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The Role of Organisations of Journalists in Promoting Media Literacy – Building Credibility and Trust

ABSTRACT

In the previous research (ANR TRANSLIT, Mapping media literacy practices and actions in EU 28) organisations of journalists were identified as stakeholders in promoting media literacy. Their role was seen as essential in promoting credibility as a competence based on the truthfulness and relevance of content and sources. Furthermore, in 2014 they were identified as key actors by UNESCO within the Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in Digital Era. Credibility is still seen as fundamental media capital. Although media organisations were one of the first stakeholders promoting credibility, recent research has showed that their activities in promoting media literacy were outnumbered by NGOs. According to the European Federation of Journalists, one of the main goals of journalists' organisations is to defend values such as freedom of the press, independency, quality and credibility. In this study the authors research the existing activities of organisations of journalists in promoting media literacy throughout the EU. The results of a survey done within organisations of journalists and the results of content analysis of websites are presented. The authors' goal is to examine how organisations of journalists are engaged to promote media literacy and to what extent they produce additional activities to tackle disinformation, fake news and media manipulation.

KEY WORDS

Media literacy. Organisation of journalists. Credibility. Trustfulness.

1. Introduction

In April 2018, within the nationwide campaign *Days of Media Literacy* (*Dani medijske pismenosti)*[1], 974 primary and secondary school students of eighteen Croatian counties visited eleven media companies. This was the first time that only in a one-week period of time, within the public campaign organised and coordinated by UNICEF and the Agency for Electronic Media (as the media regulator), students had the opportunity to visit diverse media companies and have an insightful perspective of the journalistic profession and of work in a newsroom.

One could expect that this kind of activity is to be organised by journalists and media outlets themselves and/or in coordination with journalists' organisations and not exclusively by the regulators, as it occurred in the case of Croatia. In the time when traditional media are fighting for their audiences as the media owners and editors fail to attract younger audiences, this could have wide implications for their future business, their market position as well as their position in society. Furthermore, we will discuss the connection between media literacy programmes and media credibility.

Although the analysed associations did not recognise the whole potential of media literacy projects, we will provide an overview of the valuable projects initiated, organised and hosted by media companies and individual journalists concerned about illiteracy. *„There is a potential risk, that in the future, fewer and fewer people will be able to properly use newspapers' publications, either on paper or in digital format.“*[2] In the article *Journalists' Role in Media Education in Poland in Time of Globalization* Biernacka-Ligieza provides a detailed list and explanation for each media literacy project initiated by the media and claims that *„Polish media representatives have decided to take an active role in the media education process.“*[3] New projects have recently been initiated in the Czech Republic as well. According to the research conducted by Lucie Stastna (2017) there are also several projects initiated by print and electronic media. The journalists interviewed within Stastna's survey specified several reasons for being involved in media literacy programmes. One of them reported that *„journalism would benefit from actively advocating media literacy, especially with the goal to improve trust in the media“* and *„the other one thinks that „media literacy is a precondition for protecting democracy in the Czech Republic.“*[4]

In the northern part of the EU examples of best practice can be found. In 2017 a project called *Faktana, kiitos!* was launched in Finland. Journalists visited schools with the idea to share „their expertise on journalistic practices and social responsibility" with the main focus on fake news. In the course of the project 124 journalists met around 7,200 school students, according to organisers.[5] This is indeed a good example of how journalists can initiate new media literacy programmes with great interest demonstrated by students. Another project comes from the UK. In 2018 *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* launched a media literacy programme for all secondary schools, sixth forms and colleges. Ten schools participated in the pilot programme. Martin Ivens, editor of *The Sunday Times* emphasised that the media literacy programme would share extensive experience in investigative reporting *„to ensure that future readers have the*

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[1]   *A campaign initiated by the Agency for Electronic Media and UNICEF with a view to building a long-term platform whose main task is to raise the awareness of media literacy and capacities of teachers, parents and children in Croatia.* [online]. [2019-03-27]. Available at: <https://www.medijskapismenost. hr/rezultati-prvih-dana-medijske-pismenosti-u-hrvatskoj/>.

[2]   BIERNACKA-LIGIEZA, I.: Journalists' Role in Media Education in Poland in Time of Globalization: Reflection on Media Education Futures. In SIRKKU, K., KUPIAINEN, R. (eds.): *International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media.* University of Gothenburg, Sweden : Nordicom, 2015, p. 68.

[3]   Ibidem. p. 69.

[4]   STASTNA, L.: *Journalists and Schools Work Together to Teach Media Literacy.* [online]. [2019-03-03]. Available at: <https://en.ejo.ch/ethics-quality/journalists-schools-work-together-teach-media-literacy>.

