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IN GEORGIA, LATVIA, MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE

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Contents

Introduction 3

1. General Context 4

1.1. Policy Regulations 4

1.2. Actors 6

1.3. Targeted Groups 9

1.4. Mapping Activities 11

1.5. Funding 15

1.6. Ukraine in Indexes 16

2. Country Findings and Recommendations 16

2.1. Cross-sectoral Cooperation and Networking 16

2.2. Evaluation of Media Literacy Activities 19

2.3. Sustainability and Funding 21

2.4. The Role of Media in Increasing Media Literacy 23

References 27

Introduction

Media literacy is a core element of information consumption in a rapidly changing media environment. In such an environment, high media literacy within the audience also generates a demand for quality journalism and helps quality media to survive and develop, as well as to remain trusted. Critical thinking and responsible media use are among the most essential elements in order to strengthen the cognitive dimension of societal resilience to stand up against disinformation and other types of aggressive information. To a different degree, the selected countries are facing multiple challenges connected to the information environment. However, in all these countries, media literacy is seen as a tool for facilitating and saving democratic processes.

Although the term "media literacy" does not have a single definition, and could be interpreted in different ways (for example, to fit in with a donor's agenda), the definition used for the purposes of this analysis is put forward by the European Commission: "Media literacy refers to all the technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow us to access and have a critical understanding of and interact with media. These capacities allow us to exercise critical thinking, while participating in the economic, social and cultural aspects of society and playing an active role in the democratic process". [1]

By using this umbrella definition, the research team introduced and designed the **A-A-A approach** on mapping media literacy developments, which means focusing on **A - actors**; **A - audiences** and **A - activities**. Given the dynamics of developing the media literacy sphere, the team focused on a set of country specific recommendations in the following dimensions: cross-sectoral cooperation and networking; evaluation of media literacy activities; sustainability and funding; media involvement. The executive summary starts by providing background information. The general findings are listed afterwards. Selected threats and strengths are followed by general recommendations.

Methodology

Detailed mapping of media literacy actors, audiences and activities was created using the following methodology, which included:

- Desk research;
- Semi-structured in-depth expert interviews;
- Online survey.

The **desk research** included an analysis of policy papers, traditions of development of media literacy, and significant changes in the trajectory of the development of the environment that have occurred. The focus of the analysis was to evaluate changes within the last three years. However, it includes relevant historical background on media literacy policies; media education development and disinformation resilience development; and the redirecting of responsibility from one institutional body to another.

For the **semi-structured interviews**, the scheme of selecting experts was created. This included selecting at least three experts from the following clusters: government related; non-government related; academia and media related; supporters and donors related. 20 experts were interviewed by using the same interviewing guide with five subsections of questions.

Survey - **the online survey** was created to collect qualitative data on activities and audiences used by different

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups/consult?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=2541

media literacy actors. In the survey active actors were asked to fill in the questionnaire. The survey included four sections, including the profiling of selected media literacy activities. The research team used available conferences and meetings to collect additional information needed to make an analysis, which focused on 1) cross-sectoral cooperation and networking; 2) evaluation of media literacy activities; 3) sustainability and funding; 4) the role of media in increasing media literacy.

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1. General Context

1.1. Policy Regulations

Ukraine recognises media literacy promotion as a priority. However, there have been no systematic policies implemented in this sphere up till now. There are three types of documents where media literacy is mentioned in one way or another:

- strategic state-issued documents (Doctrine of Information Security; Strategy of Information Security);
- state-issued documents in the sphere of formal school education;
- strategic documents developed by the academic community and not authorised by the government.

The institutionalisation of the media literacy promotion process started 10 years ago. On the 27 July 2011, the Ministry of Education, Science, Youth and Sports of Ukraine issued a decree (№ 886) "On conducting the all-Ukrainian experiment on the introduction of media education to the educational process of secondary schools of Ukraine" (Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports of Ukraine, 2013). The Institute of Innovative Technologies and Content of Education, the non-governmental organisation (NGO) "Academy of the Ukrainian Press", the Institute of Social and Political Psychology of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine were involved in the experiment. However, the experiment did not receive the necessary funds and attention from the state in its initial stages. Neither was it scaled up, and so grew rather slowly. Instead, donors and international organisations stepped in to work in the media literacy sphere.

The geopolitical reality of military and informational aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has had a huge influence on including media literacy in the government's agenda. Public protection from the information attacks and the influence of Russian propaganda became an urgent issue; hence, media literacy ended up as a focus of civil society, the donor community, and the state. However, no meaningful efforts to develop systemic and comprehensive policies regarding media literacy had been made at that point.

Nevertheless, some steps in the right direction were made by scholars and civil society. In 2016, the Institute of Social and Political Psychology of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine developed the Concept Note for the Introduction of Media Education in Ukraine (The Institute of Social and Political Psychology of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine, 2016). The main provisions of the Concept Note correspond with the objectives set out in the Paris Agenda or 12 Recommendations for Media Education (from the 22 June 2007) and the European Parliament Resolution on Media Literacy in the World of Digital Information (from the 16 December 2008). However, this Concept Note has not been approved as an official document.

The media literacy issue received more strategic prominence in early 2017 when the then President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko issued the decree on approving the Doctrine of Information Security of Ukraine. This document declared "the development of public media culture and socially responsible media landscape" as a vital national interest. The doctrine also defined priority areas in the government's policies regarding the information sphere, such as: 1) combatting disinformation and destructive propaganda from the Russian Federation; 2) raising the level of media literacy among citizens and assisting in training of personnel to a high level of competence for the media sphere. In 2021, the Ukrainian government approved the Strategy of Information Security towards 2025. This document defines the increased significance of digital technology against a backdrop of low level of media literacy and digital awareness as a global threat, and an insufficient level of informational culture and citizens' media literacy as a threat at the national scale. The Strategy includes eight strategic objectives, first of which being "resisting disinformation, information manipulation, and information operations and attacks from other countries", third being "raising the level of public media culture and media literacy". However, the government's viewpoint on achieving this objective is somewhat narrow as it doesn't mention formal (school) education, instead it focuses on informing the public about media literacy and incentivising the development of responsible media business.

There are also relevant documents addressing media literacy in the formal secondary (school) education curriculum. In particular, there is a State Standard on Basic Secondary Education which is based on the "Recommendation of The European Parliament and Council of the European Union on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning" (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2020). The state standard requires that media education should be integrated within civic, historical, natural, linguistic and literary educational areas. In general, experts who were assessing the State Standard came to the conclusion that educating a media literate student is now a priority for teachers in general educational areas (The Academy of Ukrainian Press, 2020).

Despite a number of efforts made in the media literacy sphere, the government recognises that its media literacy activities are "lacking in systematicity, coverage of different target audiences and the number of competent specialists" (mentioned in Strategy of Information Security). Experts draw attention to the same problems. Experts also express the need for creating a coordinating governmental body on media literacy since there are three Ministries in Ukraine that work in the media literacy area in one way or another: Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, Ministry of Digital Transformation. The lack of systemic coordination and cooperation between ministries and within departments of the discussed ministries do not contribute to the creation of systematic and comprehensive policy in the media literacy sphere.

