



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Representative on Freedom of the Media
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**Communiqué by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on
Fostering Media Freedom Literacy in the OSCE participating States**

Media freedom is a cornerstone of the OSCE's comprehensive security approach. It secures the availability of, and accessibility to, a diverse range of information and views – the basis of which individuals can form and express their opinions and exchange information – and is therefore central to the functioning of a democratic society. As such, it is crucial to foster across the OSCE region an environment where citizens are able appreciate this vital component of democracy and security, and are better able to recognise, access and use, the different types of media.

Digital media and communications technologies, services and platforms have offered citizens broad opportunities to engage with, create and shape the media environment. Some of these opportunities, however, come at a cost, the true extent of which is becoming increasingly apparent, as the critical role of informed discussion and debate across society is being undermined in favour of the exploitation of concerns and the extreme polarisation of views, often for financial gain.

In reaction to this, *Media Freedom Literacy (MFL)* has evolved to describe the specific knowledge and skills that enable citizens to value the crucial democratic functions of the media, both online and offline. This places MFL next to the already existing concept of media literacy, which is widely understood as the skills and knowledge that citizens need about the information that they consume, create and disseminate on a daily basis.

MFL includes the understanding of the significance of a pluralistic, well-functioning media landscape serving the public interest, along with the ability of all citizens to critically evaluate and ethically produce media content. Media Freedom Literacy should be viewed as a life-long learning process with different citizens being provided with different support at different stages of their learning journey.

Working in partnership (media, academia, civil society organizations, government agencies, independent regulators, video-sharing platforms and other actors) is recognised as a key aspect of delivering successful media literacy initiatives. Initiatives involving cross-sector collaboration generate significant reach, engagement, impact and sustainability. Throughout the OSCE region, obligations relating to media literacy, and by extension to MFL, are applicable to a range of stakeholders, including government agencies, media regulatory authorities, video-sharing platforms and other media actors. Collectively, these form a solid base for the introduction of MFL programmes within the wider arena of media literacy.

The critical importance of MFL must be ensured by adequate visibility and sufficient resources for media freedom literacy interventions, as part of wider media literacy and media and information literacy policies, strategies and national plans. Interventions anchored to this holistic, media freedom-based approach will help develop more effective responses to the current and future challenges in a rapidly changing media and information space.

Recommendations

Therefore, the Representative on Freedom of the Media recommends that the OSCE participating States:

Ensure that independent national regulatory authorities and other bodies have the scope and resources to promote MFL in line with their mandates and remit, while facilitating strategic co-ordination at a national level;

Establish adequate funding and financing instruments for the development and strengthening of MFL initiatives, including by government-independent actors;

Stimulate the media, without interfering with their editorial independence, to promote MFL through policies, strategies and activities;

Include the topic of MFL in the curriculum of schools and third-level educational institutions. These curricula should be developed in close collaboration with media community, professional media organizations and experts alike;

Provide, possibly through media regulatory or other bodies, easily accessible, and easily understandable information on structures of (online and offline) media ownership;

Stimulate media regulatory authorities or other similar bodies to work with the academic and the research sector to identify gaps in knowledge and commission or carry out research related to various media freedom literacy topics;

Support public service media and community media to promote MFL by virtue of their objectives, mandates and working methods;

Motivate and support media in their efforts to create campaigns and other interventions designed to raise awareness on MFL issues with the general public, in co-operation with other key actors;

Support the education sector and civil society organisations to help ensure that citizens have access to support in developing and enhancing their MFL skills;

Support civil society organisations and other key stakeholders to create and disseminate messages and practical advice about rights and responsibilities in relation to MFL;

Empower academic and scientific communities to gather and share data and create evidence-based guidance on the opportunities, risks and mitigations required to enhance MFL;

Stimulate online platforms to provide vetted researchers with access to non-personal data and anonymised data in order to understand the impact of digital platforms;

Promote, and where possible regulate, transparency amongst online platforms with users about how they deliver news content and aim to empower users by offering them more control over the news they see.

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