[5]   KOPONEN, H. M.: *New Finnish project brings journalists to schools to teach media literacy.* [online]. [2019-03-04]. Available at: <https://ipi.media/new-finnish-project-brings-journalists-to-schools-to-teach-media-literacy/>.

tools to verify they are reading well-researched, accurate, and impartial journalism."[6] The listed projects and activities are valuable case studies of media literacy programmes organised and implemented by diverse media companies.

On the basis of the existing research[7], apart from CSOs (Civil Society Organisations) that have been recognised as key stakeholders in media literacy, there cannot be identified better stakeholders and partners than media and journalists' organisations. With new challenges such as disinformation, misinformation, fake news, algorithms malfunctioning, propaganda, native advertising and sponsored content, bots, trolls, hoaxes and other kinds of manipulations, we believe that media literacy programmes could empower the audiences and help them choose credible, reliable and trustworthy media outlets. Furthermore, to the best of our knowledge, journalists were the first to implement fact-checking departments at the beginning of the 20th century and to recognise credibility as the ultimate criterion for accountability.

For some of the above-listed reasons, countries in the EU have a history of media literacy programmes organised by media and journalists' associations. There are outstanding examples of leading national newspapers becoming the promoters of media literacy, such as *The Irish Times*. They work collaboratively with education institutions through a project entitled *Newspaper in the Classroom.*[8] The importance of cooperation between organisations of journalists and the school system has also been identified in Croatia.[9]

Media literacy programmes provided by journalists have a long history in the world primarily through the programme *Newspaper in Education (NIE)*. It started back in 1930s with *The New York Times*. The idea behind it was to improve media literacy by using the newspaper as an education tool.

"The digital or print editions can be used to provide lessons in basic reading, mathematics, politics, science, social studies, geography and critical thinking. NIE can be carried out at all levels of education and the lessons can be designed to tie in with the national school curriculum."[10]

According to the data from WAN-IFRA, there are more than 700 NIE programmes internationally with print and e-editions today.[11] The same source argues that *"newspaper associations in Finland and Sweden became continental Europe's early practitioners in the 1960s."*[12] This article will give an overview of the existing projects and practices initiated and coordinated by organisations of journalists in EU 28.

2. The connection between media literacy, credibility and trust

In the existing research papers and studies, one of the most cited definitions of media literacy is the one proposed by Patricia Aufderheide. *"A media literate person - everyone should have the opportunity to become one - can decode, evaluate, analyse and produce both print and*

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[6] *News UK.* [online]. [2019-03-04]. Available at: <https://www.news.co.uk/2018/06/the-times-and-the-sunday-times-launch-the-uks-first-free-media-literacy-programme-for-schools/>.

[7] KANIŽAJ, I.: The role of civil society organisations in promoting media literacy, transliteracy and media and information literacy in EU. In *Revista Fuentes*, 2017, Vol. 19, No. 2, p. 69-80.

[8] MATOVIĆ, M., JURAITE, K., GUTIERREZ, A.: The role of non-governmental actors in media and information literacy: a comparative media systems perspective. In FRAU-MEIGS, D., VELEZ, I., FLORES, M. J. (eds.): *Public Policies in Media and Information Literacy in Europe.* New York, USA : Routledge, 2017, p. 167.

[9] KANIŽAJ, I., CAR, V., KRALJ, L.: *Media and Information Literacy in Croatia (2013), ANR TRANSLIT national research report, 2014.* [online]. [2019-27-03]. Available at: <http://ppemi.enscachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/CROATIA_2014.pdf>.

[10] HENRIKSSON, T.: *Some Frequently Asked Questions about News in Education (NIE*)* [online]. [2019-03-17]. Available at: <http://www.wan-ifra.org/articles/2012/04/17/some-frequently-asked-questions-about-news-in-education-nie>.

[11] Ibidem.

[12] Ibidem.

electronic media. The fundamental objective of media literacy is critical autonomy in relationship to all media."[13] In 2011 R. Hobbs suggested five essential dimensions of digital and media literacy that include: access, analyse, create, reflect and act.[14] Our understanding of media literacy is also all about empowering the public for critical thinking about media content. However, one of the outcomes could refer to the increase in trust in those media organisations that provide reliable, transparent and unbiased content by promoting accountable and socially responsible journalism.

At the beginning of the 90s Claude-Jean Bertrand suggested a new deontology model for journalism. He called it NODO – ways of ensuring social responsibility. It included every possible non-governmental activity or tool used to make media accountable to the public. It is probably the most comprehensive accountability framework. The author also recognised the importance of media in school programmes.[15] *"Although accountability is primarily considered as being for the public benefit, it also serves the media as a form of feedback from the public."*[16] Nevertheless, it is not just about feedback and transparency.

