

Media and Information Education Policies in Lithuania (2013)



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Introduction

The main purpose of the report is to map the actual media education policies that exist in Lithuania and to highlight the underlying educational and media/information culture that supports it. Also, the report applied in the comparative analysis of media and information education policies in Europe will hopefully contribute to a clearer understanding of the similarities and differences between the European countries.

Three major areas are considered that might yield answers: 1/*the policies* of the public sector (*official documents, standard setting tools*); 2/ the *capacity-building resources and the actors* involved within the school system (training, materials, funding); 3/ the role of *other actors* outside the school system (role of private sector, of civil society in informal/non-formal training) and their *own initiatives and learning events*.

The concept of media literacy or education has been used in a diverse way, depending on the interpretation of the concept such as *digital literacy, computer literacy, cultural literacy, information literacy, audio-visual literacy*, or *media education* resulting in policies focusing on different educational aspects or on technological or communicational dimensions.

Over the past several years the EU institutions have been active enough in promoting media literacy policy recommendations, first of all aimed at the national media literacy policies to be developed and media literacy to be included into high school curricula as a mandatory subject in the EU countries (European Audiovisual Services Directive, 2007; Communication on media literacy, 2007; Study of current trends in the field, 2008; Recommendation on the Media Literacy in the digital environment, 2009).

Media literacy is often summarised as the capacity of individuals to interpret, analyse, contextualise and produce media messages in a variety of forms and contexts. For instance, in the European Commission documents we usually meet such a definition:

“Media literacy may be defined as the ability to **access, analyse and evaluate** the power of images, sounds and messages which we are now being confronted with on a daily basis and are an important part of our contemporary culture, as well as to **communicate** competently in media available on a personal basis. Media literacy relates to all media,

including television and film, radio and recorded music, print media, the Internet and other new digital communication technologies.”¹

Thus, the major components of media literacy include access the media, understanding and having critical approach towards different aspects of media contents, and creative use of communications in a variety of forms and contexts. This definition has been further refined by including awareness of cultural, political, and economic contexts with an emphasis on critical thinking:

„The aim of media literacy is to **increase awareness** of the many forms of media messages encountered in our everyday lives. It should help citizens **recognise how the media filter their perceptions** and beliefs, **shape popular culture and influence personal choices**. It should empower them **with critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills** to make them **judicious consumers and producers of information**. Media education is part of the basic entitlement of every citizen, in every country in the world, to **freedom of expression and the right to information and it is instrumental in building and sustaining democracy**.”²

The Lithuania's Progress Strategy 2030, adopted by the Lithuanian Parliament in 2012, is a national vision, priorities and guidelines for future development of the country prepared by government insitutions, business and civil society organizations. Based on the values of a modern, dynamic, open, and patriotic state it envisages a set of priorities and policy measures. Among the main priorities set up in the document, solidarity in society is to be promoted by the following objective:

“To create a vibrant public space for information through promotion of socially responsible media and critical public skills enabling **critical analysis of information in the public domain**. **To introduce media literacy programmes in all education institutions**. To respect the freedom of the press, and encourage self-regulation processes in the media.” (p.12)

In Lithuania, no agreement has been achieved on the use of the concept of media education/literacy, computer literacy, digital literacy, visual literacy, film literacy, etc. On the other hand, we can observe an increasing interest and an ongoing conceptual discussion on the changing competencies with regard to the media and communication technologies use, as well as the need to define these changes (Ilomaeki et als., Duoblienė 2010; Dagienė et als.).

1 http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/media_literacy/index_en.htm

2 Ibid.

Media literacy is understood as ability to access, use and understand the media as an important tool of information and socialization. The main media competences include understanding media, media texts and culture (Duoblienė 2010).

Information literacy refers to knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes that are necessary to understand, evaluate, and use information produced and presented by different media (Teaching about Information Processes and Human Rights 2006; Cymermonienė 2008).

