



Key Findings from the International Conference on Media Literacy and Media Self-Regulation

25-26 April, 2024
Kyiv

Background

Set against the dynamic backdrop of the fast-paced global digital transformation and sophisticated media environment shaped by the war, the International Conference on Media Literacy and Media Self-Regulation took place on 24 and 25 April 2024 in Kyiv and online, gathering over 140 participants from Ukraine and abroad. The event was co-organised by the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine, the OSCE Support Programme for Ukraine, the Council of Europe Office in Ukraine, International Media Support, United Nations Development Programme in Ukraine, UNESCO in Ukraine, and the Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine. The primary goal of the conference was to enhance media literacy and strengthen media self-regulation frameworks to ensure that the media freedom and integrity are underpinned in Ukraine and beyond. Amidst the challenges of misinformation and the exigencies of war, the conference participants focused on developing resilient media policies that are adept at navigating contemporary and emerging challenges.

Among the conference objectives were the following:

- To provide a platform for stakeholders to discuss and develop strategies that bolster media literacy at the national and regional levels.
- To showcase and evaluate best practices and innovative approaches to media literacy and self-regulation, particularly under conditions of war.
- To foster collaboration among different sectors, including state bodies, media organizations, educational institutions, and a civil society to promote informed and engaged citizenry.
- To assess and devise metrics for evaluating the impact of media literacy initiatives and the effectiveness of self-regulation. The main findings of the conference, which will guide further work on the enhancement of media literacy and self-regulation in Ukraine, are outlined below for the use of the event co-organisers and key stakeholders engaged in the discussions.

DAY 1: MEDIA LITERACY

1. Media literacy at the state level: challenges, solutions, strategy

- To enhance communication with online platform representatives to detect and stop Russian disinformation, as well as to prevent the persecution of journalists in the social platforms for their professional activities.
- As the objective of hybrid warfare is to undermine media credibility, it is crucial to focus on the association between media independence and media literacy. Russian disinformation sets sights on journalists, underlining the importance of independent media as the foundation of a democratic society.
- To consider possible steps towards supporting the development of artificial intelligence and other ground-breaking technologies that shall become a driving force for national information security strategies, fact-checking and media literacy efforts.
- To bolster coordination and support for media literacy initiatives both at the national and international levels, as disinformation is a global challenge requiring collective efforts.
- To incorporate media literacy into educational programs at all levels and for all types of learning processes.
- To contemplate sanctions against the media platforms participating in the dissemination of disinformation.
- To augment media monitoring to detect the spread of disinformation and to ensure the strengthening of self-regulation efforts within the media community to prevent the proliferation of fake news.

2. Media literacy and media: not by fact-checking alone

- It is essential to survey target audiences when developing new initiatives and projects. Programs that clearly understand the needs of their audience will undoubtedly be effective.
- Media literacy initiatives should be aimed at forming a connection between media and the audience and should not be aimed at protecting the audience from media influence.
- Media literacy projects need to engage new stakeholders and reach a vast audience, including media realm representatives, experts, and

academia, expanding the foundations of critical thinking and media competence.

3. Efficient media literacy: how and what to evaluate

- Numerous projects from various sectors are very focused on enhancing media awareness and resilience to disinformation by dispelling myths and stereotypes, yet do not portray themselves as media literacy projects. Therefore, support of such initiatives should be focused on the challenge the project addresses, rather than on the fact whether it portrays itself as a media literacy project or not.
- While supporting projects, it is necessary to assess both quantitative and qualitative performance indicators. Project initiators should have a clear understanding of their desired ultimate outcomes, rather than simply offer solutions regardless of the fact whether a person or an organisation is able to implement them.
- Media literacy projects should be human-centred. Therefore, it is important to estimate how specific tools to be implemented within the project will affect the society.
- It is essential that projects be relevant for the context in which they are being implemented. Partners in development are willing to accommodate changes and address more urgent threats requiring a rapid response that may arise for the target audience in the course of the project, provided these align with the project's area of expertise.
- It is crucial to ensure that media literacy initiatives reach as many people as possible with the maximum frequency of interaction. Projects should maximise the qualitative participation, starting from million-strong initiatives to those tailored for small villages and towns, where the participation may be little but equally important.
- Special attention shall be paid to qualitative research, especially the study of changes in information handling behaviour. Such studies usually involve at least three stages: content analysis, which forms the basis of interaction; quantitative analysis of participation; and study of comments and shares. It is also essential to consider whether people make decisions based on such content. It is crucial to involve experts from different fields for developing evidence-based evaluation methodologies.
- It is necessary to survey the impact of media literacy on social cohesion and resilience to misinformation in both short-term and long-term perspectives.

DAY 2: SELF-REGULATION

1. Achievements and challenges in self- and co-regulation, identification of needs and commitments

- It is necessary to bolster efforts towards systematic communication between government officials responsible for regulating the industry and representatives of journalistic initiatives advocating for and developing self-regulation.
- It would be reasonable to investigate whether it is appropriate to establish a body (council, board, assembly, working group) that would include leading state regulatory bodies (such as the National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting, State Committee of Ukraine for Publishing, Printing and Book Distribution, etc.) and prominent self-regulatory initiatives. The Verkhovna Rada Committee on Freedom of Speech should also be involved in the work of this body. This body should serve as a liaison between relevant institutions, fostering prompt clarification and alignment of approaches to co-regulation issues when needed. The body should monitor the development of co-regulation in conformity with the legislation and initiate discussions on uncertain co-regulation issues arising in this realm.
- It is crucial that we build on the international experience when creating quasi-nongovernmental organizations whose activities focus on self-regulation in various sectors. This experience can be used in Ukraine to both alleviate the excessive workload of government bodies and support grassroots initiatives through their establishment.

2. Professional standards and editorial policies as important factors of self-regulation. Incentives are more efficacious than punishments

- It is necessary to encourage editorial offices (editorial groups, media holdings) to develop unified editorial standards that encompass self-regulation provisions. It is essential to foster the exchange of experience among editorial teams in creating and applying consolidated editorial rules.
- Apart of that, it is crucial to promote and disseminate the experience of the Institute of Mass Information on forming lists of high-quality media outlets ('Transparent and Credible Media List'). These lists should serve as benchmarks for appropriate editorial policies and play a significant role in creating the audience demand for high-quality content.

- It would be reasonable to establish collaboration between editorial teams and professional associations in the field, which have an impact on colleagues working in various sectors of the industry. The same applies to cooperation between editorial teams and grassroots organizations in the media sector that supervise specific dimensions of industry activities (such as the Commission on Journalistic Ethics, Independent Media Council and others).

3. Gender-sensitive policies in media as a reflection and driver of social changes in building social equality

- It is necessary to encourage and, where possible, facilitate discussions on gender-sensitive policies in media, as well as to proliferate information about the progress and findings of such discussions.
- Furthermore, it is crucial to ensure that editorial policy guidelines encompass sections on gender equality and foster the exchange of experience among editorial teams in drafting and implementing such policies.
- It would be helpful to consider possible steps towards creating a gender equality policy guidebook for editorial teams, which could serve as a handbook and a resource for sharing best practices in implementing well-founded gender equality policies in media. To compile such a guidebook, the experience of the Commission on Journalistic Ethics could be leveraged effectively, as the body raises awareness about the Journalistic Ethics Code and efforts to expand its use in editorial work. The experience of NGOs having the said issues as their core area of expertise (i.e. NGO 'Women in Media') and focused on ensuring and protecting gender equality in the profession can be of practical value.

4. Communication with audiences as an important self-regulation factor

- It is crucial to consider whether it's feasible and possible to implement the position of 'reader editors' in editorial offices, editorial groups, or media holdings. These positions would focus on surveying and satisfying audience requests incessantly, as well as forming favourable conditions for the audience to demand high-quality journalism. Where financially feasible, such positions should be established.
- It is essential to demonstrate to the audience the impact of its engagement with the industry by maintaining communication with the audience and creating projects based on the topics derived from this inter-

action. It is important to highlight the visibility of audience participation in shaping editorial policies, including by posting letters to editorial offices, inquiries, and other forms of engagement.