"In order for a democratic society to function, a quality journalism is necessary, which, on the other hand, requires media literate citizens. Professionalism, quality and credibility of information are largely determined by the users' media competence, and their expectations of the media."[17]

Rouba El Helou, as quoted in *Journalism, Fake News & Disinformation: Handbook for Journalism Education and Training,* offers a different perspective: *"Equipping people with the skills needed to decode various messages is an ongoing struggle that media educators and journalists are all asked to join. Media Literacy helps people to find an equilibrium between trust of news sources and the necessary suspicion to question them."*[18]

Credibility has always been the fundamental media capital as suggested by Thomas A. Bauer.[19] *"What type of media system is founded, which quality standards media generally accomplish and to what degree of media literacy the audience was brought very much depends on the quality of democracy. All these factors of media and communication culture reflect the democratic quality of life in a society."*[20] Bauer conceptualises media credibility as a two-way agreement: *"Credibility should be expected from both sides - competence in the context of media production (meaning professionalism) as well as the competence of media consumption."*[21]

Bauer argues that media should *"create a climate of trust and create a cultural use environment to set up (conditions for) credibility, which, on the other hand, is also a contribution of a recipient who can be a reliable partner if he is willing to contribute with his media literacy or with a habit to be interested in the truth."*[22] The author further explains that credibility is the dimension of mutual trust because the cultural attitude of the recipient in the use of the media is as relevant as the organizational use of the media by the producer. In this respect it can be seen that media literacy gives new opportunities to media companies and audiences for establishing a trust-credibility relation with the public. Even more obvious connections with media literacy can be seen in the work by Najil Kurtić.

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[13] AUFDERHEIDE, P.: *Media Literacy: A Report of the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy.* Queenstown, MD. : Aspen Inst., 1992, p. 1.

[14] *HOBBS, R.: Digital and media literacy: connecting culture and classroom.* Corwin, USA : Thousand Oaks, 2011, p. 12.

[15] BERTRAND, C. J.: *Deontologija medija.* Zagreb : ICEJ & Sveučilišna knjižnica, 2007, p. 95.

[16] MCQUAIL, D.: *Journalism and Society.* London : Sage, 2013, p. 154.

[17] CAR, V., TURČILO, L., MATOVIĆ, M.: *Medijska pismenost – preduvjet za odgovorne medije: zbornik radova s 5. regionalne znanstvene konferencije Vjerodostojnost medija.* Sarajevo : Fakultet političkih nauka, 2015, p. 62.

[18] IRETON, C., POSETTI, J.: *Journalism, "Fake News" & Disinformation – Handbook for Journalism Education and Training.* Paris : UNESCO, 2018, p. 78.

[19] BAUER, T.: Vjerodostojnost medija – društveni kapital medijskog društva. In MALOVIĆ, S. (ed.): *Vjerodostojnost novina.* Zagreb : ICEJ & Sveučilišna knjižara, 2007, p. 21.

[20] Ibidem, p. 22.

[21] Ibidem, p. 23.

[22] Ibidem, p. 30.

"Why is the issue of media credibility important after all? The feature of credibility becomes the crucial determinant in choosing the news in the situation of the glut on the market. When there are more different, and sometimes contradictory news of the same event, we will choose the news in which 1) we recognize more components of credibility and 2) which come from branded sources (which have already been proven as sources and transmitters of credible news)."[23]

Kurtić actually emphasises the need for media literacy and the competence of the public to recognise credible content with multiple sources. *"Credibility is a complex concept that applies simultaneously to all components of the communication process; both to real truthful message quality (news) and to communicators, the nature and reputation of the media and ultimately to all the factors that determine the communicative behaviour of the communicant (recipient)."*[24] In last several years we have witnessed a great number of credibility challenges in our media and have faced diverse channels promoting the content that is not credible. For this reason we think that the journalists' organisations ought to become an important actor in promoting media literacy by providing projects for building trust and credibility between them and the public.