Digital literacy is described by the competences to access, select, use, understand, reflect, critically evaluate hypertext and creatively apply ICT while communicating and participating in online networks (Ilomaeki et als.; Dagienė). Digital literacy is refers to digital competences, however it also overlaps with the media literacy (Ilomaeki et als.).

Internet and other ICT literacy includes skills, practices, approaches necessary to adapt to ongoing changes in online and other ICT, which are penetrating in all the spheres of social life (Ilomaeki et als.).

Computer literacy is about the use of computers and ICT in different spheres of life, including education, work, leisure, etc.

Film literacy is about using film as a medium in different educational contexts through watching, interpreting, critically assessing films and engaging into creative video production.

1. Dimension	(short) Historical background
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Media has become an important part of our everyday life changing our identities, life style and social interaction. Understanding media and its role in education and socialization has been a long process, including Lithuania, a country of 3 million people, a member of the EU since 2004. From protectionists who are perceiving media as a threat and danger to media as a public empowerment tool or as one of the principal factors promoting institutional, structural and individual changes in today's society. Mediatization of education (Hjarvard 2013; Hepp 2013) refers to the increasing

interdependence between education system and media and information technologies, which are changing institutional and individual practices of learning, including the contents, methods and . New source and flows of information require new competencies and skills for teachers, students and others involved in the new learning process (Donskis; Duoblienė).

Media literacy as a part of compulsory education system is in the initial stage in the country, as the national education system is lacking sufficient attention to the area. There is no media education program implemented on the national level. However, due to the international policies and changes, the first steps have been taken in integrating media literacy into high school curriculum. In 2006 the Ministry of Education and Science adopted a national program of high school education “Teaching about Information Processes and Human Rights”, aimed at developing information and media literacy program targeted at the students of 9-11 grades. The program is aimed at developing such competences as critical thinking and analytical skills, abilities to use media, Internet and other sources of information, advertising and entertainment by emphasizing civic, cultural and social skills. The document includes the key concepts, current state of the situation, goals, objectives and priorities of the program, its implementation phases, evaluation criteria, control measures, etc.:

“The purpose of the program is to develop information literacy among 9-11 grade students by encouraging students' critical thinking and the ability to use media, the Internet and other information, advertising and entertainment sources, while fostering students' awareness, civic and cultural maturity, social skills. Students' ability to understand the phenomena of the mass audience will not only help to develop their thinking and awareness, but also to bring their individual needs with the opportunity to evaluate everything they read and see.” (Teaching about Information Processes and Human Rights, 2006, p.1)

In 2007-2008, the program was piloted in 15 schools across the country. The main aim of the pilot project was to promote integral teaching of information literacy understood as students' ability to critically select and assess public information. The major objectives of the Project include the following:

- to develop the guidelines for a cross-curricular program on media literacy;
- to develop teaching materials for 9-11 grade classes of media literacy;
- to involve high schools to participate in the pilot project;

- to organize workshops for teachers and administrators on the project objectives, stages and outcomes;
- to launch project website for dissemination purposes;
- to test teaching materials during cross-curricular classes of media literacy;
- to summarize project outcomes and prepare media education guidelines for teachers of 9-11 grades;
- to finalize and pass a national program of media education.

The Project was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science, Journalists Ethics Ombudsman, Commission of Journalists and Editors Ethics, Education Development Center, and NGO “Modern School Center”, followed by the annual reports of the Journalists Ethics Ombudsman in 2003-2004 emphasizing the need for media education programs in compulsory curriculum. It was started in 2007 with workshops for selected teachers organized, and educational material (on the topics of advertising, media, TV, cinema, and Internet) prepared. However, due to the economic crisis, financial difficulties, as well as conflicting perspectives towards media education, lack of professionals in the field, the program of media education was terminated and has not been introduced on the national level yet.

There have been many initiatives introduced by other actors, including NGOs, industry and media. However, bold new approach towards critical media literacy and critical pedagogy as transformational power is missing.