An attempt to create a systemic policy was made by the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, which presented the National Project on Media Literacy for 2021-2022 on the 20 April 2021 (Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, 2021). The main dimensions of the project were defined as the following:

- strengthening of communication by the state;
- developing of media education;
- promoting a responsible and safe media environment.

The Project, although launched, hasn't received a proper institutional status. It is not part of the Ministry, in legal terms. Consequently, no powers and responsibilities concerning the coordination of different government bodies that help with the implementation and proliferation of media literacy among Ukrainian citizens have been assigned to this project.

In addition, the Government created two more Centres: The Centre for Countering Disinformation (works

under the Council of National Security and Defence) and Centre for Strategic Communication and Information Security (works under the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy). However, the lack of a unified governmental perspective on their goals and coordination mechanisms, and excessive bureaucracy render their efforts ineffective.

There are different and even sometimes conflicting understandings of the very concept of media literacy as a result of multiple issues, for example: a great number of actors working in the media literacy area; the lack of coordination among them; as well as the lack of unified, consistent and systemic policy in this sphere. There has also been a shift of emphasis in certain governmental bodies to digital literacy and acquiring the technical skills without the component of critical thinking. Experts, therefore, insist that media and information literacy must come first and include different components, digital literacy in particular. This must be taken into account during the development of future documents that can become the foundation for creating systemic policy in the media literacy area.

1.2. Actors

In Ukraine, there is a diverse and dynamic field of institutions dealing with media literacy activities. The following categories of major actors can be identified: 1) Government; 2) International donors and organisations; 3) Non-Governmental Organisations; 4) Educational institutions; 5) Non-oligarchic Media[2]; 6) Non-institutionalised Grassroot Initiatives.

Government

Currently, the Ukrainian government is starting to play a more active role with regard to media literacy as several new initiatives have been launched to address the issues of disinformation resilience and media literacy. At present, there are three ministries - Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, Ministry of Digital Transformation and Ministry of Education - that deal with media literacy in Ukraine to some extent.

Despite the fact that the Ministry of Education has been involved in media literacy activities for a decade and much work has already been done, the Ministry has not played a consolidating role in the implementation of media literacy activities at all levels of the education system. As several experts mentioned in the interviews, there is a need to assign a specific department, commission or at least a person in charge for the Ministry's activities on media literacy implementation.

In 2021, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy launched the National Media Literacy Project "Filter", however, this has not been granted official authority to lead the process of coordination of media literacy initiatives. Despite these bureaucratic obstacles, "Filter" now works on the creation of a platform that would collect and store information about media literacy projects, best practices and materials prepared by the main actors in the field. Apart from the Filter, the Ministry of Culture also established, the Centre for Strategic Communication, this year. This agency among other things, was created to coordinate the efforts of the government and civil society organisations (CSOs) in countering disinformation. At the same time, the Centre, similarly to the "Filter" Project, hasn't been sufficiently institutionalised; and it is too early to speak about its impact in the field.

[2] We define this category as non-oligarchic, purposefully avoiding the term "independent". This category describes the media that rely on donors' support and cannot be financially sustainable without such support at present. There are cases when projects were discontinued due to the termination of donors' funding, which is evidence of media dependence. While such media tend to abide by standards of professional and unbiased reporting and manage to avoid political pressure, they still lack financial independence.

The third important actor among government agencies - the Ministry of Digital Transformation - is also indirectly involved in the media literacy process. They have started production of an educational TV series about digital literacy, which feature national celebrities. TV series are stored on the portal "Diya. Digital Literacy" (https://osvita.diia.gov.ua/). Several interviewed experts, however, noted that this body apparently underestimates the role of media literacy and centres its work around digital literacy in isolation from media literacy.

International Donors and Organisations

International donors and organisations play a critical role in the media literacy field in Ukraine, sometimes even by setting the agenda for other actors, according to several interviewed experts. Among the most frequently mentioned were USAID, US Embassy, UK Embassy, European Commission, Black Sea Trust, Internews Network, IREX, OSCE and UNICEF. The wide range of donors working in Ukraine and their interest in media literacy projects contribute to the growth of activities and the emergence of a larger number of organisations implementing media literacy projects. The donors' agenda covers a variety of directions in the field of media literacy, including those centred around counteracting mis/disinformation, training, online learning and content production. Some donors/organisations fill a specific niche, such as IREX playing a leading role in curriculum development and setting the trends in promoting media literacy in the educational field.

Non-Government Organisations

Ukraine can boast a vibrant CSO environment, which includes a number of non-governmental organisations working in the media literacy area, both on the national and regional/local levels. The list of the strongest organisations that have relevant expertise and a track record of implemented projects includes, but are not limited to, the Academy of Ukrainian Press (systematically working with curriculum development), Ukraine Crisis Media Centre (making an important contribution to combatting disinformation and hybrid threat analysis), Detector Media, and Internews Ukraine (both working in content production, in conducting monitoring and analysis, as well as doing some audience research).

Educational Institutions

Media literacy has received significant attention at both, secondary and higher education levels. Key actors in the system of education include:

- Secondary schools that participate in the All-Ukrainian Media Literacy Experiment;
- Institutes of Continuing Education for Teachers;
- Pedagogical universities;
- Journalism departments in a number of universities.

The majority of these establishments are engaged in media literacy activities due to the support from donors and CSOs, such as the Academy of Ukrainian Press and IREX, which have a leading role in developing media literacy curriculum and training the staff for educational institutions of different levels. At the same time, experience and capacity accumulated and developed over the last 10 years allow educational institutions, particularly schools, to become gradually more independent.

The Academy of Ukrainian Press has recently presented an interactive map with information about schools practicing media education (http://medialiteracy.org.ua/mapa/). The map is still being developed and will,

hopefully, contain up-to-date information about the scale of educational institutions' engagement in media literacy activities and projects.

Non-Oligarchic Media

While the largest Ukrainian media remain oligarchic, some smaller ones embarked on media literacy activities with donors' support. The activities of media outlets in the media literacy field include fact checking, explanatory pieces on mis/disinformation and media literacy, satirical content, analytical input and also lectures and other live events for a wider audience. In recent years, these non-oligarchic media have become important actors in the media literacy field. This relates to major actors such as, Hromadske Radio, Toronto TV, Texty.org.ua, StopFake, Behind the News ("*Po toy bik novyn*"), and Vox Ukraine.

Non-Institutionalised Grassroot Initiatives

In addition to projects inspired by donors and organisations, some non-institutionalised grassroot activities can also be found in Ukraine. Such activities are initiated by a wide range of actors, starting from popular bloggers' projects to local activities at schools, libraries, art schools and municipalities across the country. For instance, there are several popular bloggers that produce myth- and fake- debunking content and advance critical thinking among their audiences. For instance, Oksana Moroz, a communications professional, has been creating explanatory content under the project title, "How Not to Become a Vegetable (*Yak ne staty ovochem*) and even published several books on information hygiene. Her thematic Facebook page is followed by around 15 thousand users.