3. Why should organisations of journalists care about media literacy?

The formal framework for the development of media literacy and the importance of the planned and coordinated action of all the key stakeholders was recognised in many documents. It was already the UNESCO *Grünwald Declaration on Media Education* to recognise that *"the media education will be most effective when parents, teachers, media personnel and decision-makers all acknowledge they have a role to play in developing greater critical awareness among listeners, viewers and readers."*[25] In the UNESCO *Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in the Digital Era* there is a special annex about "Significance of key actors", while the *Riga Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy in a Shifting Media and Information Landscape* notes that *"different stakeholders and creators are in a dynamic relationship with one another."*[26]

The media, journalists and their professional organisations and associations are detected as key stakeholders in promoting media literacy in all the above-cited documents. In some parts of the documents the importance of their role is additionally emphasised and explained in detail. First, UNESCO *Grünwald Declaration on Media Education* said that *"the role of communication and media in the process of development should not be underestimated"*[27] and that *"the greater integration of educational and communications systems would undoubtedly be an important step towards more effective education."*[28] Then, the UNESCO *Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in the Digital Era* concluded that it is important to encourage media *"to integrate media and information literacy priorities in their strategic plans and governance."*[29] In its annex, an extended explanation of why media literacy should be important for journalists can

[23] KURTIĆ N.: Bosna i Hercegovina: Između profesionalnih standarda i očekivanja čitatelja. In MALOVIĆ, S. (ed.): *Vjerodostojnost novina. 39-67,* Zagreb : ICEJ & Sveučilišna knjižara, 2007, p. 39.

[24] Ibidem.

[25] *UNESCO Grünwald Declaration on Media Education.* [online]. [2019-03-22]. Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/MEDIA_E.PDF>.

[26] *UNESCO Riga Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy in a Shifting Media and Information Landscape.* [online]. [2019-03-22]. Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/Events/riga_recommendations_on_media_and_information_literacy.pdf>.

[27] *UNESCO Grünwald Declaration on Media Education.* [online]. [2019-03-22]. Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/MEDIA_E.PDF>.

[28] Ibidem.

[29] *UNESCO Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in Digital Era.* [online]. [2019-03-22]. Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/In_Focus/paris_mil_declaration_final.pdf>.

be found: „*Media and information literacy matters to them because they need to think reflexively about their practices and because they need an audience that understands their functions and to whom they should ultimately be accountable. (...) Their professional status and their values can benefit from further training in media and information literacy for better investigation and promotion of their ideas in a pluralistic setting.*"[30]

In the UNESCO *Riga Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy in a Shifting Media and Information Landscape* there is a specific chapter entitled „Call on media & information providers." It was written to address the „*public and private broadcasters, over-the-top content providers, film rights holder and distributors, games distributors, news media, advertisers and advertising agencies.*"[31] These stakeholders are urged „*to join in partnership with the education sectors and MIL communities to make media and information content available to children and young people to foster their media and information literacy.*"[32]

4. What have we learned from previous research?

The studies conducted in the field of media literacy have dealt with a wide range of topics such as literature overview of media literacy, examples of good practices, public policies, national regulation, activities of the key stakeholders, to name but a few. Since this study is focused on the latter, in this chapter the authors will give a brief overview of the main research results related to stakeholders, and, more specifically, to the activities of organisations of journalists in promoting media literacy.

Civil society, Public authorities, Academia, Audiovisual content providers, Online platforms, Media Regulatory Authorities and Journalist Associations are identified as the main stakeholders in the report *Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28.*[33] It is explained that 878 out of total 939 identified stakeholders „*were categorised into these seven broad sectors with another 61 stakeholders being categorised as 'Other.*"[34] The research showed that „sector with the smallest number of main media literacy stakeholders was 'Journalist Associations.'"[35]
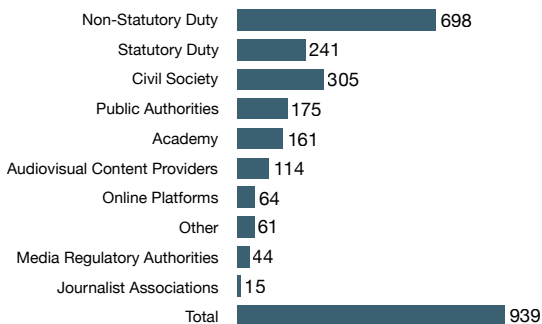
Non-Statutory Duty	698
Statutory Duty	241
Civil Society	305
Public Authorities	175
Academy	161
Audiovisual Content Providers	114
Online Platforms	64
Other	61
Media Regulatory Authorities	44
Journalist Associations	15
Total	939

CHART 1: *Stakeholders identified in the report Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28*
Source: EAO, 2016

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[30] Ibidem.

[31] *UNESCO Riga Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy in a Shifting Media and Information Landscape.* [online]. [2019-03-22]. Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/ HQ/CI/CI/pdf/Events/riga_recommendations_on_media_and_information_literacy.pdf>.

[32] Ibidem.