2. Dimension	Legal policy framework
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In Lithuania responsibility for education policy is shared between the Ministry of Education and Science, the municipal governments and the governing bodies of schools. The ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the development and implementation of national policy on education and research, including the development of the national curriculum, study programs, education standards, the organization of examinations and funding rules. The law on the general education (2011) also refers to the importance of media literacy as one of the main goals:

“to develop a person's values enabling him to become an honest, knowledge-seeking, independent, responsible and patriotically-minded human being; to cultivate the

communication skills important in modern life; to assist in internalising the information culture characteristic of the knowledge society, by providing for command of the state language, foreign languages and the native language, **information literacy** as well as modern social competence and the skills to shape one’s own life independently and to live a healthy lifestyle.”

Information literacy is later referred as competences acquired via informal education:

“The purpose of informal education shall be to provide an individual with possibilities for continuous independent learning supported by the surrounding information space (libraries, mass media, internet, museums, etc.) and life experience gained from other persons.”

Municipal institutions are also delegated significant powers to implement the national education policy at a local level. Education departments at the municipality level prepare, implement and coordinate regional education programs and infrastructure. The head of the school is responsible for the drafting of the school's Strategic Plan and Annual Action Programme as well as the school education programmes, and is in charge of their implementation. Self-governance bodies of the school collectively discuss issues of school activity and funding, approve decisions of the head of the school and monitor the school's management.

In 2002, the Lithuanian Parliament adopted the law on Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information, which described the ways public information having a negative impact on the physical, mental or moral development of minors may be published, distributed and the rights and responsibilities of owners, journalists and media regulating institutions. In 2009, the law was updated and a list of harmful information was renewed. Due to the abstract, inexplicit and therefore differently interpreted information, it has been actively discussed in the public.

In the national program of high education Teaching about Information Processes and Human Rights (2006), it has been emphasized the need to develop and implement a comprehensive policy on information literacy for students and their parents, to promote media ethics and law, as well as to teach the public to assess information, to select trusted sources and to be able to use them at school and at home. One of the policy measures was the new program of Teaching about Information Processes and Human Rights, 2006.

There are other national authorities, including the office of Journalists Ethics Ombudsman or the Committee of Information Society Development, which are not primarily responsible for media education programs, however, they also take a role in promoting media literacy and education.

3.1 Dimension	Capacity-building: teacher training
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The role of teacher is changing in a media saturated and sophisticated world. Therefore, new competencies for teachers are required, not only to be able to use new information and communication technologies, but first of all demonstrate leadership and guidance in using information and media (Donskis 2014; Duoblienė 2010).

Among the program priorities, training and professional development of teachers has been emphasized. After the new program on Teaching about Information Processes and Human Rights was introduced in 2006, the first official trainings on media education for teachers were organized within the framework of the national project in 2007-2009. Selected teachers who participated in the project went through a series of workshops on how to develop key competences in media literacy of 9-11 grade students. Apart from the national pilot project, there have been other projects elaborated to provide high school teachers with necessary educational material and didactical competences. However, these projects have been initiated by other actors, including NGOs, private sector and universities.

3.2 Dimension	Capacity-building: <i>Teaching/training Materials and other relevant content</i>
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The national program of Teaching about Information Processes and Human Rights (2006), which was developed by a group of education and media experts, educators, and NGO activists, included development of teaching and learning materials for the lessons integrated into various teaching subjects, such as: ethics, citizenship education, literature, history, also extra-curricular activities. Most of the resources have been published on the website of Teacher Professional Development Centre. Stronger

collaboration between teachers and researchers is needed to support effective practice of teachers' training.

3.3 Dimension	Capacity-building: funding
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The national program of Teaching about Information Processes and Human Rights (2006) included specific funding for the development and implementation of media education. After the program was terminated in 2009, media education is promoted through other educational and cultural programs funded by the national and regional authorities.