Another interesting example is a popular YouTube blog called, "Damned Rationalist" (*Klyatyi Ratsionalist*). In his blog Artem Albul explains and debunks popular myths by relying on and providing scientific evidence. Albul started his blog driven by personal interest but managed to attract a significant audience (around 194 thousand followers on YouTube). At present, he collaborates with a popular online media outlet Liga.net and another famous blogger and doctor Andriy Semyankiv (MedGoblin). Together they prepare content, which debunks Covid-19 related fakes by providing science-based explanations.

Apart from bloggers, this category of grassroot initiatives also includes lectures, information campaigns and secondary school students' projects at the local level, etc. It is important to note that such activities are mostly driven by personal interest and commitment, which has its advantages. On the other hand, bloggers or other actors from this category are not constrained by professional standards and accountability mechanisms, unlike NGOs and the media. Hence, the quality of their projects and products can also be poor in some cases.

Above is an attempt to categorise the groups of main actors based mainly on the interviews and referring to those specific actors that were often mentioned by the interviewees. However, it is important to note that it is not always possible to precisely classify these actors in Ukraine. For example, it is often difficult to distinguish the media from the NGOs as the former often use the NGO entity as a legal status for an institution, either itself or as an additional way of getting funding from international donors. In the report we consider whether such media/organisations focus predominantly on the production of media content or implementation of media literacy projects. In the first case we classify such organisations as media, in the second case - as NGOs. At the same time, there are cases in Ukraine when one organisation tries to serve both roles, being content creator and implementing media literacy projects simultaneously.

By and large, NGOs supported by the foreign donors are a major driving force behind media literacy projects in Ukraine. While donors influence the media literacy area by setting the trends and the topics in focus in their call for applications, the organisations develop concepts, react to the changes in the environment and

adjust their activities accordingly. Some interviewees pointed out that the state should participate in the media literacy processes more actively as this is an important prerequisite for successful implementation of media literacy projects and raising media literacy skills among a wider audience.

There is also an emerging trend of mentioning the influencers as possible actors in the field of media literacy; however, it is too early to speak about them as important players in the area.

Some interviewed experts also mentioned business as a potential actor, but there have been no substantial efforts to involve it into media literacy activities' so far.

Survey Results

Speaking specifically about the organisations that took part in the survey, 14 (45,2%) out of 31 respondents reported "Academia or education related organisation" to be one of core characteristics of their organisation, 13 (41,9%) chose "Media (content)", 11 (35,5%) called themselves a think-tank. In addition, 4 (12,9%), 3 (9,7%), 2 (6,5%) chose professional networking organisations, research institutes and capacity building organisations respectively. Some respondents used an opportunity to write down their own definition of their major activities claiming themselves to be an IT-cluster, non-governmental organisation, youth activism and community's citizens education development organisation, and voluntary initiative (1 person or 3,2% for each added option).

With regards to the description of their main strands of work, the majority (25 respondents or 80,6%) chose media literacy. Other oft-repeated categories were education - 18(58,1%), media, content production - 16(51,6%), media monitoring - 11(35,5%), and disinformation monitoring and/or countering - 11(35,5%). Less widespread were fact checking, verification, digital forensics - 6 (19,4%), media (networking of professionals) - 6 (19,4%), capacity building - 4 (12,9%), advocacy - 4(12,9%), media self-regulation - 3 (9,7%), media regulation - 2(6,5%), legislation - 2 (6,5%), and law – legal advice/help/consultations - 1 (3,2%).

The respondents were also asked to reflect on their organisation's capacity in the areas of management, funding, advocacy, cyber security etc. According to the survey results respondents were capable of and had the capacity to do the following: find professionals for project implementation; communicate with stakeholders and target audiences; grant/project proposal writing; advocate the problem to national stakeholders; and had the ability to monitor and evaluate the impact of the projects. At the same time, finding financial resources, managing sustainability of funding, advocating the problem to international and other national stakeholders and also security/cyber security of their organisation were assessed as less positive.

1.3. Targeted Groups

There are different approaches to classification of target audiences among media literacy actors, which was evidenced by the interviews with various stakeholders. Sometimes, organisations define their target audiences based on the professional criterion. For instance, a number of Ukrainian NGOs have been targeting journalists, students of journalism and media professionals at large as part of their countering disinformation efforts and activities. This is likely explained by the proximity of this audience for many NGOs implementing media literacy projects. Age-based definitions of the target audience are also quite widespread. Some projects are also designed to target audiences of specific regions, mostly Eastern and Southern oblasts of Ukraine that are close to the border with Russia, which might be explained both, by perception of these audiences as most needy and donors' attention to the regions.

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

- School children;
- University students;
- Professionals - teachers/educators;
- Professionals - journalists and media practitioners in general;
- Professionals - librarians;
- Professionals - politicians, public officials;
- General public/all citizens;
- Elderly people/pensioners;
- Citizens from specific regions;
- Expert community.

High school students were most frequently specified as a target group by the organisations that participated in the survey (23 out of 31 organisations). Twelve organisations also mentioned students of secondary schools among their target audiences. School children are targeted by projects that deal both with school curriculum and extracurricular activities. Interviews also revealed that various stakeholders perceive school children and teenagers in particular to be critical audiences for the long-term effect of media literacy initiatives. However, very few organisations work with primary school children and pre-schoolers.

In addition to school children, several professional groups were identified as important target audiences of media literacy projects. Nearly two thirds of the organisations mentioned journalists and teachers as their target audiences. Teachers are often targeted by projects that aim at implementing changes in the school curriculum and improving media literacy teaching skills. A number of Ukrainian NGOs that generally focus on media-related issues have embarked on developing media literacy projects for journalists; their knowledge of the professional media community at least partly explains why they focus on them as their target audience.

Students' parents, pensioners and rural residents made up a third tier of most frequent target audiences, according to the survey. Almost half of the organisations that participated in the survey mentioned these groups.

Interviews with stakeholders helped to collect additional data and identify certain peculiarities of the projects' targeting. Thus, although expert community and public servants/politicians were not highlighted in the survey, interviews showed that the two groups are commonly seen as important target audiences for countering disinformation activities. In particular, such organisations and media as Detector Media, Internews Ukraine, Ukraine Crisis Media Centre, StopFake, VoxUkraine produce their analytical reports to inform the expert community, both inside and outside Ukraine. Projects and initiatives focusing on countering disinformation also often target journalists as critical actors and, hence, important audiences for their respective activities (including, for instance, training on information verification etc.).

In terms of age groups distribution, 26 organisations (84%) indicated in the survey that they target young adults (35-44 years); 25 (81%) - youth; 24 (78%) - middle-aged adults. Teenagers were mentioned by 19 organisations (61%), seniors - by 10 organisations (32%) and children (up to 12 y.o.) - by only 2 organisations participating in the study.

Under-Covered and Vulnerable Audiences

While senior people and rural residents were mentioned by a number of organisations as their target audiences in the survey, interviews with various stakeholders, including representatives of NGOs working in the media literacy field, showed that both groups are perceived as the most under-covered by the media literacy projects in Ukraine. Not only rural residents, but also residents of small towns located far from big cities are believed to be lacking the attention of media literacy activities. One of the biggest challenges is a lack of infrastructure that can be used to engage elderly people, as well as adults living in small towns and villages, some experts noted. While children and teenagers can be reached via schools, nothing similar exists for adults.