[33] *Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28* is one of the most extensive reports in that field. it was prepared by the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO) for the European Commission which „has considered such a mapping necessary for identifying good practices and for promoting the transfer of knowledge between member states" (EAO, 2016: 1). The report on the most significant media literacy projects carried out since January 2010 was published in 2016.

[34] *Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28.* Strasbourg : European Audiovisual Observatory, 2016, p. 36.

[35] Ibidem.

The national experts who participated in conducting the research „were asked to identify the main stakeholders involved in the promotion of media literacy and indicate which stakeholders had a statutory duty and which had a non-statutory duty in relation to media literacy."[36] They identified a total of fifteen associations of journalists from nine countries active in the field of media literacy, which means they concluded that in twenty countries there are no organisation of journalists that could be identified as key stakeholders in promoting media literacy. These are Austria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Slovakia and the United Kingdom.

Country	Number of associations of journalists identified as media literacy stakeholders
Finland	3
The Wallonia-Brussels Federation	2
France	2
Greece	2
Slovenia	2
Flanders	1
Bulgaria	1
Italy	1
Lithuania	1

SCHEME 1: *Number of associations of journalists identified as key stakeholders in promoting media literacy by countries*
Source: EAO, 2016

Associations of journalists were involved in just three out of the 109 cross-sectoral collaborations on the „case study" projects.[37] However, these organisations were identified as significant media literacy projects, especially in Belgium, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, with the project *Journalists in Classrooms* (*Journalistes en classe*). In Estonia a practical training workshop was organised by *Young People's Media Club*, a network of young professionals. „*This younger generation of established journalists and media and communication specialists are aiming to raise awareness and teach practical skills and knowledge around media literacy to secondary and high school students around Estonia.*"[38]

In Finland one of the twenty recognised projects is *Yle Uutisluokka (Yle News Class)*, „*a media education project, where students have a chance to make their own news with Finnish Broadcasting Company Yle's professional journalists.*"[39] There is also *Faktabaari (Fact Bar)*. „*Faktabaari is a Finnish web-based fact-checking service bringing accuracy to the public debate. It is a non-partisan journalistic project using the Internet and social media for collecting and distributing factual information.*"[40] In France, „*the media literacy projects of CLEMI are realised with teachers and journalists.*"[41] The journalists' engagement is recognised as well in *Les Clés des médias (Keys for understanding media)*. Greek journalists were active in the project *Oh where*

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[36] *Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28.* Strasbourg : European Audiovisual Observatory, 2016, p. 34.
[37] Ibidem, p. 49.
[38] Ibidem, p. 156.
[39] Ibidem, p. 172.
[40] Ibidem, p. 179.
[41] Ibidem, p. 184.

has my truth gone? - Playing with Journalistic Practice.[42] In Croatia media literacy has brought together academics, NGOs as well as the representatives of the public radio and television (HRT) within the ERASMUS+ project *Y-NEX (European Youth News Exchange).* Lithuania had similar training activities with the *Training Programme for Socially Responsible Young Journalists.*[43] One of the examples of national campaigning can also be found in Lithuania in the project *Media4Change.*[44] In Luxembourg there is the project *Competition „jeune journaliste"* by Conseil de Presse and Script.

ANR TRANSLIT[45] is another large research project focused on the analysis of media and information literacy policies in Europe. It brought together 29 national reports from 2014 with detailed analyses of key stakeholders in each of the analysed countries. This research project has also mapped the activities of journalists' organisations in media and information literacy. Similar to the EAO project there are countries in a European context and outside EU28 without any existing activity by journalists' associations just like Croatia: *„journalists and news professional organisations are not engaged."*[46] As far as countries with long histories in media literacy are concerned, such as Finland, the report says that *„promoting media literacy has become widespread in media sector companies"* and that *„Finnish Newspaper Association organises newspaper education and the Finnish Broadcasting Company has funded many kinds of media education projects."*[47]

5. Research Design and Methodology

To examine *the role of journalists' organisations in promoting media literacy* we combined two research methods in this study - survey and content analysis of the websites. One of the aims of this study was to get the data directly from national organisations of journalists rather than carrying out solely secondary analysis of their work.

Our research was based on the following research questions:

1. How are organisations of journalists engaged to promote media literacy?
2. What are the main audiences addressed in their media literacy programs?
3. How are they promoting media literacy programmes on their official web sites?

In the first part of the research, a questionnaire with sixteen questions was sent to all 28 national organisations of journalists in the European Union. The questionnaire instrument was chosen as the optimal research technique for several reasons. First of all, considering geographical distance and time frame, an online questionnaire was the only feasible option.

Most of the previous studies in the field of media literacy had been carried out in the European Union. We decided that national organisations of journalists in the European Union form the sampling frame of this study to enable comparisons and referrals to previous research results. The questionnaire was sent out to all 28 national organisations of journalists in the

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[42] Ibidem, p. 196.
[43] Ibidem, p. 254.
[44] Ibidem, p. 260.
[45] *The French research project ANR TRANSLIT explores the socio-technical, political, economic and educational implications of this emerging transliteracy.* [online]. [2019-27-03]. Available at: <http://www.agence-nationale-recherche.fr/Project-ANR-12-CULT-0004>.
[46] KANIŽAJ, I., CAR, V., KRALJ, L.: *Media and Information Literacy in Croatia (2013), ANR TRANSLIT national research report, 2014.* [online]. [2019-27-03]. Available at: <http://ppemi.enscachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/CROATIA_2014.pdf>.
[47] KOTILAINEN, S., KUPIAINEN, R.: *Media and Information Literacy in Finland (2013), ANR TRANSLIT national research report, 2014.* [online]. [2019-27-03]. Available at: <http://ppemi.ens-cachan.fr/data/media/colloque140528/rapports/FINLAND_2014.pdf>.

European Union. Consequently, the sample was formed from those who responded (19/28). The survey was conducted in February 2019 and the response rate to the questionnaire sent to national journalists' organisations was 67,8%. In total, nineteen out of 28 organisations sent their answers back, which authors evaluated to be as expected. The national journalists' organisations that answered the questionnaire are those from Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

Questions were categorised into three sections: „TGeneral opinion on media literacy", „Present activities" and „Past activities". The first set of questions examined opinion on the necessity and importance of media literacy programmes and activities. In the second and third sets of questions organisations were asked to define their present and past activities as well as to define for whom they are/were organised.

In the second part of the study, we also analyse the official website content of all 28 national organisations of journalists in order to find out if they have published any content connected to media literacy.

6. Results and Discussion

As the questionnaire itself was divided into three sections of questions, so are the results which vary noticeably – from examining opinions to examining actual present and past activities of national organisations of journalists. The big gap between what organisations think they should do and what they actually do can be noticed.

All nineteen organisations find engaging and promoting media literacy by journalists' organisations „necessary" or „very necessary", but only eleven of them completely agree that organisations of journalists should be more engaged in promoting media literacy. It shows that they recognise the necessity of media literacy in theory and that they do not deny their role and responsibility. However, organisations did not provide new programmes and initiatives in media literacy. One possible reason may be the fact that they are aware of not being sufficiently engaged and that, on the other hand, their greater engagement is not currently possible due to difficulties such as lack of money, people, knowledge and other resources.

Furthermore, seventeen out of nineteen interviewed organisations think media literacy is „important" or „very important" to general audiences, but answers vary more when it comes to examining the importance of media literacy in specific fields. It is significant that literature reviewed in the theoretical framework of this study strongly emphasises the importance of media literacy for building credibility and trust. Yet, organisations of journalists still do not show a higher degree of agreement on this subject. In order to have more insight into the attitudes of representatives and members of these organisations new research is needed.
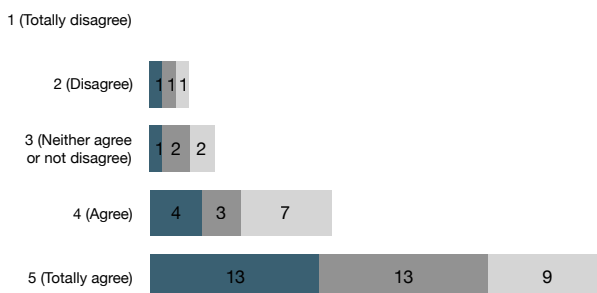

CHART 2: *Results of the survey on the general opinion on media literacy*
Source: own processing, 2019

In examining present and past activities, there is also a visible difference in relation to the perception of the importance and necessity of media literacy. Currently, twelve out of nineteen organisations carry out at least one activity in promoting media literacy while seven of them do not. The authors find particularly worrying the fact that the results are exactly the same when it comes to past activities in the last twenty years, which indicates that there is no innovative progress. The results are even more discouraging when it comes to financial support of activities in the field of media literacy. Only 7 out of 19 organisations financially support at least one media literacy activity at the moment, and eight of them did so at least once in the past.

There are five organisations that have never carried out an activity in promoting media literacy in the last twenty years, nor they are carrying out any now. The national organisations of journalists in question are the ones of Belgium (Flanders), Italy, Malta, Poland and Romania. It is interesting to note that journalist associations of Flanders and Italy were identified as stakeholders in promoting media literacy in the report *Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28.*[48] It is also significant to find that the Italian organisation, in spite of the fact it has never carried out any programme, has financially supported programmes in the last twenty years. The Flemish Organisation of Journalists declared in additional notes that in Flanders media literacy activities are mostly done by NGOs, which is a good thing but as a journalist Federation they would like to be involved. SDP has organised many conferences regarding manipulation and disinformation. In the last three years SDP has been involved in international project Stop Fake, but nothing fully dedicated to media literacy yet, notes Polish Journalists Association (*Stowarzyszenie Dziennikarzy Polskich*, *SDP*).

When it comes to the type of activity in the field of media literacy that is or was carried out by organisations of journalists, one-sided activities prevail, such as organising and holding conferences, seminars, workshops and lectures. Only three organisations used to hold individual consulting, and four of them still do that. National organisations of journalists of Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain currently support creating media literacy curricula in schools, but only Denmark and Luxembourg did it in the past as well, so the progress is visible in this field. This kind of activity is emphasised in the above-listed declarations and these best practices should be promoted more at the European level. Building a new curriculum in collaboration with schools is an effective way of promoting media literacy and empowering both pupils and teachers.

Our opening line in this study concerns a programme where students of primary and secondary schools in Croatia had the opportunity to visit media companies, but within the activity organised by the media regulator. The Croatian Journalists' Association did not participate as a partner in this activity and other national journalists' organisations did not meet the expectations either when it comes to organising visits to media newsrooms although it would be expected from professional journalists. Only the National Association of Hungarian Journalists has demonstrated continuity in organising visits both in the past and today. The Union of Journalists in Finland used to organise this kind of visits, but it is not conducting this activity at the moment, while Portuguese journalists are currently organising visits to media newsrooms, which they did not do in the past. Only the Union of Journalists in Finland added an additional activity to the list of activities they are organising. „We participated" in a project „Facts, thanks" where 160 volunteer journalists visited schools to tell about journalists' work", they explained and said that they also in the past organised school visits by journalists.

Answers to the questions as to for whom these activities are/were intended are very similar in the past and in the present. They are and were mostly intended for the public, high school students are in second place, for university students. The Syndicate of Journalists of the Czech Republic and the Union of Cyprus Journalists added „journalist" to lists in the section „other".

48 *UNESCO Riga Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy in a Shifting Media and Information Landscape.* [online]. [2019-03-22]. Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/Events/riga_recommendations_on_media_and_information_literacy.pdf>.
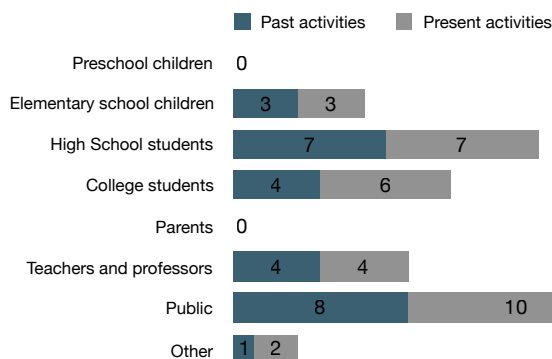
CHART 3: *Results of the survey on the past and present activities*
Source: own processing, 2019

These results correspond to the results of the report *Mapping of media literacy practices and actions in EU-28* according to which „*80 of the 145 „case study" projects targeted the broad audience group of 'Teens and older students.*"[49] It also notes that „*half the projects that target teenagers and older students are aimed at parents.*"[50] However, the results of this study show that not one single media literacy project conducted by organisations of journalists was intended for parents. In the report on Public policies in media and information literacy in Europe it was also noted that „*The role of parents in MIL outside of the school system diverged noticeably from one county to another, with parents being co-actors or coaches in the learning process (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, etc.) or parents and parents' associations simply ignoring the issue of MIL (the Czech Republic, Portugal).*"[51] In any case, this study shows that organisations of journalists do not see parents as key subjects in media literacy. It is worrying that there is no programme for preschool children either in spite of the fact the it was already included in UNESCO's *The Grünwald Declaration* of 1982 how important it was to „initiate and support comprehensive media education programmes - from pre-school to university level, and in adult education."[52] The research conducted in Croatia by Ciboci, Kanižaj and Labaš in 2013 „*revealed that the media are an integral part of children's lives starting at the very earliest age, according to which an overwhelming 98.8% of parents reported that their preschool aged children are involved in some kind of media use.*"[53] Since children in Croatia „*start to learn about the media only in the first grade of primary school, as part of Croatian language courses, until then, it is up to their parents to teach their children about media content.*"[54] It shows why quality media literacy programmes are necessary for both pre-school children and parents and organisations of journalists should recognise it.

