MEDIA LITERACY STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICES DRAFT CHECKLIST

This draft checklist has been developed by EDMO's Working Group on Media Literacy Standards and Best Practices with input from the EDMO Hubs and other practitioners and experts during a consultation process. Its goal is to raise media literacy levels across Europe by developing quality standards, guidelines and best practices that new and existing practitioners can consult to increase the effectiveness of their projects. This is crucial to EDMO's wider mission, as raising media literacy levels increases the public's resilience to online mis- and disinformation.

For the purposes of this work, we are basing our understanding of media literacy on the definition used by the European Commission's Media Literacy Expert Group: *media literacy is an umbrella expression that includes all the technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow a person to access, have a critical understanding of the media and interact and engage with it.*

We are aiming to keep the final list concise, with links to further explanation and examples.

BEFORE: PLANNING

Key goals and principles

A good media literacy initiative has clearly defined goals and principles

Develop clearly defined, achievable, measurable goals for an initiative
- Defining clear goals at the beginning of an initiative allows more focused, targeted work and potential for more rigorous and effective assessment and evaluation of these goals. It is important to bear in mind that these goals might evolve during the course of the project and may be updated and redefined.
- Connecting with existing recognised frameworks and skills measures, at a national or international level, is helpful.

Establish your key principles
- Identifying some key principles is a helpful way to guide your work.
- For example, UNESCO has developed what it calls five laws of media and information literacy, ERGA's Action Group on Media Literacy has identified a set of six key principles to consider, NAMLE's resources provide a guide to principles, and Ofcom proposes principles for media literacy design (targeted at online platforms).

Define your target audience
- Knowing your target audience is essential, and it is important not to forget about minorities within a target group.

A good media literacy initiative is empowering

Ensure that the initiative takes an empowering rather than solely protectionist approach
- Media literacy skills are clearly vital for promoting online safety and preventing online harms, and much of the funding in this area is likely to be targeted at prevention of/protection against harm, particularly when it comes to vulnerable audiences. However, as decades of research suggest, it is important to think about how media literacy skills and knowledge can empower participants to explore and to create media, as well as to protect them from harm.

Consider possible negative outcomes, and take steps to reduce any potential harms
- Even with the best of intentions, your project might have unexpected negative outcomes and it is important to be aware of what these might be. For example, could participants end up becoming distrustful of all online information, even that from legitimate sources? Could an increase in digital skills without an accompanying increase in critical thinking capability result in behaviour that is harmful to others?

Exploring the wider context

A good media literacy initiative is consultative

Consult your target audience and if possible involve them in project design
- In conjunction with the needs analysis, it is essential to include the perspectives of your target audience in the planning and design of an initiative. This will increase the likelihood that your project is relevant to them, accessible, and effective in achieving its goals.
- Remember that they may have very different media practices and habits to other sectors of the population, and even to others with similar demographic profiles.

A good media literacy initiative takes an evidence-based approach

Ensure that your initiative takes an evidence-based pedagogical approach
- Using an established and pedagogical framework with sound learning objectives is essential for any initiatives that involve education or training.

Carry out a needs analysis if practical
- This should answer the question of why your initiative is necessary, based on the needs of your audience, eg gaps in competences, and/or gaps in provision of services/resources.
- Your initiative is taking place within a wider ecosystem and it is important to work out how it would benefit the audience/wider sector.

Carry out an assessment of existing evidence to establish whether the project is likely to create measurable impact, and the best way to take your project forward
- Considering what evidence already exists is important to help make your initiative as effective and impactful as possible. Such evidence could be academic research, industry research, or outcomes of other projects in the field.

Identify areas of potential resistance
- These could include the belief that young people are all tech whizzes, or the tendency for people to over-estimate their own media skills, or scepticism of mainstream media.

A good media literacy initiative is inclusive

Inform and engage the wider media literacy community
- No media literacy initiative operates in a vacuum, so ensure you are familiar with those engaged in media literacy activities in your region and/or aimed at similar target groups as well as any relevant communications and collaboration channels.
- This will not only help in the shaping of your project or initiative and to build on the experiences of others, but will also provide mechanisms for the promotion and exploitation of your results.
- For example, consider creating an advisory board with representation from several different associated sectors as well as members of your target audience.