When asked to define vulnerable groups in Ukraine, interviewees voiced different opinions. Some mentioned factors that predict higher vulnerability to disinformation, which included age (older people are perceived to be more vulnerable), residence in small distant communities, lower income level, lower education level. Such evidence was also observed in some other recent studies (Detector Media, 2021). Several experts pointed to the vulnerability of citizens living in the regions bordering Russia. This explains a special emphasis on the eastern and southern regions which is found in a number of projects addressing media literacy and countering disinformation. Some experts noted that little if anything is done for people with disabilities with regard to their media literacy.

At the same time, many interviewed experts noted that vulnerability to disinformation is not limited to particular socio-demographic groups but rather it is a common problem. In the words of one of the interviewees, even top officials share fake news in Ukraine from time to time. No one is excluded from potential vulnerability; it all depends on their particular area of knowledge and perceptions which makes all of us vulnerable to some extent, according to experts.

1.4. Mapping Activities

The data obtained from our survey, interviews and desk research suggest that three types of activities are prevailing in the media literacy field in Ukraine at present. These include: training, fact-checking/countering disinformation efforts, and production of media literacy related content. Apart from these major directions of activities, the following types of activities were identified: support of educational institutions (including curriculum development), networking and popularisation of media literacy, online learning, and research.

Training

Training activities are widely implemented by numerous actors in the media literacy sphere in Ukraine. Supported by donors and international organisations, training is mostly organised and conducted by the NGOs and educational institutions. As our data show, they target different audiences, including potential multipliers who are expected to train others in media literacy skills, such as trainers and teachers; journalists; public officials; and other groups representing a broader audience. Most often such training programmes aimed at teaching participants how to 1) to perceive information critically; 2) debunk disinformation and propaganda; 3) identify hate speech and resist stereotypes and discrimination of individuals or groups; 4) understand the media landscape and how media works; 5) take decisions based on the media and information literacy.

Training for wider audiences is perceived as important, as they have the potential to equip a diverse group of citizens with relevant knowledge and skills. However, several interviewees also pointed out that formal and continuing education can be more effective compared to sporadic and informal training activities. One of the critical challenges, with regard to training activities, is related to the evaluation of participants' actual skills and knowledge, as well as understanding the long-term effect of such training.

Fact Checking

Russian aggression and an avalanche of disinformation and propaganda against Ukraine provoked a rise of fact checking initiatives in the country over the recent years. The oldest and the most visible fact checking initiative is StopFake, which publishes debunking content in several languages. Another important fact checking project called VoxCheck is famous for debunking the untrue statements of politicians. Since 2020, both the above-mentioned organisations have been the partners of the Facebook fact checking initiative contributing to the fight with mis/disinformation in the social media. Another noteworthy fact checking project is called "Behind the News" (*Po toy bik novyn*). It started in 2018 as a social media only campaign for debunking false information and has grown significantly in several years. As a side project, they have also created the Coronafakes website aimed at debunking fake content about coronavirus, the pandemic and related issues. This initiative banded together 6 newsrooms and several independent experts, thereby showing a successful case of journalistic collaboration. In general, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the situation, with mis/disinformation and fact checking initiatives expected to grow given the challenging context.

In addition to the discussed activities, some projects countering disinformation attempted to use crowdsourcing instruments to engage citizens in their activities, for example, by encouraging people to use special software or plugins to add some information on dangers or help in collecting a database of trolls etc.

Support of Educational Institutions

IREX and the Academy of Ukrainian Press (AUP) are a key driving force in the media literacy curriculum development, as well as in training staff at all levels of education in Ukraine. They promote the introduction of media literacy into the curriculum at multiple levels and provide educational institutions with the models and methods of teaching media literacy competencies. IREX and AUP helped to develop teaching programmes for the basics of media literacy at schools, which includes methodological manuals for teachers on how to integrate media literacy into such disciplines as History, Arts, Ukrainian language and literature. Some of these manuals, which received a "Recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine" stamp, helps teachers to be more systematic in their teaching on the topic.

The media literacy programme implemented by the IREX in cooperation with the AUP in 2018-2021 has covered 60,000 individuals, including 45,000 school students and 9,295 teachers from over 1300 schools across the country. On top of that, IREX has been developing a textbook on media literacy for journalists in collaboration with the journalism departments from several universities. Other donors also work in this area. For instance, German "Interlink Academy" has been conducting training for media literacy trainers together with several Ukrainian universities.

Networking and Popularisation of Media Literacy

Networking platforms play an important role in the Ukrainian media sphere. Events organised within such platforms often address the issues of media literacy and challenges of disinformation and propaganda. Lviv Media Forum (LMF) is one of the biggest network platforms of this kind. They organise a large-scale annual media conference, a notable event in the Central and Eastern European region. The LMF is more than a conference though; it is an entire ecosystem of people, organisations and projects that promote best media practices from around the world in Ukraine. Donbas Media Forum and National Media Talk also occupy a significant niche in the present-day media environment. In addition, there is an annual conference on media literacy in Ukraine. Global Media and Information Literacy Week advanced by UNESCO is also a

crucial consolidating occasion for organisations and initiatives working in the media literacy field. There are also other smaller activities, initiated by various actors that aim at popularising media literacy across Ukrainian society.

Content Production

Many Ukrainian NGOs and media produce media literacy related content in diverse formats and for different audiences. The following types of content can be identified:

1. Media monitoring reports;
2. Analytical publications and reports;
3. Educational content (usually aimed at debunking myths and stereotypes disseminated by the media; exposing fakes and disinformation; raising critical thinking of the wider audience);
4. Entertaining content (mostly humour or satire, but also aimed at debunking myths disseminated by the media; exposing fakes and disinformation).

Media monitoring reports are quite widespread among leading media NGOs in Ukraine, including Detector Media, Institute of Mass Information, Pylyp Orlyk Institute for Democracy. This activity gains particular importance during the election campaigns. Interviews revealed that organisations which produce monitoring reports tend to perceive their monitoring activities and products as part of media literacy efforts, arguing that they draw attention to the issues of media quality and professionalism.

A number of organisations also produce analytical content, including analysis of Russian disinformation narratives (Texty.org.ua), publication of books (e.g., "Re-Vision of History", analysis of key narratives of Russian historical propaganda, published by Internews Ukraine with the involvement of historians), and analytical articles (StopFake).

Quite a few media create audio and video content in user-friendly formats, including humour and satire. There are examples of podcasts (for instance, "*Post Pravdy*" and "*Do Vorozhky ne Khody*" by the online magazine Kunsht, which debunk myths, fakes and promote science-based reasoning), video content (e.g., Toronto TV satirical newscasts and posts/stories for Instagram; content for social media by Detector Media journalist Angelina Lomakina), and radio content (e.g., Hromadske radio content on Russian propaganda and fakes, information manipulations during election campaigns) etc.

Research

While development of media literacy programmes and activities should be informed by research of media consumption patterns, attitudes and perceptions of information among citizens, there is a lack of solid studies examining these issues and social dynamics in Ukraine.

