society. It might incentivise the local NGO sector to become dependent on short-term project calls, encouraging them to focus on the project-writing pipeline and spurring internal competition for resources, which might further prevent collaboration and eco-systemic benefits. Second, international financing might increase the risk of national institutions and civil society's over-reliance on international donors in the long term, which might prevent them from establishing sustainable operations.

- Therefore, the key recommendation for the government would be to lead the formulation of a comprehensive strategic and financial framework for media literacy activities, to which international donors could then contribute.
- It is important to note, that the Lithuanian terminology (especially in the educational, capacity-building context) differentiates between media literacy and information literacy, mostly balancing both competencies. The most common definitions are:
 - Information literacy refers to the person's ability to identify, retrieve, evaluate, select, and use information from a variety of information sources ethically and responsibly.
 - Media literacy is equipping people with the competencies to understand the role and function of the media in a democratic society; to understand the conditions under which the media can perform their function; to critically evaluate media content; to cooperate with the media in the promotion of democracy and self-expression, and to be skilled in the creation of (and use of) IT in production of content. Media literacy also includes citizenship education and media art education.
- The Lithuanian media literacy ecosystem is notably vibrant and continues to grow. An increasingly wider number of NGO actors contribute to the development of ML initiatives, most of which involve elements of cooperation between the public (e.g., state institutions) and the private (e.g., commercial media networks) sector. Similarly, the media sector is actively engaged with and contributing to media literacy competence building in Lithuania. Together, these elements of civil society (academia, think tanks, media, NGOs, etc) form a critical asset - both in terms of "soft" media literacy (e.g., arts and cognitive education) and "hard" media literacy (e.g. civic defence).
- One of the key recommendations for the government is to develop a standardised media literacy monitoring and evaluation system, to benchmark, track and evaluate different programs and initiatives. The Ministry of Culture is one of a few institutions to engage in a regular evaluation of the media literacy skills and media consumption of the public. However, a more comprehensive media literacy survey by the central government would significantly boost the overall media literacy programming, budgeting, and competence-building.
- Currently, media literacy training is most prevalent within formal general education and in general targets the school youth and educators. The recommendation is therefore to approach media literacy as a lifelong learning subject and develop competence enhancement programs targeting all age and ethnic groups of society. The most benefit would also arise from the targeted education of the most vulnerable groups, such as senior citizens, inhabitants of rural communities, as well as representatives of ethnic minorities.
- The lack of widespread understanding of the applicability of media literacy competencies remains a potential obstacle to enhancing the quality of training, in turn limiting societal demand for new initiatives. Additionally, most of the existing initiatives focus on basic skill training and knowledge development, widening the gap from more advanced media literacy education, thus impeding a gradual educational advance of all of society.

-
- There is a clearly stated need for a national database of all media literacy initiatives. This would further strengthen the domestic media literacy sector, which would also benefit from an ecosystemic knowledge sharing and exchange of best practices. In addition, the database should put a special emphasis on servicing the needs of the media, who would benefit from additional training and easily available information for more-informed reporting and better analysis.

References

Lietuvos pažangos strategija „Lietuva 2030“, 2012 (The Strategy for Progress of Lithuania "Lithuania 2030"), Available at: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.425517>

Lietuvos Respublikos Kultūros Ministerijos Visuomenės informavimo politikos strateginės kryptys 2019-2022 Strategic Directions of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania Public Information Policy 2019-2022, Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/95c4cf60344211e99595d005d42b863e>

Lietuvos Respublikos visuomenės informavimo įstatymas | 45 str. 2 d. 4 p.1996 (Law on Public Information | Article 45(2)(4) Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.065AB8483E1E/asr>

Nacionalinio saugumo strategija, 2021 (National Security Strategy, 2021), Available at: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/10625df0623a11ecb2fe9975f8a9e52e?positionInSearchResults=0&searchModelUUID=0ad4b921-9a5c-40e4-a16e-a753cfa94425>

NACIONALINIS PAŽANGOS PLANAS 2021-2030 (National Progress Plan 2021-2030), 3 strateginis tikslas – didinti švietimo įtrauktį in veiksmingumą, siekiant atitikties asmens ir visuomenės poreikiams, Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/d492e050f7dd11eaa12ad7c04a383ca0/asr>

XVIII Vyriausybės programa (The 18th Programme of Government), Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/ed22bb703bc311eb8d9fe110e148c770>

Lietuvos Respublikos Kultūros Ministerijos Visuomenės informavimo politikos strateginės kryptys 2019-2022 (Strategic Directions of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania Public Information Policy 2019-2022), Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/95c4cf60344211e99595d005d42b863e>

Lietuvos kultūros politikos strategija | 32, 2019. (Lithuanian Cultural Policy Strategy | 32)

Trečio Strategijos tikslo pirmas uždavinys – stiprinti gyventojų ir institucijų atsparumą informacinėms grėsmėms, pilietinį aktyvumą ir žinias. (The first objective of the third goal of the Strategy is to strengthen the resilience of citizens and institutions to information threats, civic engagement, and knowledge), Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/6aa23a109d4d11e9878fc525390407ce>

Bibliotekų plėtros politikos strateginės kryptys 2016–2022 m., 2016 (Strategic Orientations for Library Development Policy 2016-2022), Available at: Available at: <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/5939be90103011e6acc9d34f3feceabc>

2021–2030 m. Intelektinės nuosavybės apsaugos plėtros programa, 2021(Intellectual Property Protection Development Programme 2021-2030) Available at: https://tm.lrv.lt/uploads/tm/documents/files/2021%E2%80%932030%20M_%20INTELEKTIN%C4%96S%20NUOSAVYB%C4%96S%20APSAUGOS%20PP%20PROJEKTAS.pdf?msclid=679a3458b90011ecac1b528eac6bc455

Ugdymo programos, 2022 (Education programs), Available at: https://smsm.lrv.lt/web/lt/ugdymo_programos

Lietuvos Respublikos piliečių rengimo pilietiniam pasipriešinimui strategija, 2022 (Strategy for Preparing Citizens for Civil Resistance), Available at: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/3ac8fb30800311ecb2fe9975f8a9e52e>

Vidurinio ugdymo medijų meno programa, 2021 (The media art program in general education) Available at: <https://www.emokykla.lt/upload/EMOKYKLA/BP/2021-11-03/BP/Medij%C5%B3%20meno%20BP%20projektas%202021-11-03.pdf>

Žiniasklaidos priemonių naudojimo raštingumo lygio pokyčio tyrimas, 2021 m. (Study on the change in the level of media literacy by Ministry of Culture) Available at <https://lrkm.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/tyrimas-atskleide-lietuvos-gyventoju-informacinio-rastingumo-ir-kritinio-mastymo-gerejima>

Pilietinio ugdymo bendroji programa (9-10 klasė), 2016 m. (Citizenship education in general education), Available at: <https://sodas.ugdome.lt/metodiniai-dokumentai/perziura/4301>

Nacionalinio saugumo strategija, 2021 (National Security Strategy). Available at: <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/TAIS.167925/asr>



**Baltic Centre for
Media Excellence**

Research Lead

Dr. Solvita Denisa-Liepniece

Country Researcher

Dalia Bankauskaite

Project Team

Gunta Sloga, Executive Director, BCME

Martins Murnieks, Head of the EaP Programme, BCME

Magda Walter, Copy Editor

Ilva Paidere, Layout Designer

This publication is co-sponsored by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the supporting institutions or their partner.



NATO
OTAN

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION