



Background Document on National Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Policies and Strategies in Albania

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1. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

Media and information are crucial in a democratic society for citizens to make informed decisions and for their empowerment and contribution to society. At the same time, while new information technologies bring along a huge potential, citizens and media should also be empowered to make proper use of these tools and avoid risks they entail. In this respect, media and information literacy is a crucial competence in order to develop critical thinking and make use of rapidly advancing technological tools in media and communication. For this purpose, this Background Document aims to address Media and Information Literacy (MIL) reality in Albania, based on the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Policy Guidelines¹. The Background document served as the basis for discussion during national consultative meeting on MIL, which took place in Tirana on February 21, 2017. The consultations brought together an array of actors, such as the Minister of Innovation and Public Administration, the representatives from Ministry of Education, different universities and education institutions, National Library representatives, audiovisual media regulatory authority, the trade union of journalists, media experts, organizations engaged with media and youth, journalists, and civil society organizations. The consultations identified the main trends and actors that are or can be engaged in MIL, and specific roles they can play in order to have a more complex, integrated, and strategic approach to MIL, in formal, informal, and non-formal education.

This document also reflects the feedback from different actors during the national consultations. The document will be available for the government and other stakeholders in order to recommend specific steps that can be taken for integrating media and information literacy in the formal, non-formal, and informal education in Albania.

WHY IS MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH CRUCIAL/SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

The effort to identify the needs and draft potential policies and strategies to address media and information literacy would be limited without the involvement of numerous stakeholders that are affected and can contribute in the future to the development of media and information literacy. These actors would

¹ Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/resources/publications-and-communication-materials/publications/full-list/media-and-information-literacy-policy-and-strategy-guidelines/>

come from various areas of formal, informal, and non-formal education, and can help the cause of spreading media and information literacy through different tools and practices. Such actors would ideally include formal education institutions, such as state bodies dealing with curricula development and training of teachers, secondary and primary schools, universities, and continuous learning institutions and initiatives. Other important stakeholders would include media industry, regulatory and self-regulatory bodies, public and school libraries, parents and teachers' associations, librarian associations, information providers, social media users, training institutes, memory institutions, information intermediaries, etc. Significant change in the changing media and information landscape show that schools are not anymore the only/sing source of gaining knowledge/learning. This places a strong emphasis on to informal learning institutions and intermediaries, such as libraries, archives, museums and other cultural institutions.

While in Albania the preparations and efforts towards MIL are still in their infancy, it would be crucial to involve as many stakeholders as possible in any future effort, in order to have results in this field.

2. HOW IS MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY CONCEPTUALIZED IN THIS DOCUMENT?

Digital age and technology advancement have led to a transformation of what was previously defined as media literacy to a broader concept of media and information literacy, addressing various needs of literacy in the current world. In this context, this Background Document uses UNESCO's understanding of MIL as the starting point as a composite concept encompassing both Media and Information literacy (More about UNESCO's MIL concept available in Annex 1.

In essence, by using the concept of MIL as a composite concept, the aim is to harmonize the approach between media and information literacy, and apply this concept to the Albanian situation. For this purpose, the document will consider issues such as media literacy, computer literacy, Internet literacy, and digital literacy². It will do so by considering existing regulation, documents, and strategies that focus

² MIL as the composite concept includes: library literacy, news literacy, digital literacy, computer literacy, Internet literacy, freedom of expression and freedom of information literacy, television literacy, advertising literacy, cinema literacy, and games literacy (UNESCO, MIL Policy and Strategy Guidelines)

on these issues, as well as initiatives by civic sector, such as civil society. Considering the situation and the needs identified, the document will offer recommendations for developing policies and strategies in the area of media and information literacy in Albania.

3. DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR MIL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES IN ALBANIA

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) policies and strategies in Albania have to be viewed and assessed against the country's social, political and cultural context. One of the driving forces for reform and guidance of new regulations and policies in the country has been the EU integration process, with Albania currently being a candidate country. Although the negotiation process has not started yet, it has had important impact in the legislative area, paying attention that drafting of legislation and policies is in line with EU standards and legislation, and sometimes requesting EU assistance in drafting legislation. The area of legislation affecting MIL makes no exception, such as in the cases of audiovisual media regulation, e-commerce regulation, digital switchover, electronic communications, etc.

A crucial precondition for improving access of citizens to media and information is improving infrastructure of information and technology and Internet penetration rate has increased significantly in the last years. The Albanian government for years has declared digitalization and having a knowledge based and information society as a priority, both in terms of having a more open and developed society, as well as a better economic record. In addition, it has been a consistent policy of the last two governments to pay attention to the establishment of e-government services, aiming to facilitate offering of information and services to citizens. Another government policy has been that of improving and strengthening technological situations in schools, with the aim of teaching students ICT skills as a widespread action. Meanwhile, the efforts to reform the curricula and especially provide the teachers with sufficient capacities to train the young generation on media and information literacy are less pronounced. Although digitalization of archives and information is lagging behind in some sectors, there has been progress in areas such as libraries and other databases.

While the government with the relevant ministries and other public training and research institutions are mainly in charge of legislation and policies on MIL, civil society sector has also attempted to affect several components of media and information literacy, such as content production training for young people and

citizens, attempting to introduce MIL as a separate subject in schools, and other efforts to develop critical thinking skills, especially among young people. In addition, civil society has also engaged in projects providing marginalized communities with the skills to produce media content and enable them channels of communication, as in some cases with ethnic and linguistic minorities, LGBT community, etc.

However, a formal, official strategy and policy treating MIL as a complex concept is lacking. The government and the civil society are tackling different aspects, sometimes through joint cooperation, but the different component and approaches that make up MIL are still underdeveloped in terms of policy, strategy, and implementation.

4. OVERVIEW OF MIL IN ALBANIA

The paper has focused on current policies on MIL in Albania, in three approaches: formal education, non-formal education, and informal education.

4.1 MIL POLICIES IN ALBANIA IN FORMAL EDUCATION

The basic legal framework for pre-university graduation in Albania is laid out in the Law no. 69 / 2012 "On pre-university education in the Republic of Albania." The main aim of the law is to determine the basic principles on the structure, activity, and governance of pre-university education system in Albania, striving to guarantee the constitutional right to education³. The law covers general education, while vocational education is addressed in another law.

While the law on pre-university education leaves the responsibility of drafting curricula to the respective authorities, it highlights that the whole pre-university education is a system that should use a competency-based approach, specifying the competencies that each student must acquire as result of pre-university education. Some competencies are related to MIL, and in this way it can be said that some MIL skills are implicitly assumed as outcome⁴.

³ "Law no.69/2012, "On Pre-University Education," Art.1.

⁴ More specifically the basic competencies defined in the legal framework include: communication and expression; thinking; learning to understand; competencies for life, enterprise, and environment; personal skills;

The competencies laid out in the law are broad and do not focus on any section in particular, but rather are intended as part of the basic skills the students have to gain as part of their education until university education. The only more section-specific skill mentioned is digital competencies, which is directly related to media and information literacy. The same emphasis on use of new technologies and teaching digital competencies to students also resonates with the Strategy of Development of PreUniversity Education 2014-2020. The section explaining the visions, principles, and priorities of policies on pre-university education states that “progressive actualization of this vision will enable the necessary conditions and opportunities for students ... to use new technologies,”⁵ among other goals⁶. Among the main tools used the Strategy envisioned the improvement of technological infrastructure in schools, as well as the development of multimedia materials for the curricula, mobile labs for the schools, and integration of ICT in different subjects of the school curricula⁷.

Apart from the law and the Strategy on pre-university education, more specific guidelines are included in the core curricula, which is the basic document that guides the drafting of teaching plans and subjects. The core curricula are based on the Curricula Framework (See Annex 2). The Curricula Framework defines digital competencies as “critical and efficient use of ICT at work, during free time, and communication. These competencies include basic skills of using computer to find, produce, create, present, and exchange information, as well as to cooperate in information networks on the internet.”⁸

The Curricula Framework considers technology and ICT as one of the main learning areas and recommends that in order to see a quick advancement of students in this area, it should be integrated with all other learning areas, in a graduated form, across the pre-university education system cycles⁹.

Based on the Curricula Framework, the Core Curricula is drafted, hence including digital competencies

civic skills; and digital competencies. Moreover, the amendments made to the law in 2015 rank among the aims of the pre-university education system that of teaching students on using new technologies.⁴

⁵ Strategy of Development of Pre-University Education 2014-2020.

⁶ This was a point strongly made also in the previous Strategy on education, for years 2009-2013. One of the priorities of the previous Strategy included widespread introduction of ICT in the curricula, enabling students to improve use of ICT and become competitive in the labour market.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

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In the initial phase, ICT subject should be scattered across various subjects; in the second cycle it should include ICT and technology as a separate subject, while in the advanced third and fourth cycles, it should consist in advanced development of ICT skills for the students.⁹

among the main skills students are expected to learn, and ICT and technology as one of the main seven learning areas.

Apart from ICT, which is a separate subject, parts of other subjects in the curricula are related to finding, assessing, and interpreting media texts, combined with developing critical thinking skills. More specifically, this is true for the subjects of Albanian language and communication, as well as civics, which is part of the core curricula, making it a mandatory course. So, the curricula for the subject of Albanian language and communication, grades 1-6, states among its aims “searching, finding, and critical assessment and use of information from the media and internet.”⁵ Similarly, the curricula of the subject of civics include skills the student is expected to gain, which are related to MIL⁶.

So, even though media literacy is not used as a term and does not rank among the key competencies of the pre-university education system, parts of specific subjects are related to specific components of media literacy, such as assessment of information, accessing information, and also composing content and distributing it through communication channels.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ICT SUBJECTS IN SCHOOLS

The introduction of ICT to schools and improvement of infrastructure for the subject has been a priority for the governments in recent years. However, the teaching of ICT in schools has not been smooth, due to several factors. First of all, the generation gap between teachers and students tends to favor students in terms of technology skills. Second, the technical infrastructure needed to teach ICT subject has improved, but much more remains to be done⁷. Thirdly, the ICT subject is relatively new for the teachers, and they

⁵ Albanian Language and Communication program.

⁶ Some of the skills include: drawing main information from a book, newspaper, magazine, radio, TV., etc, and comments and uses it as a reference in drafting homework; using digital media and information tools to communicate and cooperate, including online communication; analyzing, assessing, and managing the information received electronically (e.g., composing in a table or graph the information taken from internet.)

⁷ The current Strategy for pre-university education admits that “in spite of all investments made, ICT use in education institutions is limited. The equipment offered is mainly through public funds, but also through contribution of private sector in specific cases. However, according to the Strategy information, for the most part, the is not properly used or is out of use. The basic public education schools report to have 15,731 personal computers, out of which only 11,331 are functional. There are also 1,631 laptops in the schools, out of which 432 are out of order.

are faced with having to teach new skills to the students, who are often more advanced than the teachers in this field. According to the Strategy on pre-university education, teachers currently are expected to have 18 hours of training per year⁸. However, training on ICT has not proved to be sufficient so far. “Often this subject is taught by teachers who have had short-term training and are educated in other fields, such as physics, mathematics, and this is a way of fulfilling the number of classes a teacher must have. Training of teachers is certainly lagging much behind or is inexistent, both in ICT and in media literacy.”¹⁴ The lack of official training initiatives of teachers has not been compensated through any initiative of the NGO sector, neither in ICT, nor in information literacy.

In this respect, the Institute of Education Development has drafted guidelines⁹ for teachers on ways of teaching ICT, providing also models and formats of integrating ICT skills into other subjects, such as language, sciences, history, etc. The text encourages teachers to use different technology tools to communicate with students and to teach their subject, such as websites, blogs, chats, forums, etc, promoting a more interactive approach. The guidelines also cite the UNESCO ICT competency framework for teachers as part of the competencies the teachers must have in technology when teaching their subject¹⁶.

GOVERNMENT POLICY AND OBJECTIVES REGARDING ICT AND MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY

The main document that lays out the government policies on information society is the Digital Agenda Strategy (2015-2020), which was first preceded by the Inter-Sectoral Strategy of Information Society (2008-2013.) The Strategy drafted in 2008 identified the need to introduce ICT as a subject in schools, but also to educate the broad public on how to find and take advantage of information, against the background of growing internet access among the population¹⁷. “The measures taken for introducing ICT in the education system must be accompanied by education plans for the broad population, which, in a way or another will be user of information or electronic services.”¹⁰ The Digital Agenda Strategy admits that in spite of the progress, much remains to be done in the field of ICT in education (See Annex 3.)

The 2013 government program cites media as one of its field, referring to press freedom, public service broadcaster, independent regulatory authorities, and right to information, but there is no mentioning of

⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴

Interview with Erida Koleci, Institute of Education Development.

⁹ Learning with situations, constructivism, and technology: guidelines for teachers. ¹⁶ Ibid. ¹⁷

Inter-Sectoral Strategy of Information Society (2008-2013.)

¹⁰ Ibid.

media and information literacy. Other policies and strategic documents on gender, protection against discrimination, or youth strategy, do not envisage MIL as a tool for empowering citizens and especially vulnerable group. The only reference in this regard is to use media for public awareness campaign against e.g. domestic violence, gender issues, discrimination, etc.

4.2 NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

The education system and core curricula are not particularly focused on media and information literacy. Although ICT is part of the curricula, it tends to focus more on the technical capacities of using technology, and not on how to handle and assess information received via technology.

In this context, several civil society organizations have attempted to implement initiatives that would fill the void in this area through several projects. The Albanian Media Institute in 2010 started a project aiming to collect and share regional experience on media literacy initiatives and potential ways of introducing them into the curricula. Two textbooks were created that could be used by the teachers, but there was no formal introduction of media literacy to the core curricula. Neither there was follow-up in establishing non-formal education, such as extracurricular training, training for teachers, etc. however, the Institute has continued to publish several books (mainly translations) related to media literacy. In addition, the institute holds courses for students of journalism and mid-career journalists focused on improving their digital skills.

A similar involvement in training young people to create media content by teaching them professional norms and technical skills has been that of the Media Aktive center, which has engaged in this project for two years. In addition, Soros Foundation has organized the project RRATHE for three editions, calling on young people to produce video-documentaries focused on social aspects.

Other organizations, mainly those addressing children safety and problems, have engaged on online safety of children, creating a coalition and platform, also with the participation of Albanian government institutions, namely the website: www.isigurt.al. However, this initiative's main concern is protecting children, rather than explaining them how to use the media and information safely, but effectively.

Overall, the absence of strong and community-based organizations and associations in the fields of education, media, and information, has not contributed to a more developed non-formal education in the area of media and information literacy. There is no active association of teachers in the area of MIL. At the same time, the media community is deeply divided. Although formally there are several associations, most of them are not active and at a time when journalists do not actively participate in the union for their own labour rights and benefits, it is difficult that they would organize for improving ethics or educating

the public. Even though there is a Code of Ethics approved in 1996, and then later revised in 2006 by Albanian Media Institute, there are no self-regulatory bodies, and previous initiatives to establish such bodies or mechanisms have failed. The only body that could affect MIL policies and public awareness is perhaps the Council of Complaints, which functions as part of the regulatory authority on Audiovisual Media (AMA.) It is supposed to act as an intermediary between citizens that can complain on media conduct, and the media outlets. However, it was established in April 2016 and it still remains to be seen what the effect will be.

Private sector

The private sector has also provided its contribution recently in education efforts towards media and information literacy. In 2016, the Ministry of Innovation, in cooperation with ALMOOC, the Albanian Platform of the Coding Hour, carried out a pilot project of a curriculum that includes basic knowledge of coding, in a Microsoft sponsored project. The project establishes an online education platform, “which cooperates with distinguished professors of Albanian world to offer free online classes, accessible to all.”¹¹ The subjects offered in online classes and tutorials include English, Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry as general subjects, as well as Coding and ICT as professional subjects.

4.3 INFORMAL EDUCATION

AVAILABILITY AND ACCESS TO MEDIA AND INFORMATION PROVIDERS

Informal learning is learning that occurs in daily life, in the family, in the workplace, in communities and through interests and activities of individuals¹². However, it is difficult to speak of the significance of informal learning and the importance of MIL among the population without first establishing if there is a satisfactory basis for free and available access to media and to information providers (See Annex 4.)

Sector-specific laws also guarantee freedom of expression, such as the Law on Press and the Law on Audiovisual Media.

In early 2012, Albania adopted comprehensive reforms of its criminal and civil defamation laws, bringing them into much closer alignment with European democratic standards. Sources are protected and journalists are not forced to reveal their confidentiality. A new law on access to information was also approved in 2014 and considered to be among the best in the region. Recently there have been proposed

¹¹ <http://almooc.com/rreth-nesh>

¹² <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002163/216360e.pdf>

amendments to e-commerce regulation, affecting the practice of media outlets regarding comments from users, but the amendments are still being discussed. Overall the legislation guarantees freedom of expression, including media freedom, in a satisfactory way¹³.

AVAILABILITY OF AND ACCESS TO MEDIA SOURCES

Citizens in Albania have access to a large number of media outlets operating in the country. There are no official figures on the number of print media, and neither on their circulation. There are more than 20 existing daily newspapers, both of a general nature and thematic one, such as sports.

Digital switchover is well beyond the official deadline for Europe, namely June 2015. The spread of the internet, on the other hand, has been a very gradual process, with significant improvements over the last years.

Hence, the overall context, both through traditional means of information, and online, indicates that there exists a rich variety of sources of information and access to these sources is not hindered, while costs are considered generally affordable.

However, there is digital divide in Albania in terms of geographic distribution of access to internet.

ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN INFORMATION LITERACY

Museums and libraries can play an important role in informal learning process in the field of media and information literacy. However, their role and mission have to be redefined against a background of digitalization of information and services they can potentially offer, tailored to the needs of citizens in a digital era.

The libraries are designed by law as part of the national information system. The law considers them as cultural and informative institutions, offering free access to information to everyone, in whatever form it is available¹⁴. The national library network includes all public libraries in the country, working in

¹³ Balkan Media Barometer: Albania.

¹⁴ In addition to the National Library, the law also stipulates the establishment of public libraries, defined as libraries created and supported by the community with the support of local or central governments. At the moment there are about 33 such libraries in the capital, and 42 in other cities. The greatest part of the libraries

cooperation with the network of archives and museums. The Ministry of Culture is in charge of overseeing the strategy and policies of development of libraries.

The main institution in the areas of libraries in the country is the National Library, founded in 1920, based in Tirana. The library has numerous functions and departments, but in terms of educating the public on media and information the role of the Sector of Informatics and New Technologies is especially relevant, since it enables, guides, and organizes the integration of the information technology in the practice of National Library. Currently there is a digitized and searchable database of the books, documents, maps, and manuscripts hosted in the library, containing about 325,207 bibliographic records. In addition to preserving copies of all publications, compiling catalogues and bibliographies, the National Library is also the Center of Library Training, training all librarians in the country. The National Agency of Bibliography is also part of the National Library, working as the bibliographic center in the country. Since 1961 the monthly report of the National Bibliography of Albania is published, containing articles of periodic publications in the country, describing the main articles that are related to Albanian history, geography, literature, culture, and arts, a bibliography that is also searchable online. In the last years the National Library has worked to digitize and make available online digital archives for rare and old manuscripts, maps, or important periodicals of early Albanian press or complete works of wellknown writers. In addition, the National Library runs a two-year qualification program in Librarianship, which includes elements of MIL¹⁵.

In order to spark interest especially among the youth on reading of books and accessing information (in the terms of searching, identifying and finding credible sources of information) different organizations and state bodies have started projects. One of the first and major projects in this regard has been that started from UNICEF, in cooperation with other private and state actors, the project “Albania Reads,” aiming to open libraries or further enrich existing collections in pre-university education institutions all over the country . The Ministry of Culture has also cooperated with publishing houses and public figures in organizing activities that could promote reading among young people, such as the campaign “See you for a book,” organizing public readings and discussions with famous persons; the campaign “Reading the city,”

belongs to the private or public universities or institutions, such as parliament and Academy of Sciences, while the rest is part of the local municipalities’ network.

¹⁵ The curricula include subjects such as Information Organization, ICT, Digital Library, and Library services to users.

which aimed to combine conveying information to pupils about the city they live in through book reading; the campaign “Read to them, to make them read,” which consisted of meetings between Albanian artists and high school students to talk about books, etc. Another project has been that of “Revitalization of libraries,” with the Ministry donating 1,200 books to six public libraries in the capital.

ROLE OF MUSEUMS AND ARCHIVES IN INFORMATION LITERACY

Albanian legislation provides for the existence of both public and private museums. Public museums can be under the supervision of Ministry of Culture, Academy of Sciences, other public institutions, and also local government. Although the law allows for donations and sponsorship of museums, the public museums seem to be chronically underfunded according to museum management representatives¹⁶.

There are several public archives in the country, the largest of which is the Central State Archive, while other archives belong to specific institutions, such as Parliament, different ministries, court archives, etc. By law, information available in archives is available to all citizens, without discrimination, and no need to provide a reason for seeking the information is necessary¹⁷. While in principle information in these archives is available upon request, in accordance with the regulation, there is no pro-active approach or any specific initiative in affecting media and information literacy landscape. Digitalization of archives remains a problem, especially for old movies and public broadcaster old content, whose archive quality has worsened over time, sometimes risking the materials they preserve. The State Archive of Film has slowly started to digitalize and improve the quality of old movies, and some of them are available online in the website of the archive.

5. POLICIES AND STRATEGIES TOWARDS MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY IN ALBANIA

Albania’s preparations in the field of MIL policies, strategies, and their implementation are far from advanced. Although several actors have attempted to deal with particular aspects of MIL, it is still in an

¹⁶ In the last years the government has invested in renovating old museums (e.g. Museum of Medieval Art in Korca) or co-funding the establishment of new ones (e.g. Photography Museum “Marubi” in Shkodra.) In view of overall debate and spirit of revising history texts and narratives, or discovering the truth in dictatorship regime, other museums showing life under dictatorship have also opened or are in the plans (e.g. two Bunkart museums.) According to the law, museums can offer reduced price for special categories of people, while for schools access is usually free.

¹⁷ Information is denied only in cases when it is limited by another law, usually if the information is still classified.

initial phase, hampered also by important obstacles, such as the ongoing educational reform, low training capacities of teachers, underdeveloped NGO initiatives in this field, the absence of strong and active professional and community-based organizations, etc. However, the sooner MIL as a concept is introduced in the formal curricula or in other initiatives, the better will be for Albanian citizens, especially in an era of rapid changes of information and technology world.

Based on the context and analysis provided on the situation of MIL in Albania, and following the UNESCO Conceptual Strategy for MIL, the following strategies and objectives could be proposed to further develop policies and strategies of MIL in formal education. The proposals will be discussed in the national consultation and then the final policy recommendations will reflect the discussion and feedback from the consultation.

POLICY STATEMENTS:

- MIL programmes will provide specific education and training to enable citizens’ competencies in media and information literacy.
- MIL programmes will be designed to enable greater democratic participation of citizens by improving their media content production skills and improving their critical thinking on media and information.
- MIL programmes will provide opportunities for further professionalization of media reports and establishment of self-regulatory bodies that assist the process of media and information literacy among citizens.
- MIL programmes will promote the benefits of media, archives, libraries, and other information providers in order to support social inclusion, anti-discrimination policies, and uneven regional development.

MIL STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS IN FORMAL EDUCATION¹⁸

Goals	Key stakeholders	Strategies/Objectives
Media and information literate citizens	Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration, Institute of Education Development, secondary and	Formulate an official strategy and policy treating MIL as a composite concept and adopting the necessary policy guidelines accordingly.

¹⁸ The proposed model follows the UNESCO MIL Strategy and Policy Guidelines.

	primary schools, higher education and research institutions	Training of trainers on MIL and curriculum leaders to guide curriculum
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		adaptation process
		Develop Curricula and guidelines for professionals including teachers by adapting model MIL Curriculum and this Policy and Strategy Guidelines published by UNESCO and other similar resources
		Pilot MIL Curriculum in selected teacher training institutions
		Support training opportunities on MIL for researchers at higher education and research institutions
		Efforts for training of teachers on ICT should improve through continuous learning opportunities.
		Review primary, secondary school, and higher education curricula to accommodate MIL
		Integrate MIL into schools' extra-curricular activities to complement formal classroom settings. For instance MIL clubs; put a small radio in the library; start a media and library cadets programme.
		Create an enabling environment where private sector can engage and contribute to MIL policies.
		Adopt journalism school curricula to a more hands-on experience, rather than theoretical approach to journalism and communication, emphasizing media and information literacy skills.

MIL awareness among policy makers and researchers	Ministry of Education, Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration; education institutions, NGOs, media regulatory authorities	Support to research, seminars and conferences which aim at bringing together stakeholders across professions and sectors.
		Provide policy makers with access to online training programmes on MIL
		Provide a protective environment in which children can make choices as media consumers that promote their development to their full potentials

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Goals	Key stakeholders	Strategies/Objectives
MIL among parents, communities, NGOs	Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration, Institute of Education Development, secondary and primary schools, parents and teachers' associations, schools and public libraries	Encourage initiatives of extracurricular activities and initiatives from NGOs and private sector centered on teaching youth MIL skills.
		Support establishment of associations of teachers or similar organizations working on MIL initiatives.
MIL awareness among media professionals	Media organizations and, media regulatory bodies, online media and information providers, social media users	Adapt and pilot guidelines for broadcast and print media to promote MIL and usergenerated content
		Encourage the establishment of self-regulatory bodies and mechanisms as a way of improving media ethics and encouraging media and information literacy.

		Encourage initiatives of regulatory bodies aiming at educating the public on MIL, such as respecting the Broadcasting Code, communicating with the Council of Complaints of AMA on media conduct, strengthening the Council of Listeners and Viewers of PBS, etc.
		Promote awareness campaigns and professional debates on publication of ethical guidelines in media outlets, as well as systematic professional reviews of quality of media coverage.
		PBS should assume a leading role among media outlets in educating and communicating with the public on MIL, both through training programs for students and through content production focusing on diverse MIL aspects.

INFORMAL EDUCATION

Goals	Key stakeholders	Strategies/Objectives
MIL databases and information sources	Libraries, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, NGOs.	Encourage initiatives that improve access to information and databases and improve information literacy among youth and citizens.
		Foster initiatives of libraries, museums, and other similar institutions focused on introducing and teaching MIL skills to young generation and overall public.

	Archives, Museums, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, NGOs.	Support the digitalization of archive and museum materials and adopt policies that make the materials available online or in an easy accessible format that would assist information literacy.
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6. Annexes

6.1. Annex 1: UNESCO’s MIL as a composite concept

“MIL, understood as a composite concept, encompasses knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable citizens to:

- Understand the role and functions of media and other information providers in democratic societies;
- Understand the conditions under which those functions can be fulfilled;
- Recognise and articulate a need for information;
- Locate and access relevant information;
- Critically evaluate information and the content of media and other information providers, including those on the Internet in terms of authority, credibility and current purpose;
- Extract and organise information and media content;
- Synthesise or operate on the ideas abstracted from content;
- Ethically and responsibly communicate one’s understanding of created knowledge to an audience or readership in an appropriate form and medium;
- Be able to apply ICT skills in order to process information and produce user-generated content;
- Engage with media and other information providers, including those on the Internet, for selfexpression, freedom of expression, intercultural dialogue and democratic participation.”¹⁹

6.2 Annex 2: Curricula Documents affecting MIL policy

The core curricula and Curricula Framework date from 2014 and constitute the basis of content of preuniversity education system in the country. The Curricula Framework is “a key document in the

¹⁹ See UNESCO, MIL Policy and Strategy Guidelines.

organization of the education system; it orients the education actors and the stakeholders on key aspects of the curricula, as a way of guaranteeing efficiently quality education for all.”²⁰ The document of the framework states that the rationale for the need of changing the existing curricula included among others the need to build a knowledge society and the need to prepare students for integration in the digital era²¹. Both these factors recognize the necessity of the school to adapt to new developments and needs, such as teaching new competencies to students and improving digital literacy through the school system, in order to achieve full functional literacy²².

According to the Curricula Framework, at the end of the pre-university education students must be able to:

- Interact and cooperate with others by using a diversity of digital media;
- use different media and formats for communicating information and ideas in an effective way for different audiences;
- develop awareness on globalization and cultural diversity by interacting with students of other cultures;
- contribute to increasing efficiency in group projects in order to bring original products or solve problems;
- preserve ethics in personal and group communications;
- find, organize, analyze, assess, and elaborate and use information from a diversity of sources and media;
- select sources of information or digital tools based on their appropriateness in doing specific tasks;
- preserve the security of virtual identity and privacy;
- select and use applications efficiently;
- solve problems of systems and applications;
- understand and use accurately the technology systems²³.

²⁰ Curricula Framework.

²¹

Ibid.