4 Dimension	Role of actors (outside school system)
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Lithuanian national and regional media outlets are encouraged to promote media literacy by supporting their projects with the national financial frameworks. A couple radio programs have to be mentioned, including *Media Anatomy* program broadcasted by News Radio Station (Žinių radijas). Public service radio also broadcasts talk shows with the focus on the media processes. Major online portals have specific projects dedicated to the analysis of media market and processes, including www.delfi.lt, www.balsas.lt, www.bernardinai.lt, a blog of “Honourable Media” www.gzi.lt, etc. Community-based projects with the aim to promote media education.

National project “Safer Internet LT” consolidated the efforts of different public and business institutions, including NGOs. It was initiated by the mobile communication company Bitė Lithuania, Ministry of Education and Science and the Center for Social and Psychological Services in 2005. The program addresses harmful information available on the Internet such as pornography, paedophile, racism, xenophobia. Program website www.draugiskasinternetas.lt serves as an educational resource, as well as a hotline for the cases of illegal and harmful online information to be registered. The following institutions and organizations have joined the project at later stages:

- Committee of Information Society Development
- Lithuanian National Radio and Television

- Lithuanian Journalists Ethics Ombudsman
- Ministry of Internal Affairs
- “Infobalt” Association
- Inspector of Children Rights Protection
- NGO SOS Children
- Microsoft Lithuania
- Telecommunication company Teo LT
- Association “Window to the Future”
- Lithuanian Human Rights League
- Online portal www.one.lt

Since 2007, Microsoft Lithuania supports a national project “Computerizing of Public Libraries”, which aims to provide every public library with free access to the Internet, which is available for free to the public. Advertising campaign was created to promote digital literacy in the public.

Different organisations and associations have been active in the media literacy field, including Lithuanian Journalists Union, Human Rights Center, Transparency International Lithuania, National Institute for Social Integration, Teacher Professional Development Center, Lithuanian Parents' Forum, Art Hive, etc. The main activities of the mentioned NGOs include workshops for students and teachers, public discussions, trainings for journalists and teachers, publications, and public campaigns.

5 Dimension	Evaluation mechanisms (inside and outside school)
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Even though the national program on media education developed in 2006 anticipated transparent and regular evaluation mechanism of the program. However, due to its termination it hasn't been implemented yet. On the other hand, there are project-based evaluation tools applied in different media literacy projects.

6 Dimension	Main concepts and legitimizing values
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The national program developed in 2006 and piloted in 2007-2008 aimed at developing such competences as critical thinking and analytical skills, abilities to use media, Internet and other sources of information, advertising and entertainment by emphasizing civic, cultural and social skills.

The program includes the following objectives:

- “to develop students' abilities to critically evaluate public information ;
 - to train students to use public information;
 - to teach critical understanding and analyzis of the effects of media and information dissemination;
 - to develop students' understanding of the media marketing processes;
 - to cultivate the values of democracy , tolerance and citizenship;
 - to develop students' activity, curiosity, initiative and creative potential;
 - to educate students' need for learning, knowledge, development, interest in new information;
 - to develop students' selection of information, awareness and the ability to use it.”
- (Teaching about Information Processes and Human Rights, 2006)

In the program, the following competences and skills have been emphasized to familiarize students with the evolution of the media, freedom of expression and responsibility principles, legal frameworks; encourage students to critically evaluate advertisements in the entertainment industry and its expression in motion pictures, radio and television broadcasts, the Internet, other web services to provide information and critics, facilitate students themselves to creatively use the above-mentioned communication tools.

Following the above mentioned Project of media education, media literacy is supposed to be taught as an integral topic of the core subjects including language, citizenship, economics or other classes.

7 Dimension	General appreciation
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Today Lithuania could be characterized as a country of relatively young democracy, small media market, particularly strong media power and close contacts between journalists and politicians. Legitimacy gained during the national liberation movement in late 1980s, when media was playing a particular role, has been retained. On the other hand, Lithuanian media has been affected by the global changes, including increasing

competitiveness and concentration of media market, homogenization and popularization of media content. Liberal laws, increasing media commercialization, a lack of professionalism and journalistic autonomy and lack of public debates about media performance create favourable conditions for the mass media to set the news agenda according to their own political or business interests.