Among the academic institutions, the Laboratory of Psychology of Mass Communication and Media Education is the most noticeable, in terms of accumulated expertise in the media literacy field. The Laboratory, which is part of the Institute of Social and Political Psychology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, regularly organises conferences and publishes collections of articles addressing various aspects of media education. However, there is a lack of actual empirical research of Ukrainian audiences that could be used for informing media literacy interventions.

NGOs, donors and international organisations have been trying to fill at least some gaps in the research pertaining to media literacy. One of the most frequently referred to studies was commissioned by the Detector Media. Media Literacy Index of Ukrainians (2021a) presented a conceptual model and detailed data on trends in media consumption, perceptions and beliefs about media, digital competences and sensitivity to distorted content. The Media Literacy Index presented by Detector Media, although similar by name to another study, Media Literacy Index by Open Society Institute (https://osis.bg/?p=3750&lang=en), is not part of the latter and is based on a different methodology.

Ukrainian NGOs have also been relying on another study, the Annual Media Consumption Survey commissioned by USAID-Internews. The survey has a separate section with questions related to media literacy, which illustrate some patterns of media use and assessment of information credibility by Ukrainians.

Several other organisations have also made attempts to study public attitudes and behaviours with regard to media consumption and related issues. For instance, Public Interest Journalism Lab, in collaboration with several other organisations, published a study, "Why Conspiracy Propaganda Works and What We Can Do About It" (2021) with a focus on audience vulnerability and resistance to pro-Kremlin disinformation in Ukraine.

The Academy of Ukrainian Press (2021) has recently presented a study based on a survey of media literacy practitioners, including teachers, librarians, media representatives and others. The study contains data on the views, experience and practices of the media practitioners.

All in all, there is a growing interest in conducting research on media literacy and related issues among different media literacy actors in Ukraine. However, the quality of some of the existing studies raises questions about research design, methodological approaches and validity. More high-quality studies, both quantitative and qualitative, are needed to gain a better and more nuanced understanding of the Ukrainian audiences and dynamics around media consumption.

Online Learning

Online courses on media literacy are quite abundant in Ukraine. Most of them have been created by the NGOs with donor support. Some were created earlier than 2019 (before the period of our analysis) but remain relevant for the audience, such as "Fact check: trust and check" (*Factcheck: doviryai-pereviryai*) by VoxCheck and EdEra, "Media literacy for educators" (*Mediagramotnist dlya osvityan*) and "Media literacy: practical skills" (*Mediagramotnist: praktychni navychky*) funded by the Czech Embassy and located on the Prometheus online learning platform. All three courses were launched in 2018.

In 2020, IREX with partners launched the "Very Verified" online course on media literacy explaining how to navigate information space and how to identify disinformation and propaganda. In autumn 2021, the earlier mentioned blogger Oksana Moroz launched her online course on information hygiene "How Not to Become a Vegetable" on the Prometheus learning platform.

Ministry of Digital Transformation has also launched its online platform "Diia Education" (*Diya Osvita*), which contains educational video series and online courses with the primary focus on digital literacy.

In addition to the discussed types of activities, there have been several attempts of creating cross-sectoral projects that would engage organisations and institutions from different fields. For instance, Internews Ukraine collaborated with artists to create murals on disinformation as part of the international ARTIFAKE project.

Interviewed experts noted that there is an evident need to find new approaches (such as usage of gamifica-

tion in media literacy) and ways to repackage the messages for different audiences. In this context, the content created by influencers was sometimes mentioned as a prospective communication channel for media literacy projects.

Several interviewed experts also pointed out that the media literacy field in Ukraine is characterized by some imbalance with training and countering disinformation activities overrepresented in the overall structure of activities.

1.5. Funding

Financial sustainability remains a critical challenge for a number of NGOs working in the media literacy field. Most organisations are quite dependent on foreign donors, as they are a major source of funding for media literacy projects in Ukraine now. Dependence on foreign funding has been evident in both, survey data and interviews.

According to survey results, Ukrainian organisations predominantly rely on such sources of funding as foreign Embassies and Foundations (18 organisations out of 31) and EU grants (12 organisations). Strikingly, even private international donors were mentioned more frequently than national private donors (6 and 4 organisations, respectively). Only three organisations indicated their dependence on the national government, and none of the organisations indicated that of the regional government.

Though the Ukrainian government hasn't been active in providing financial support to organisations and initiatives related to media literacy, some changes in the government's approach have been observed recently. In 2018, the Ministry of Information Policy of Ukraine announced a call for grants for NGOs proposing projects on media literacy. However, after changes in the government, the Ministry was transformed and merged with the Ministry of Culture. Following that, funding of media literacy projects via grants was handed out to the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation. The Foundation has supported some media literacy projects, although none of them were implemented by major NGOs working in the media literacy field, according to the interviews conducted. In addition, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy received around 7m UAH, equivalent to nearly 270 thousand USD, from the state budget to fund the activities of the National Media Literacy Project. By and large, while the Ukrainian government has made certain steps towards providing some financial support for the projects and initiatives in the media literacy field, it remains a minor source of funding for the latter.

Interviews with representatives of the organisations revealed their awareness of the need to diversify sources of funding. There is a growing interest in cooperation with national and local businesses among NGOs. Several experts interviewed noted that they observe some interest from the business community as well. However, there seems to be a lack of vision on what such cooperation could look like. Some interviewees suggested that the government should consider tax rebates for businesses supporting media literacy initiatives, which could motivate companies to contribute to the funding of media literacy projects.

Several organisations have been benefiting from small private donations, making use of such platforms as Patreon. Yet, in most cases, the amount of donations are still modest; even those organisations that get some donations are still largely dependent on donors. It is also noteworthy that the private donations option seems more feasible for media generating content rather than for traditional NGOs.

Most of the interviewed NGOs tend to secure support from a set of donors, which allows some flexibility for them. At the same time, support is mainly project-based. Only three organisations participating in the survey specified that they receive long-term non-project-based funding for their media literacy activities. The data also shows that projects are mostly supported by one donor. Again, few organisations can boast implementing media literacy projects supported by two donors or more.

Representatives of the NGOs also noted that donors' calls for projects usually envisage short-term projects, which impedes the organisations' strategic stainability, thinking and quality of work. The length of the projects was mentioned as a major reason to abandon the idea of participating in the grant application by a quarter of the organisations. The second most widespread reason was the need for their own resources/ mandatory contribution.

Funding is widely perceived as one of the critical challenges for their organisations' future and capacity to develop media literacy activities. When asked about potential challenges for their media literacy projects, more than a half of the organisations participating in the survey indicated there was a risk of "not being able to attract donors".

To conclude, most NGOs working in the media literacy field find themselves largely dependent on foreign donors; their awareness of their financial precariousness prompts them to seek diversification of funding sources, but with very limited success so far.

1.6. Ukraine in Indexes

	2019	2020	2021
World Press Freedom Index	102/180	96/180	97/180
Global Innovation Index	47/131	45/131	49/132
Global Peace Index	150/163	148/163	112/163

2. Country Findings and Recommendations

2.1. Cross-sectoral Cooperation and Networking

Cross-sectoral cooperation and networking have seen some improvements over the recent years in Ukraine, according to the interviewed experts. They have noted improved overall communication among representatives of different sectors, increased exchange of information and best practices, as well as a somewhat improved coordination effort. Engagement of the governmental agencies in conversation about media literacy and related activities has also intensified. At the same time, the lack of a coordinating body responsible for media literacy on the governmental level and general institutional weakness of governmental agencies do not allow for more substantial cooperation between the government and other stakeholders.

While networking opportunities are quite broad for the established NGOs and contribute to improved communication among the main actors in the field, there is a need to cross the borders of existing professional bubbles, to reach new potential actors/partners and engage them in the media literacy network.

Active communication among major stakeholders, which can be observed at present, hasn't yet transformed into substantial coordination of activities. Cases of successful cooperation exist, but they are often a result of situational cooperation rather than systematic approaches and elaborated institutionalised mechanisms.

Strengths

- Cross-sectoral discussions and meetings are held regularly. There are platforms for ongoing conversation and exchange of experience, for instance, Disinfo Hub meetings organised by the Kyiv office of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) that bring together key actors in the countering disinformation field, including CSOs and representatives of governmental agencies;

- Increased engagement of recently created governmental agencies, including Stratcom Centre at the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy and The National Media Literacy Project, are in dialogue with NGOs working in the fields of media literacy and countering disinformation, which can potentially result in improved coordination of activities;

- A successful track record of cooperation between the Ministry of Education and several critical non-governmental actors in the media literacy field, namely, the Academy of Ukrainian Press and IREX;

- There are examples of successful partnerships among some organisations/initiatives, including, for instance, the production of joint content or content exchange (especially among fact-checking initiatives and media), and the arrangement of joint thematic events and/or activities etc. More cooperative approaches within the NGO community has been noted by experts;

- Big networking events supported by the donors, including Donbas Media Forum, Lviv Media Forum, and the Annual Media Literacy Conference, bring together key actors in the media literacy field, which contributes to ongoing communication and exchange of ideas and best practices as well as fostering a sense of community.

Weaknesses

- There is a lack of coordination among different governmental agencies that work in the field of media literacy or countering disinformation. There are also increasing signals about the attempts of the Ministry of Digital Transformation to take over the media literacy policy without proper coordination with other relevant governmental agencies and bodies. Such discordance is aggravated by the absence of a separate institution responsible for developing and coordinating media literacy policy;

- Given the discordance among the governmental agencies, their engagement in cross-sectoral communication is often contingent on the personal commitment of their representatives, personal contacts, political relevance and other non-institutional factors;

- Examples of cross-sectoral cooperation, though existing, lack institutionalised mechanisms and sustainability;

- Despite improved overall communication, there is still an insufficient level of awareness about activities across different sectors, sometimes - even within the sectors;

- Reaching and developing new partnerships with out-of-the-bubble actors remains a challenge. Engaging businesses as partners and sources of funding is seen as desirable, but so far has been unsuccessful in this area;

- High competition for funding among NGOs often hinders coordination and stronger synergy between the actors/projects/activities.

Threats

- Institutional strength and prospects of new governmental initiatives, like the National Media Literacy Project "Filter" or Stratcom Centre at the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy are not certain. They are not properly institutionalised in legal terms and, hence, are very susceptible to changes in the political environment;
- Discordance among different governmental agencies and an absence of a major institution responsible for media literacy policy further complicates the situation and adds unpredictability;
- Institutional weaknesses of the governmental agencies impede coordination of efforts inside the government and across other sectors involved in the media literacy activities;
- Cross-sectoral communication is often driven and logistically supported by the donor organisations, which means that their change of focus from media literacy towards other directions might have a negative impact on cross-sectoral cooperation;
- Networking platforms and events for bringing together different actors in the media literacy field are also largely supported by the donors, which makes them susceptible to changes in the donors' priorities;
- A potential decrease of funding opportunities for media literacy projects might provoke higher competition among NGOs and increase the reluctance to cooperate with each other.

Opportunities/Recommendations

- A coordinating body/centre is needed to develop media literacy policy, coordinate its implementation and ensure proper communication within the government and across sectors;
- Institutional capacity of governmental agencies working in the media literacy field should be strengthened. The agencies should not be susceptible to political changes;
- All actors should use opportunities to promote media literacy initiatives at the local level (government - through their infrastructure; national NGOs - by developing contacts with local actors; donors - by finding and supporting local actors capable of delivering media literacy projects);
- Utilise known voices from different sectors and engage them into media literacy projects in order to develop partnerships beyond existing ones;
- NGOs should enhance their capacity in seeking diverse funding sources to decrease their dependency on foreign donors;
- Donors should support development of creative cost-effective ways to deliver media literacy to counter disinformation, which would involve cross-sectoral cooperation;
- Cooperation between civil society and business can contribute to the improved sustainability of media literacy initiatives;
- The government should consider ways to stimulate business support of media literacy projects;
- Networking activities could have more impact if conducted in smaller towns, not only in big cities with the involvement of the usual participants. This could help to reach local actors and stimulate the development of local actors in the media literacy field.

2.2. Evaluation of Media Literacy Activities

Interviews with experts confirm a substantial move ahead in the field of media literacy in Ukraine. According to several interviewees, the topic of media literacy has found its way into both the Ukrainian public and the political establishments. Successful initiatives from recent years include efforts in countering disinformation, educational initiatives, the increase of fact checking projects, production of media content on media literacy, and efforts to popularise media literacy among the wider audience. "Small steps led to a boost in the field. Now it is necessary, not to forget about the hybrid war we are still in. This is why these initiatives have to be developed and scaled up," one of our interviewees suggested.

At the same time, the developments achieved are not the result of strategic efforts and sustainable collaboration in all media literacy sectors. This is rather a merit of civil society organisations inspired and supported by the major players, like IREX, that move the media literacy ideas and activities ahead. As for the government bodies, so far there have been individual people who are enthusiastic, and who understand the importance of media literacy. They help the activists to push these ideas forward, another interviewee suggested. Government capacity in the media literacy field remains insufficient.

The state has not developed the evaluation system for media literacy activities and does not collect respective data. Donors and NGOs also face a similar challenge. As a consequence, media literacy activities need a comprehensive approach, which means not just scaling up the endeavours but building a strategy and adequate measurement instruments to be sure the strategy is efficient. Besides this, more awareness of the audience is needed from all media literacy actors in general and those implementing specific projects in particular. This means reaching the right audiences, dealing with necessary skills development and keeping the activities simple, understandable, and appealing.

Strengths

- Media literacy remains high on the political agenda due to the increased awareness of media literacy as a result of the combined efforts of different actors in the field, mainly CSOs;
- Active integration of media literacy into a secondary school education process. Media information literacy competencies were incorporated into the State Standard for Base Secondary Education;
- Due to the efforts of a variety of actors put into the "training of trainers" activities, a generation of media literacy experts emerged in Ukraine;
- A variety of activities on media literacy in Ukraine have been developed, including experimental approaches, such as combining media literacy and art.