²²

Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

The core curricula are mandatory for all pre-university schools in the country, including private schools. In the learning area of ICT and technology the core curricula specifies the following topics that must be addressed during the teaching process:

- In-depth data analysis (analysis and interpretation of statistical data)
- Search engines and media tools (specific features of search engines and finding information online)
- Programming language (application of basic formulas)
- Technology, technological systems, and computer world (definition of technology and its systems, and analysis of their impact on society; advanced use of media to do homework and projects)
- Graphic communication (use of graphic design to communicate)
- Technological structures, mechanisms, and materials (construction and functioning of technological structures and mechanisms)
- Technology and economic activity (analysis of effect of technology on economy) - Labour ethics and safety (protected and safe environment.)²⁴

The ICT subject is supposed to be taught for two classes per week in the program of third cycle, which together with the subject of technology constitute 5.4% of the teaching plan, while the ICT also is taught for two classes per week in the program of the fourth cycle, or 3.2% of its total teaching plan.²⁵ Some of the main competencies the students are expected to develop include drafting online content in different multimedia forms, disseminating information and content, engaging in online citizen activity, cooperation through digital channels, searching and filtering online information, critically assessing information, etc³⁴.

6.3 Annex 3: Digital Agenda Strategy and its implementation

According to the Digital Agenda Strategy there are currently 1,496 computer labs in pre-university system and broadband internet connection is available in the labs in schools²⁶. In addition, the ICT subject, which

²⁴

ibid.

²⁵

ibid.

³⁴

ICT and Technology program.

²⁶ Digital Agenda Strategy.

in 2006 was taught in high school, from 2014 is also spread across other, lower cycles of pre-university education²⁷.

Some of the problems with ICT in education as identified in the Digital Agenda Strategy include the following:

- the ratio of number of computers for students is 1:27;
- internet connection is available only in computer labs, but not in libraries, for example;
- in more than 1/3 of schools the students' access to online information is limited;
- risk of exposing students to inappropriate content;
- lack of children awareness on phenomena related to cyberbullying or online abuse of children²⁸.

Furthermore, a priority of the Digital Agenda Strategy is also increasing human capacities, mainly by starting the use of new technologies in a systemic way and early, ranging from pre-school and reaching also public administration. Recognizing that any existing or new ICT system cannot work if human resources are used, the Strategy identifies the need to apply ICT education programs across all education system levels, and also extend it to public administration employees²⁹.

Overall, the priorities identified for the years 2015-2020 from the Digital Agenda Strategy include the overall improvement of national infrastructure of ICT, increasing high speed connection, (at least 100 Mbps for 50% of households and 30 Mbps for the population), increasing percentage of population using internet from 50% in 2013 to 90% at the end of 2020, and have broadband internet connection for all schools in the country³⁰. More specifically regarding ICT in education, the Action Plan of the Strategy states that some of the steps to be taken include digitalization of libraries in pre-university education institutions, training for teachers in ICT, developing e-learning system, and continuing work with ICT in pre-university education.⁴⁰

²⁷

ibid.

²⁸

ibid.

²⁹

ibid.

³⁰

ibid.

⁴⁰

Action Plan of Digital Agenda Strategy.

6.4 Annex 4: Media Legislation

For this purpose, the following sector briefly examines the legal framework for freedom of media and freedom of information for both traditional mainstream media and online content, as well as de facto availability of media and information in the country.

Legislation on freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is among the personal rights and freedom enshrined in the Constitution of Albania, more specifically in Article 22:

- (1) Freedom of expression is guaranteed.
- (2) The freedom of the press, radio and television are guaranteed.
- (3) Prior censorship of a means of communication is prohibited.
- (4) The law may require the granting of authorization for the operation of radio or television stations³¹.

The Law on the Press states: “The press is free. Freedom of the press is protected by law.”³² Furthermore, Article 4 of the Law on Audiovisual Media³³ ranks freedom of expression and freedom of audiovisual media operators among the fundamental principles of audiovisual broadcast:

- (1) Audiovisual broadcasting activity shall be pursued on the basis of the following principles:
 - a) Audiovisual broadcasting activity shall be free.
- (2) The audiovisual service operators during the exercise of their activity shall be also guided by the following principles:
 - a) Guaranteeing of the freedom of expression.
 - b) Guaranteeing of the right to information.

³¹ Constitution of Albania, 1998.

³² Law no.8239, “On Press,” 1997.

³³ Law on Audiovisual Media 97/2013.

6.5 Annex 5: Media , information, and internet trends

Against the background of global crisis of print media, financial crisis in the country, and severe competition from television and online media, the situation of print media has certainly deteriorated. It is believed that only a few newspapers reach a significant audience, while the rest sell only a few copies.

According to the Authority on Audiovisual Media there are 71 radio stations, 70 television stations, 109 cable televisions, and three commercial multiplexes operating in the country³⁴. Meanwhile the public radio operates in two national programs, as well as programs addressed to compatriots. The public television operates in two national programs and in view of the preparations for digital switchover has started broadcasting in thematic channels.

Although the process was stalled for a long time, due to the specific dynamics of the market, legal vacuum, and lack of preparation from institutions, the process seems to move forward now. The process was marked by legal lawsuits of operators and legal amendments that led to questions on media plurality guarantees, and it remains to be seen how these developments will affect access to information when the switchover takes place. In the meantime, the regulator, Audiovisual Media Authority, has started an energetic information campaign for the population, in order to prepare it for the switchover.