Our results overview will be concluded with a content analysis of the official websites of journalists' organisations. The researchers reviewed their content to find out if they had published any content connected to media literacy. The result shows that only ten out of 28

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[49] *UNESCO Riga Recommendations on Media and Information Literacy in a Shifting Media and Information Landscape.* [online]. [2019-03-22]. Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/Events/riga_recommendations_on_media_and_information_literacy.pdf>.

[50] Ibidem.

[51] FRAU-MEIGS, D., VELEZ, I., FLORES, M. J.: *Public Policies in Media and Information Literacy in Europe.* New York, USA : Routledge, 2017, p. 52.

[52] *UNESCO Grünwald Declaration on Media Education.* [online]. [2019-03-22]. Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/MEDIA_E.PDF>.

[53] *UNESCO Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in Digital Era.* [online]. [2019-03-22]. Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/In_Focus/paris_mil_declaration_final.pdf>.

[54] CIBOCI, L., LABAŠ, D., KANIŽAJ, I.: Media Education from the Perspective of Parents of Preschool Children: Challenges and Trends in Free Time Media Use. In *Medijska istraživanja,* 2014, Vol. 20, No 2, p. 53.

websites published some kind of content connected to media literacy. Nevertheless, it needs to be emphasised that even among these websites, many are outdated and their content is very poor. Organisations often define content about fake news and advice for journalist as "media literacy content" but it is not entirely so.
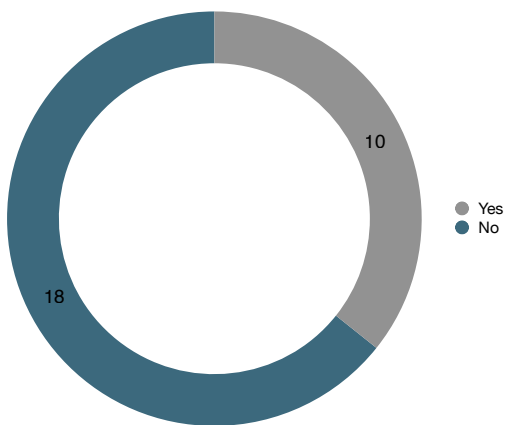

● Yes
● No

CHART 4: *Results of the content analysis of the official websites of organisations of journalists*
Source: own processing, 2019

7. Conclusion

One hundred years ago journalists were the first to recognise the problems of disinformation as a side effect of the *penny press era* that brought about a completely new approach to the audience. At that time, the first fact-checking departments were organised in newsrooms. Most of these activities were organised with the goal of obtaining credibility and trust. A great number of similarities with today's societies can be identified. Therefore, the same as at the beginning of the 20th century, journalists can be recognised as relevant stake holders in promoting media literacy programmes.

Fact-checking activities started within media companies (at that time newspapers and magazines), probably with the idea to build primarily the reputation of a specific company or newsroom. Today media companies and journalists' organisations are facing far more challenges than before and they need media literacy programmes for at least two reasons: investing in future readers/audiences and empowering the public to recognise and acknowledge quality and professional journalism vs. disinformation, "fake news" and different kinds of manipulation.

For this reason, we believe that organisations of journalists should assume a more active role in introducing media literacy programmes and coordinating activities between journalists, media companies and audiences. Although most of the research presented in this study suggest that in the last ten years organisations of journalists have been the least active in comparison to other stake holders in promoting media literacy, this could be also due to the fact that media companies have been providing media literacy programmes on their own, yet focusing occasionally on only one segment of the public. Media literacy should be initiated by journalists, their organisations and companies not only because of the above-listed declarations, recommendations, codes of practice or even laws, but because of the fact that we need to empower audiences to be able to discern trustworthy, ethical, professional, credible journalism and distinguish it from many new forms of manipulation and disinformation produced by various channels.

A great number of opportunities missed by organisations of journalists can be identified. According to our research they have recognised the whole potential of media literacy programmes but there have been almost no activities intended for preschool children and parents initiated by organisations of journalists. Furthermore, the content analysis of their websites shows that it is hard to find specific information on media literacy.

In further research one has to analyse the difference between media literacy programmes provided by commercial vs. public media. However, a detailed analysis of the long-term effectiveness of the existing programmes is needed as well. There is also the important question of financing, which was not addressed in our research.Organisations of journalists have a great opportunity and responsibility to become active promoters of media literacy but this cannot be achieved without an exchange of the best practices between members of the organisations and opening up to the public that should recognise journalists, media companies and journalists organisations as the primary promoters of credibility in our societies.

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