Weaknesses

- Measurement and evaluation of media literacy activities remain generally weak, only a few organisations make some efforts in this;
- Lack of promotion of both the media literacy topic itself and education products linked to media literacy, which were developed by different stakeholders;
- Media literacy projects often overlap, for example those dealing with online courses. This is partially because the actors themselves are not aware enough of what is going on in the field and partially because a lack of promotion, as mentioned above;

- Lack of research of audiences and a lack of evaluation methodologies result in inadequate understanding of target audiences by those running the media literacy projects activities and, consequently, doesn't allow them to reach new audiences;

- Many projects of insufficient quality in the field of media literacy;

- Media literacy projects often run by civic society organisations because of the current donors' demand rather than the CSO's strategy and area of expertise;

- Despite the wide range of activities in media literacy and some experiments among them, most of the projects remain "classic" in terms of their format;

- CSOs are often reluctant to involve new staff into media literacy projects as they are often quite conservative in their approaches, but the field would benefit from "new blood";

- Short one-time projects, that prevail at the local level, usually don't fill the gaps of their recipients, as skill development and a more comprehensive learning process need more time and a regular ongoing approach;

- Excessive focus on disinformation and a neglect of other needs of the audiences;

- Lack of the actors' capacities to adapt their product to the actual needs of their audiences;

- Plagiarism and ideas theft in the process of the development of educational materials.

Threats

- Lack of understanding of the media literacy concept and key media literacy competences by the authorities; recently some officials have reduced the broader concept of media literacy to focus just on digital literacy;

- Lack of understanding of the media literacy concept and key media literacy competences by some donors and organisations;

- Decision-making system in the field of education remains excessively bureaucratic making the process of media literacy implementation less flexible;

- Lack of coordination between the ministries and agencies responsible for media literacy issues;

- Weak teacher training, currently limited to CSOs' efforts;

- Weak institutional capacity of most CSOs;

- Frequent changes in the political environment in Ukraine lead to a lack of confidence among non-government actors and challenges their sustainability;

- Current policies in media literacy are not fully consistent with the current challenges connected to informational disorder;

- Lack of a structured approach from the side of the governmental bodies, such as the absence of a person responsible for media literacy in the Ministry of Education and the lack of a coordination centre at the governmental level;

- Insufficient representation of media literacy efforts across the regions of Ukraine: many activities are focused on Kyiv and also the East and South of Ukraine, while other regions remain under-covered;
- Professional burnout of staff in small-scale media literacy projects, facing the challenge of only seeing weak responses to their efforts and slow changes in their audiences.

Opportunities/Recommendations

- Regional networks of organisations and experts in media literacy would be beneficial in "decentralising" media literacy activities;
- More resources put into measurement and evaluation would possibly result in a higher quality of projects;
- Donors should change their approaches to calls for applications in the media literacy area, paying more attention to the goals of the projects and their measurement, possibly reserving part of a grant for studying the projects' impact;
- More resources put into audience research would help the actors to reach their audiences with appropriate products. Qualitative research methods are particularly needed;
- Media literacy should become a basic element of teacher training in the system of formal education;
- The government has to develop a strategy for continuous media literacy aimed at life-long learning for adults as the changes in a field are very dynamic;
- More generations have to be involved in media literacy activities. While implementing media literacy at the level of secondary school, a dialogue with parents is very important;
- The actors have to move out of the disinformation area and focus on other media literacy aspects too;
- Secondary education needs both the separate disciplines of media literacy integration and media literacy. Combining both approaches would give enough space to scrutinise different media literacy aspects and lead to achieving better results;
- The state programme on media literacy development would help to make the efforts in the field more structured;
- As one-day activities usually don't result in full competency development, more long-term projects are needed as they would help to achieve better results in developing media literacy skills.

2.3. Sustainability and Funding

Development of media literacy in Ukraine is highly dependent on funding provided by the international donor organisations. This approach has its advantages (little to no meddling in project's content etc. by donors) and disadvantages (a greater number of short-term projects and the inability to implement large-scale complex projects). Therefore, diversification of funding sources is the most pressing issue. The Ukrainian Government doesn't participate in funding media literacy projects on a large scale, although all interviewed experts noted that its contribution should be more substantial. Local communities are also expected to participate in the funding process. Medium and big businesses could be another important actor in this regard; however,

there is a question of finding the motivation and stimuli for them to contribute. At the same time, governmental funding can have its own risks under conditions of volatile political contexts, such as: 1) instability; 2) unpredictability; and 3) governmental attempts to exert influence over projects' content because of its own political interests. Similar risks could be found with funding from big business, as it is mostly oligarchical in nature and therefore expects some sort of political benefits from the fact that they are contributing to socially responsible initiatives.

Strengths

- The topic of media literacy in Ukraine remains the focus of donor organisations; hence, funding is available;
- The government started providing grant support for media literacy projects through the Ministry of Information Policy (previously) and Ukrainian Cultural Foundation (nowadays);
- The main actors understand that there is a need for diversifying income sources for media literacy projects.

Weaknesses

- Excessive dependence of media literacy projects on funding from the foreign donor organisations and governmental bodies;
- Funding from the donor organisations usually covers short-term and medium-term projects and cannot cover expenses on big comprehensive projects;
- Lack of project co-financing from two or more donors;
- Donor support means limitations, it's hard to become self-sustainable for media literacy initiatives;
- The system of donor funding is overly bureaucratic and rigid, so it becomes hard to quickly react to unexpected new challenges;
- Concentration of funds on 'trendy' topics leaves huge gaps and makes it impossible to elaborate on complex solutions to the existing problems;
- Limited financial resources bring unhealthy competition and a 'race for funding' between projects;
- Media literacy initiatives cannot be implemented as business enterprises, as they are not self-sufficient in financial terms; these are media literacy projects targeted at vulnerable groups;
- There is little to no possibility of crowdfunding media literacy projects due to the lack of understanding among citizens and their poor financial state.

Threats

- Lack of financial stability in Ukraine and a potential crisis in donor countries, which can be caused by some internal factors or global trends. Under such conditions, foreign aid is likely to be redirected to meet other, more urgent policy priorities;
- Media literacy can potentially lose its priority among donor organisations;

- Unacceptable interference in the media literacy project content by the state in the case of government funding;
- The State is financially incapable of fulfilling its obligations in the media literacy area;
- Lack of understanding of the importance of media literacy among businesses and other actors with financial resources.

Opportunities/Recommendations

- There is a need for creating a system of consolidated media literacy projects funding (the state/government, donor organisations, businesses) with transparent processes and safeguards against interference in the project's content;
- There is a need for meaningful and effective engagement of local communities in media literacy projects' funding system through the system of small grants, both in school education and adult education;
- Searching for motivation and stimuli for financially capable actors to engage them in funding media literacy projects;
- Forming international consortiums for funding media literacy projects.

2.4. The Role of Media in Increasing Media Literacy

Ukraine has a complex and diverse media landscape represented by a large number of national, regional, and local media. The media market has been developing under the pressure of the political environment over the course of 30 years (from 1991, the first year of independent Ukraine). Therefore, changes in the media sphere were all part of the broader changes in power relationships and social interactions. Yet, under every presidency there were journalists who strove to uphold professional standards and resist pressures from the state and from corporate owners. Globalisation was a factor that enabled them to provide new ideas, international funding, and new technology (Dutsyk & Dyczok, 2021).