Internet users in Albania (2000-July 2016)

According to the Authority on Electronic and Postal Communications, in September 2016 the penetration rate of Internet through broadband connection reached 64.7% of population, with 60% of them accessing internet through mobile phones.³⁵ At the same time, mobile phone users amounted to 3,877,321, with a penetration rate of 137% for active users and 185% for SIM cards. Similarly, the regulator in its annual report for 2015 confirmed that the number of subscribers with accessing internet through fixed broadband connection was 243,000 households at the end of 2015, marking an increase of 17% compared to 2014, and accounting for 33% of total households³⁶. In this context, the high percentage of mobile users and the increased connection to internet of the population offer satisfactory access to information that can be found online, be it through traditional media, or through news portals, or other internet sources.

A national survey of the Department of Journalism and Communication at the public University of Tirana revealed that the more remote one is from urban centers, the smaller the access to internet is: while

³⁴ AMA, List of operators: www.ama.gov.al

³⁵ AKEP Statistics.

³⁶ AKEP Annual Report 2015.

access in urban centers is closer to 74%, in rural areas it reaches 48%.³⁷ A similar correlation is also noticed in terms of the education of population: among individuals with post-university education access to internet reached 100%, while it went down to 33.87% for persons with primary education⁴⁸.

Along the same lines, another sensitive issue is that of securing access to digital terrestrial television after switchover to digital signal only and switch-off of analogue television. According to the Strategy for Digital Switchover and government decisions, the decoders would be given for free to households that are within social assistance programs. This process is still ongoing, but the representatives of public broadcaster have expressed their concern on this step, since it would be useless to transition to digital broadcasting if the households do not have access to the signal first⁴⁹.

There is very little information on the main sources of information of Albanians, be it media or other sources, since continuous surveys on this aspect are missing. The situation does not fare better within the media consumption habits of the public. Studies on audience and readership of media have been rare, not systematic, or the data have not been public, leading to often unfounded claims from media operators on their audience reach.

However, various surveys through the years indicate that there tends to be a high public trust in media, especially in its contribution in fighting corruption. Media was ranked among the least corrupt institutions in surveys conducted in 2005-2010,³⁸ while it was perceived as the second most trustworthy institution in 2012³⁹. In 2014 the perception has not changed, with the public tending to trust media more than most other institutions and organizations.⁴⁰

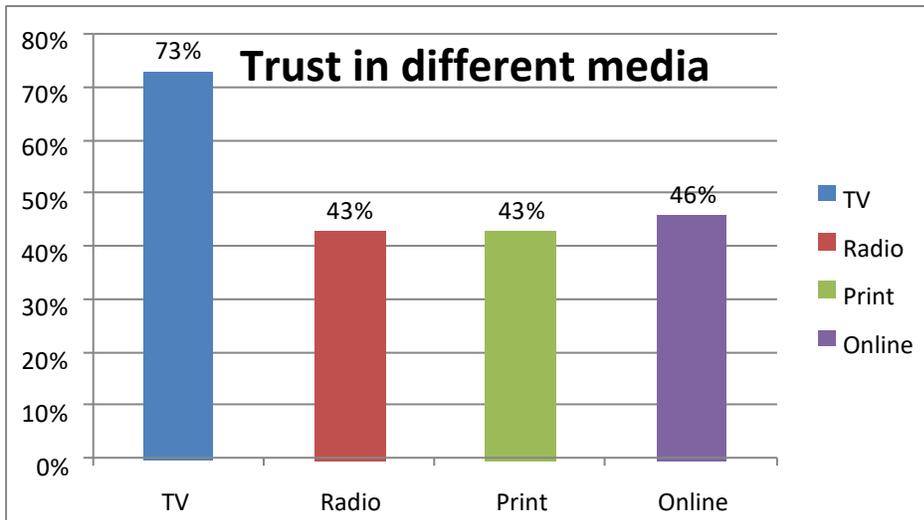
One of the few surveys on media use from the public reveals that Albanians tend to refer to traditional media more for reliable information, even though online media has gained ground.

³⁷ Department of Journalism, "Digitalization of terrestrial television: challenges, paradoxes, hopes." ⁴⁸ Ibid. ⁴⁹ Roundtable on RTSH and Editorial Standards, November 30, 2016, Tirana.

³⁸ IDRA, „Corruption in Albania: Perception and Experience: Surveys 2005- 2010.

³⁹ AIIS, "Albania in the next ten years: Politics, Economy, Society- Perceptions,"2012.

⁴⁰ AIIS, "Albanians and the new European Model,"2015.



Source: National survey on perceptions and expectations for future membership of Albania into EU, Soros Foundation, 2014

The fact that Albanians tend to spend more time watching television also confirms the popularity of this medium as the prevailing source of information still in the country. According to the same survey, 89% of Albanians said they use TV everyday, as compared to 42% for internet and 25% for press. In addition, when asked within the same survey what is the source they use for information on political news in the country, 84% of surveyed persons indicated television as the main source of information.