Liberalization of the media and transition from the state censorship to the market-driven model has made the media very sensitive to the market mechanisms. Hence, media is still being considered as one of the major public institutions. In such a context, media education is particularly important so that a public is able to understand and assess what is behind the so called *free* information, i.e. what kind of interests of media, politics or business may have. Increased media literacy based on the democratic values of participation, critical thinking is crucial to improve media quality, promote professional journalism and democratic culture.

ADDENDUM

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Good Practices

Local NGO “Meno avilys” (Art Hive) has been implementing a national program on Cinema at my School since 2005. It is the first program in Lithuania, seeking to exploit the film as a potential means of integral education in Lithuanian schools. The program introduces teachers to the film language and different ways film can be used and integrated in educational process. Film education in formal education can be integrated in three levels: film as the media, providing students with additional information and knowledge in various disciplines; film as the media, developing student's visual literacy, critical thinking and citizenship; film as the media, stimulating students' creative skills. Further information: <http://www.menoavilys.org>

Fim center Skalvija implemented a project “Learning from Film” in 2011-2013, which was a series of activities for teachers and students of different age. Both, teachers and

students were provided with the tools how to watch films, analyze, interpret, and create them themselves. Further information: Mokausiiskino.lt

European Media Education Project OnAir is funded by the European Commission. This two-year project aimed at collecting, documenting, and developing media education practices across Europe, especially in Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania. In particular, the project aims at improving teachers’ practical knowledge and highlights the challenging aspects at stake in this process. There is a need to promote greater pedagogical awareness among educators and teachers regarding the aims and ways of implementing media education through the elaboration of appropriate educational models to develop students’ media and digital competences.

Further information: www.onair.medmediaeducation.it

LINKED - Leveraging Innovation for a Network of Knowledge on Education is a European Schoolnet project aimed to strengthen the link between research, policy and practice in the area of innovative teaching and learning using ICT. The project is led by European Schoolnet. The project was partly funded by the European Commission DG EAC and implemented in 2010-2011. The project included six EU countries: Finland, Belgium, Norway, Italy, Portugal and Lithuania. Further information: <http://linked.eun.org/web/guest/home>

The European Network Cities for Children is an international platform that enables cities to exchange good practices in the field of child friendliness. In the seven working groups, city administrators engage in a regular exchange of information about their practical experience on the topics of education, health, affordable housing and play areas, work-life balance, intergenerational dialogue, youth participation and traffic safety. With the European Award of Excellence ‘City for Children’, outstanding projects are recognised as a means to encourage processes of mutual learning. Municipalities of 3 cities in Lithuania (Kaunas, Panevezys and Vilnius) joined the European Cities for Children Network supported by Robert Bosch Foundation. The network promoted media literacy activities on the local level and produced recommendations - Agenda for Media Literacy: Policy Recommendations for European Cities to support Children and Young People (2011). Further Information: www.citiesforchildren.eu; children@stuttgart.de

Recommendations

Media literacy has to become a fully recognized subject of the Lithuanian national high education curriculum. It has to be promoted at all the stages of compulsory education, including elementary school, basic and high education. Life long learning perspective implies the necessity for permanent development and education especially in a rapidly changing technological environment.

Successful implementation of media literacy requires a critical mass of media literate teachers who would be able to educate active and informed citizens and media consumers. Professional teacher training in media literacy has to be organized so that teachers gain key competences in media education and training methods. As Lithuania is doing the first steps towards systematic media literacy education, national and European programs are essential to support educational, as well as media and public initiatives in developing media literacy competences and improving media quality (Cities).

In order to empower students and young people to use media in a creative, responsible and critical way rather than protecting children them from the harmful information and its effect, a **consolidation** of all stakeholders on the local, national and European level is necessary, including the main actors in education system, research, media industry, private sector and civil society.