Nowadays big oligarchical media holdings, independent media and the network of public broadcasting are all neighbours with each other in this media landscape. In many instances, media understanding of the need to promote media literacy for their audiences is conditioned by their funding sources. Oligarch-owned media companies do not show an interest in media literacy. In contrast, a number of Ukrainian media outlets with independent editorial policy have been working with media literacy since 2014. With the funding from the international donors, they have managed to implement diverse projects related to media literacy, especially with regard to fact checking, disinformation and propaganda resilience etc.

Ukraine's Public Broadcaster, known as Suspilne or UA:PBC, also contributes to media literacy activities. Suspilne believes that they do that by creating high-quality edutainment content. They also promote critical thinking among their audience through a number of programmes. For instance, one of the major political talk shows called "Countdown" (*Zvorotniy Vidlik*) includes a fact-checking section. Analysts from the Vox Ukraine organisation check the credibility of statements voiced by political guests while on air (Detector Media, 2021b). Media literacy components are also present in other programmes, including the project called "Debates" (*Debaty*) aimed at promoting the culture of reasoned discussions and the project called " 12 Myths about Donbas" (*12 Mifiv pro Donbas*), which produces explanatory content about the history of the region.

The attention of media outlets to the media literacy issue was driven by two major factors, first the military and informational aggression by Russia against Ukraine, which started in 2014, and second the COVID-19 infodemic.

Despite a growing attention to media literacy concerns and a significant number of media literacy projects, non-oligarchic media outlets cannot reach all Ukrainian citizens. The Media Literacy Index of the Ukrainian population shows that a huge section of Ukrainian citizens are not aware of media education courses or disciplines – 75%. People also do not have a clear understanding of the role of media in society and their impact on the audience. Individuals with high educational status (55%) and high-income levels (62%) showed a greater level of understanding of the media's role in the society and rated as 'high' or 'above average', but the youth are less competent in this regard (Detector Media, 2021a).

Hence, there is still a lot of room for media literacy promotion by the media themselves. There are also expectations on the important role of the Public Broadcaster. At the same time, several experts noted that donors' and government's refusal to work with the oligarchic media for promoting media literacy could be unproductive as those media still have a wide coverage of the audiences.

Strengths

- There are internationally renowned media outlets in Ukraine (such as StopFake) that are a part of The International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN);
- A number of independent media outlets are actively implementing projects in fact checking, resilience to Russian disinformation and propaganda, educating public about the media sphere (for example, by informing people about manipulation in the media during the election campaigns or the COVID-19 pandemic); a lot of media content with a vast coverage is created in these projects;
- The reform of the Public Broadcaster is completed; regional branches of the Public Broadcaster (television and radio channels) started producing independent news content, which contrasts with news content in the oligarchical media;
- There are numerous training/workshops for journalists and teachers of journalism that cover the topic of media literacy (critical thinking, spotting fake news and manipulation, and fact checking);
- Individual universities are introducing fact checking disciplines, and disciplines in understanding the nature of propaganda and disinformation, within their Faculties of Journalism;
- Some Journalism Faculties implement media literacy projects on their own; those projects target not only students, but also people in local communities, including rural areas.

Weaknesses

- Independent media outlets that implement projects in fact checking and disinformation resilience area do not have sufficient resources (both financial and human) to craft targeted content or large-scale media projects with maximum possible coverage; their content doesn't reach consumers of fake and manipulative information;
- Fact checkers face threats and information attacks in their work; there are no protection mechanisms for them in place;

- Big oligarchical media holdings aren't interested in funding media literacy content, due to its innate unprofitability;

- Low capacity of the regional and local media outlets combined with a complicated regional media landscape makes it difficult for them to participate in media literacy projects or receive donor funds.

Threats

- The number of 'trash'-websites, anonymous Telegram-channels, and social media groups that disseminate fake/manipulative/conspiracy content hugely outnumbers that of the media, which try to counteract it;

- It is hard to resist cross-border conspiracy theories and manipulative content at a national level;

- The fundamental values of oligarchical media contradict those of promoting media literacy, as oligarchical media are concerned about their owners' interests first;

- There is no systemic state policy on media cooperation in regard to promoting media literacy;

- Journalists and editors don't trust governmental bodies, therefore there is absence of cooperation when it comes to combating harmful content.

Opportunities/Recommendations

- Strengthening the capacity of the independent media (both central and local ones) through the granting of long-term institutional support (as opposed to project-based) from donor organisations is required;

- Raising the professional level of journalists that are working in the media literacy area should enhance the quality of media literacy projects;

- The Public Broadcaster should expand its role in promoting media literacy for the general audience in Ukraine;

- The expansion of governmental support for media literacy projects in the media through a system of grants (from the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, for example) can increase the number of media outlets, and, as a result, cover larger audiences;

- The development of transparent policies for cooperation between big media holdings and the state can facilitate the expansion of the audience and contribute to raising the level of media literacy among it;

- Engaging influencers in promoting media literacy can be beneficial, although they should receive proper training.

Conclusions

- While media literacy is a matter of concern and a focus for the attention of a large number of actors in Ukraine. There is still a lack of comprehensive state policy on media literacy, on the one hand, and insufficient coordination of activities among different stakeholders, on the other hand. State programmes on media literacy development is needed as it would help to make the efforts in the field more structured.

- A wide range of actors work in the media literacy field, but the lack of strategic policies and coordination creates inconsistencies and sometimes even collisions on the very definition of media literacy and approaches towards the development of media literacy. Future strategic policy documents have to take this into account and suggest a consistent approach among diverse actors.

- Existing inconsistencies and insufficient coordination of activities should also be addressed by the donors and international organisations that have the capacity to encourage collaborations, and more active exchange of knowledge and best practices. It is also critical to elaborate and set up a mechanism for effective coordination of activities among the different media literacy actors.

- Funding of media literacy projects and initiatives remains one of the biggest challenges. Ukrainian civil society organisations predominantly rely on financial support from foreign donors and international organisations. The government of Ukraine should create conditions to attract new actors that would provide financial assistance to media literacy initiatives. Suggesting incentives, including tax rebates, could stimulate businesses to get engaged in media literacy projects.

- Development of media literacy policy, approaches and projects should be based on rigorous research of the audiences, both quantitative and qualitative. Both the government and donors should stimulate and support such research. NGOs and academic institutions should develop and design research projects that would help to understand the patterns of media consumption, perception of information and gaps in media literacy among Ukrainian citizens.

- There is a need for a more effective monitoring and evaluation system in order to make relevant adjustments to the design of media literacy projects. This concerns both projects implemented by the NGOs and educational institutions.

- Promotion of media literacy among a broad audience requires involvement of big TV channels and radio stations, local media, as well as the network of public broadcasting. While there is no consensus among different actors about the engagement of oligarch-owned media into media literacy efforts, the issue should be addressed and discussed by the key stakeholders.

- As media education should be continuous, the government has to create appropriate conditions for this in the system of formal and informal education.

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