Further considerations

A good media literacy initiative is ethical and accessible

Carry out an ethics and accessibility check particularly when dealing with children or vulnerable audiences
- Establishing whether there are ethical concerns related to the running of your initiative allows you to address these effectively and avoid unintentional harm.
- It is important to consider whether resources/materials have been appropriately designed for readability and accessibility, for example by referring to the principles of universal design.

Check for GDPR compliance and any other legal considerations
- A checklist is available here for GDPR compliance.
- Further attention should be paid to the legislation in the country you are working in.

A good media literacy initiative incorporates evaluation planning from the start

Ensure that sufficient financial and human resources are in place to complete the project, and to evaluate its impact
- Ensuring that a project is sustainable, with the necessary resources to achieve its aims, is essential for success.
- Building in an evaluation plan from the beginning of the project allows you to gather any necessary data for effective evaluation. This could include establishing a control group and/or pre-testing for participants, and ensuring that appropriate resources are set aside for post-test work and analysis.

DURING: IMPLEMENTING

A good media literacy initiative is transparent

Be transparent about a project's intentions, process and funding
- Clearly explaining your goals, motivation and methods on your website, along with any information about your funding sources, allows participants and the wider community to better understand your initiative.

A good media literacy project is prepared

Carry out a pilot project with a suitable sample size, and integrate lessons learnt
- A pilot project allows you to learn a significant amount about the accessibility, useability and effectiveness of your initiative and make necessary adjustments early.

When possible, benchmark target audience's competences
- Having a benchmark/baseline to measure against will allow for better target interventions and more effective and informative evaluation.

A good media literacy project is adaptable

Carry out an improvement assessment on project design, and be prepared to adapt in case of unexpected developments
- Assessing the project at an appropriate point during its implementation allows you to make changes that can improve its outcomes. Flexibility and mechanisms to adapt are important here.

Continue to engage with the target audience throughout implementation
- Seeking feedback from your audience/participants regularly during the course of the intervention allows you to make tweaks. It can identify barriers and challenges in learning for some, and allow you to provide support where necessary.

A good media literacy project endures

Seek to extend the project's usefulness to participants
- Giving participants material to take away with useful content, links and resources can help ensure that they absorb the material involved.
- Providing participants with a certificate that they could use on their CVs or on social media (adults) or take home (children) can help both increase their confidence and raise awareness of the initiative.

Consider the durability of resources produced - can they be used again?
- Ensuring that any resources are easy to use by others means your project's usefulness can extend beyond its original term.
- Even if your project is a one-off or of limited duration, the opportunity might arise to run it again, or some projects provide a framework which can then be adapted by others to include different country- audience- or topic-specific content, while benefitting from the research and design efforts already invested.

AFTER

Reflection and evaluation

A good media literacy project reflects, shares and evaluates

Evaluate impact as rigorously as possible
- Evaluation of impact is hard but important, and it is helpful to consult the various toolkits, resources and research that have been produced.
- Using more than one different methodology for evaluation of each initiative can make your evaluation more valuable. For evaluation to be informative about whether competences have been acquired as a result of an initiative, use of a control group or pre-/post-testing strategy tends to be preferable (including follow up if possible).
- It is important to acknowledge the limitations of evaluation: you can seek to measure competences including skills and knowledge, but the choices that people make aren't within your control.

Reflect on lessons learnt, including successes, failures and improvements made.
- As well as evaluating impact, reflection is a valuable step in assessing the overall success of a project. It also provides an opportunity to recognise and account for the huge pressure your organisation might be under to deliver results and impact.

Share evaluations and lessons learnt with the wider community.
- Sharing findings and evaluation in a visible and accessible way creates a wider evidence base of what is and isn't effective that can inform future projects.
- Sharing what went wrong can be hard to do but potentially extremely valuable for those carrying out future work.

Dissemination

A good media literacy project goes beyond

Where possible, ensure that resources are available and useable beyond the project's lifetime, and beyond the project's original geographical scope
- Projects that have lasting, reusable resources have potential for wider impact.
- Using resources and cross-border partnerships to promote wider dissemination, including translation where appropriate, means that resources could be adapted for other language markets.
- Targeted dissemination efforts at specific groups/audiences are likely to be more effective than a generic dissemination strategy.